

# Sacraments

## A thought for the parents of first communion and confirmation classes

Peter's mother tip toed up the stairs and inched open the door of his bedroom. Today was his christening day and she wanted to have just a couple of minutes on her own to stare at him. The crowd downstairs had all commented on how placid Peter was, how he hadn't cried when the water flowed on his head and they brought cards and gifts and wished the child well. She had now escaped the kitchen stories, and the songs from around the fire, and Uncle Jack who had drunk too much again.

She wondered for the few moments as she watched him breathe, wondered what might lie ahead. She prayed fervently that happiness would be his, that God who had begun the good work in him, would bring it to completion.



Those of us lucky enough to have been the subject of loving eyes, wishing for us, hoping for us, are rarely aware, of how much such concern shapes us, makes us the persons that we are. Parents who have those loving eyes are seldom conscious of the power that is theirs and how dependent their children are on them, not just for shelter and food and nurture, but most importantly for meaning.

First Communion and Confirmation are big occasions for children and their families. It can be an anxious time for many. Parents can feel awkward if their own religious practice and understanding is not all that they would want it to be. Broken relationships and bereavement brings their own particular poignancy. The child of christening day wonder and hope has shaped into a unique human being with his or her own personality. Nothing is simple, except for the

fact that any parent, in their right mind, still wants all that is good for their child.

To know what is good for your child prompts a pause to ask what is good for yourself. The occasion of sacraments is a proper moment to really ask the most basic of questions. Most days and months and years we live on auto-pilot, driven along by the need to do the everyday: earn a wage, pay the mortgage, survive. For the children of sacramental classes, this year deserves a focus on more than the everyday, a focus on the matters of enduring value. The parent, who can reveal to his child, the reasons why he is hopeful and faithful will have passed on a treasure beyond price.

There is nothing magical about First Communion and Confirmation. An isolated big day will do little to introduce the next generation to the rich tradition we belong to. If we are serious about passing on the faith, now is the time to familiarise ourselves with the children's religious programme and to participate as fully as possible in their preparation.

Let the parents of this parish feel the stare of a loving mother as they try to point out to their own children, the things that are truly important.

