

Background notes for parents/carers

About the theme – Local Church

After Christmas children will explore the theme of Local Church, which is our story. The **parish** is where people gather together to celebrate and practise care and love for each other. The **diocese** is the community of the Christian faithful. The Local Church theme focuses on the people of God, gathered in Christ, united in the journey of faith, in care for one another, in sharing their story and in celebration.

The experience of community is an essential and enjoyable part of life for people of every age and faith. The cycle of a year and the span of a lifetime contain occasions for regular celebrations as well as unexpected surprises, when people want to celebrate with family, friends and communities.

The Church's celebrations are also community occasions. On Sundays, the parish family gathers together. It is a time to remember how much there is to celebrate; a time to say thank you; a time to know that God's love is offered and made visible here and now in Jesus and in people. Sacraments are more formal special moments: signs of 'God-with-us', who journeys with his people; signs of strength and blessing for life.

There may be some roles carried out in the parish community which you are not familiar with so these definitions may help you explain the roles to your child:

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist – a Catholic lay person who assists in the distribution of Holy Communion, either during the Mass, or afterwards, to housebound persons (ministers to the sick)

Deacon - *Permanent deacons* are men ordained to an office in the Catholic Church. They can be single or married and usually have secular jobs.

Transitional deacons are students in the last phase of training for the Catholic priesthood. After being a deacon for a year, they are ordained a priest by the bishop.

Deacons can baptise, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services outside of Mass, distribute Holy Communion, proclaim the Gospel and preach the homily.

Sacristan – The sacristy is the room in church where the priest prepares for a service, and where vestments and articles of worship are kept. The sacristan organises the books needed for the church celebration. He or she lays out the vestments and anything else needed, such as cruets, chalices, ciboria, (the vessels used in Mass) linens, oils, processional crosses, candles and torches.

Greeters – meet people at the back of church as they arrive and hand out hymn and Mass books.

Catechists – someone who delivers parish education and formation programmes, for example Baptism preparation, First Holy Communion classes