

SIGNS & WONDERS

A Newsletter about the Sacramental Journey for Families 2014/15

Welcome!

This newsletter will be a means of on-going communication for the enrolled families on the Sacramental journey in Annerley Ekibin Catholic Parish. It is particularly designed to keep you informed about what is coming up and what to expect. To that end, this first edition contains an invitation to come and hear all about the schedule, for the preparation and celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion.

Hello from the new co-ordinator

It is with great joy that I will join Fr Adrian and Fr Paul to help you all prepare for the Sacraments ahead. I have ministered in a number of Catholic parishes in Brisbane archdiocese, involved in walking with families on the Sacramental journey for almost 20 years. I look forward to meeting all of you, and of course, especially the children. Please know I am here to listen, guide and journey together. Peace be with you,

Selina



Sacramental Families ...

**You are invited to come to the
6pm Mass in St John Fisher
Church on Saturday 29 November**

OR

**the 9am Mass in St John Fisher
Church on Sunday 30th November**

As you may have read in last Sunday's parish newsletter, during the above Masses, your enrolled child will be called forward for a blessing. After each Mass there will be a 45-minute information sharing session in the church about what's planned for the programme in 2015. The above session, of which you are required to attend one, is the only commitment for this year, apart from ongoing Mass attendance. We look forward to welcoming all of the 97 enrolled children at one of the Masses and the parents and other caregivers at the session afterwards.

Scripture for today:

“Depend on the Lord in whatever you do and your plans will succeed.” Proverbs 16:3

Did you know?

The Seven Sacraments are:

Baptism

Penance

Confirmation

First Holy Communion
(Eucharist)

Marriage

Holy Orders

Anointing of the Sick

After your child receives Confirmation and First Holy Communion, he/she will be a “fully initiated” member of the Catholic Church. That’s truly something to celebrate!



You may be wondering

What if we can't come to Mass on 29 or 30 November?

If you are unable to attend, please contact Selina via email to selina12@icloud.com or phone 0409 735 462.

Is my child called forward by name during the Mass?

No, the children won't be called forward by name, simply within a group.

Do I need to let you know which Mass we will attend?

No, you aren't required to RSVP to which Mass you will attend, only let Selina know if you can't attend.

Are children welcome at the session after Mass?

The presentation is aimed at informing parents or other care givers. Children are most welcome, however, to stay after Mass for the session if that's practical for your family.

Can grandparents or other relatives come to the session?

Absolutely yes, they would be more than welcome.

Will there be a session at Mary Immaculate Church?

At this stage, the above are the planned gatherings and we hope they suit those enrolled. An alternative will be offered if need be.

Will we be given the dates for next year at the session?

Yes, you will be given a booklet with all the relevant dates for next year at the session.

Someone in our family isn't Catholic. Is there information available about how to become Catholic?

Again, absolutely yes! Please let Fr Adrian or Selina know who is interested in finding out more. This is a wonderful time for other family members to ask questions about how to go about taking such a significant step.

What if I have questions before or after the session?

Please ask them! See Selina's contact details above.

It's almost Advent, how can we participate?

On the day we meet (29 or 30 November), the Church will be celebrating the First Sunday of Advent. The beginning of Advent always falls on the Sunday nearest the feast of St Andrew the Apostle (30 November).

You may be aware that Advent means "coming" and is the four weeks leading up to Christmas. Every year at this time, Advent also heralds the beginning of a new Church year. This means we will move into a new cycle - that of "Year B" in the Sunday readings and "cycle 1" for weekdays.

Advent traditions reflect a spirit of expectation and, therefore, unfold gradually. During the Masses of the First Sunday of Advent, the Advent Wreath will be blessed and the first candle lit. It will be a purple (technically 'violet') candle. Purple will also be seen in the priest's vestments and in the church.

Purple is a PREPARING COLOUR in the Church. We prepare ourselves spiritually, physically and mentally - completely - for the birth of Jesus Christ. (We also see purple during Lent, the preparing time for Easter).

Advent is such a wonderful time to engage with children in preparation and anticipation. There are many ways you can help your family anticipate the birth of the Christchild during the weeks of Advent. Reading the weekly scriptures for each Sunday before you go to Mass is one idea, as is ongoing family and individual prayer. Advent is also the time of year to again go to Confession to be spiritually "ready" to welcome the infant Jesus.

What can I do at home with my child?

The list is endless! Here's some ideas:

PRAYER CORNER: If you don't have one, start a prayer corner or table in your home. Choose some special things, with your child, to go in this area e.g. a bible, a Cross or Crucifix, a family photo, rosary beads, holy cards, flowers etc. Buy or find a piece of purple fabric to place under your items to signify the liturgical season. Pray every day in the prayer space and make it visible to visitors to your home.

COUNT DOWN: Think about new ways you can do the "counting down" of Advent. If your child likes books, for example, wrap one for each day of Advent, ideally making them religious books. These can be inexpensive and educational at the same time.





ANOTHER WAY TO "COUNT DOWN": Use the more traditional idea of opening "little doors", "windows" or "boxes" in a homemade or bought Advent calendar with goodies. Be careful not to make them all sweet treats if possible! Think about other items to include like prayer cards, rosary beads, religious stickers, a special note etc. It doesn't have to be expensive or all about the sugar!

PRAYER TABLECLOTH: Buy or find a light coloured, plain table cloth or piece of fabric and write your prayers for Advent on the cloth with an appropriate marker. Watch the space fill up by the time Christmas arrives (include the prayers of younger children here too by writing for them). Use the tablecloth on your table for a meal at Christmastime and as a keepsake.

MANGER: The Advent tradition that combines a spirit of conversion and the coming of Jesus is the practice of having children prepare the manger for the family's Nativity scene. Each night, children and adults alike are invited to place in the manger once piece of straw for each good deed done that day.

YOUR OWN ADVENT WREATH: Make your wreath for the dinner table or prayer space. A round oasis works well (available from most florists). Add four candles standing upright on the oasis. They are three purple and one pink. An option is to also include a white candle in the middle to be lit at Christmas. If you don't have coloured candles, buy or find white ones and wrap coloured ribbon around the middle to identify the two other colours needed (apart from white). Use something green, like foliage, between the candles to signify the life God gives through His Son, Jesus Christ.



Light one candle each Sunday, adding another candle on consecutive Sundays. That means the first Sunday of Advent is purple and is the only one lit. The Second Sunday of Advent is again purple so light two purple candles. The colour for the Third Sunday of Advent is pink (technically 'rose' coloured) so light two purple and the pink one. The Fourth Sunday of Advent is purple again so light all previous candles plus the last purple one. On Christmas Day (or the Vigil) light all the candles including the white one. Always pray as you go, giving thanks to God for His many blessings. As a family you could also incorporate a reading of the Gospel for that Sunday as you light the candle/s. As the light increases on your Advent Wreath, the darkness is pushed away signifying Jesus Christ as the "light of the world" (John 8:12).

Most of all, enjoy the blessed season of Advent with your child! It certainly can be a time of excitement as the birth of the Infant Jesus draws nearer with every day. May God continue to bless your family!