

**Why Do Our Children Now Receive Their First Holy Communion on Sunday?**

*At St. Thomas à Becket Parish we are still pioneering the transmission of our faith to our children with the help of the Faith First program adopted in 2001. Although these first years have been at times a bumpy ride, there is in our hearts a gladness that Jesus does in fact come into our children's souls in a more profound and blessed way than ever before. Jesus is truly our Good Shepherd, and He makes right all our failings and errors, providing we remain open to Him with gratitude for the gift He offered of his life for us while on Earth, and continues to offer us now.*

*I must thank all the parents for accepting to journey with us these past four years, as our diocese breaks new ground and pioneers (in Montreal and Quebec) a life giving way of preparation for Christian initiation that helps parents in their labor of love and witness of hope as they try to transmit their faith, our faith, to their children. We are the Church all of us together. Priests and lay faithful are all necessary in carrying forward the life of faith which Jesus offers people of every generation. So, thank you for pioneering with us, which includes hard labours and disappointments along the way, as well as the joys of experiencing the life-giving love of our God.*

*The shepherds the Lord has been sending to us - from popes to bishops - have always given great priority to the Sunday Liturgy, which is the high point of our life of faith, as we live it out in bite size portions of time, that is, week by week. That is why they call us to integrate new members through the Sacraments of Initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist - either at the Paschal Vigil, the mother of all Christian celebrations, or Pentecost, or other Sundays or times, in accord with local pastoral needs and the limits of time and space and resource people.*

*Everyone who has, in recent decades, stopped to examine what is happening to our Catholic Christian faith, has come to the same conclusion. The Sunday Liturgy, the impact of the Scriptures on our lives, the significance of the Sacraments, the liveliness of our relationship with the living God, and the satisfaction and joy which faith in Jesus brings by allowing us to experience the great power of God's love to transform us and lift up our lives above the trials and troubles of life - all of these important spiritual realities - have been suffering an accelerating disintegration. If our faith is to remain alive and bear fruit in our lives and those of our children, now is the time for us to act.*

*These are the reasons why we have begun to reintegrate the first reception of Holy Communion into its normal setting, that is, the Sunday Liturgy attended by each family. The transition may be at times less than perfect, as with the coming of guests who are talkative, inattentive, even irreverent, which often happens out of ignorance. They may no longer be going to church much and so have lost the practical knowledge of how to behave there; or else, out of enthusiasm for the special day, forget where they are and how to occupy their time now that they are in church. We do not blame them. It is our responsibility as pastors to plan these celebrations in such a way as to keep the number of children and therefore of guests to a more manageable size; so that the atmosphere of reverence is better maintained. Many other improvements will also help.*

*Just like family life itself, the life of any vibrant parish community is at times messy, but what makes it life giving is keeping our eyes and hearts focused on the Lord, Jesus, who brings us into the love of his Father and our Father. May your faith and love of the Lord continue to inspire and strengthen your children, as they grow and learn to hear the Lord's call in their lives and learn to make room for the Lord in their lives from your own example of daily prayer, frequent reading from the Sacred Scriptures, and weekly participation in Sunday Worship. God bless you and your families.*

*Your Parish Pastoral Team*