



# DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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**Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle**

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Dear Parent and Carer,

When you asked to have your child baptised, you accepted the duty of being their first faith teacher, helping them grow in their understanding of Jesus and the Church. I want to thank and congratulate you for bringing your child this far in their faith journey. Now your child is ready for the next stage, as they prepare to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. This is a major stage in their faith journey and a time of great joy. You and your child will be supported by your Catholic school and local parish. Through baptism, your child came to belong to the faith community of your parish. Through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist, they will continue to grow in their understanding of the faith, and with God the Father and Jesus, who love and nurture them. You too are loved by the Father and the Son, as you continue to accompany your child. We all journey together.

In school, your child will be prepared for Reconciliation and First Holy Communion by learning about Jesus, the Church, and the Sacraments and especially the Mass. They will understand more deeply what belonging to the family of the Catholic Church means and how to be active in their faith. Deepening their understanding of prayer, your child will be encouraged to develop a closer friendship with Jesus. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation your child will celebrate God the Father's loving mercy and forgiveness, through Jesus his Son. They will reflect on how sin in our thoughts, words and actions separates us from God's love, and how God, who always forgives, calls us back to him. Your child will also come to a deeper understanding of Jesus as the Bread of Life, who feeds and strengthens us on life's journey. You can support this growing relationship by sharing in prayer at home with your child and continue to show them how to live their faith.

The parish community will also support you and your child as you grow together in faith, especially at Sunday Mass. Coming together at Mass as a faith community, open to Jesus's presence in the Word and the Holy Eucharist, is the best way to come to know His love for you and your child. I encourage you to attend Mass with your child, especially so on a Sunday when the parish community will pray for you and your child. Please play an active role in the preparation programme provided by your parish and school. If you are unfamiliar with your local parish, I know that your child's school will help you get to know your parish; its priest, deacon, and parishioners will welcome you and give you support.

Please be assured of my prayers on this journey of preparation and celebration.

With every good wish and blessing.

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