



Catholic Cathedral Of The Immaculate Conception



**English Sunday School**  
**2020-2021**

24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

Dear Parents,

Greetings and welcome to the Cathedral Parish! Thank you for your enquiry about our English Sunday School (ESS). We have prepared this booklet for your convenience and reference. *Please read it carefully.* Among other things it contains a brief explanation of our teaching methodology and a note on our organization. It is also our practice to prepare children specifically for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation in a special programme at a time other than Sunday morning.

**All the information in this Handbook can be found, together with the ESS School Calendar and Application Form for downloading, on the Cathedral website, under “English Section – Sunday School” at <https://cathedral.catholic.org.hk/wp/>.** Please complete the form and, with all the relevant required enclosures, send or hand it in to the Parish Office marked, **Attention: Fr. Gregoire Vignola** before 12 noon, **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2020 for returning students**, and **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 for new applicants**. Please note that class places are limited, and priority will be given to those who submit their correctly completed Application Form on time.

The opening day, **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2020** will be devoted to general orientation. Teachers and children will assemble in their classrooms at 9.00 a.m. in Raimondi College (across the parking lot from the Cathedral’s main entrance and up the steps). Parents are welcome to attend this introductory session.

For regular scheduled lessons, all classes begin at 9.00 a.m. in Raimondi College with age-specific Faith Formation and Children’s Liturgy of the Word. The children will then join the congregation in the Cathedral for the Offertory and the remainder of the Sunday Mass. We ask parents to have their children always arrive at Sunday School on time and ready for worship.

This year we will continue to arrange special family events for the different liturgical seasons. Again, the School Calendar will allow for students to attend fully our 9:30 a.m. Mass in English on the first Sunday of the month. The programme provides opportunities for families to meet, and for the children to develop their talents and participate more actively in the Eucharist. In order to provide a high quality Sunday School and Liturgical experience for all, we will need your strong support. Please be sure to complete your Application Form *in full*, including the “Volunteering” section on contributing your child/children’s and also your own time and talents. Everyone can make a big difference even with just a modest or occasional commitment.

The Sunday School volunteer staff and I look forward to working with you, for the good of your child/children.

Yours sincerely,



Fr. Gregoire Vignola, Assistant Parish Priest,  
English Community, Cathedral Parish.

## **What is the Catholic Cathedral's English Sunday School?**

Our Sunday School is organized by a group of volunteers in the parish and supervised by the Assistant Parish Priest for the English-speaking Community, with the approval and guidance of the Parish Priest at the Catholic Cathedral.

Our aim is to assist families of the Cathedral Parish in the growing process of Christian faith and love. It is *not* a school to learn English. We believe that parents are the best teachers of their children in the ways of faith, and so, you are encouraged to support the Sunday School efforts by teaching your children the practice of the faith in your own homes.

The Sunday School is responsible for two programmes:

- *The Liturgy of the Word and Faith Formation with children; and*
- *Preparation for reception of the Sacraments.*

### **The Liturgy of the Word and Faith Formation with Children**

The immediate aim of our Liturgy of the Word and Faith Formation is to help our children understand the message of God's love and to love Him in return. This is not a time for play, but rather an opportunity for children to express their understanding of the Scripture readings through singing, artwork, and other activities. Students are divided into groups according to their ages:

- **Pre-School and Kindergarten groups:** for children aged 4 to 5 and 5 to 6.
- **Children's Liturgy and Faith Formation:** for children aged 6 and upwards.
- **Sacramental preparation:** for children who are already part of our regular Children's Liturgy and Faith Formation programme. Special preparatory classes are held on a series of Saturday afternoons for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion; and similarly for Confirmation.

**9.00 a.m.** The children gather in their classrooms for the first part of the Sunday Mass. The catechists will lead them through the *Introductory Rites of the Mass*, that is, the Greeting, an explanation of the Sunday theme, the *Penitential Rite* and the Opening Prayer. This sets the tone for the *Liturgy of the Word* that is adapted for the children. The weekly catechetical lesson is drawn from a long-established Faith Formation Program updated in 2016 to align with the Church's mission for a New Evangelization.

**9.50 a.m.** The children proceed into the Cathedral where they join the rest of the congregation for the Offertory and the second part of the Sunday Mass – the celebration of the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.

For the **Pre-School** group only, the sessions run from **9.00-9.25 a.m.** on regular Children's Liturgy Sundays. The children gather for a session of Bible stories and songs.

***This is an integrated programme. On scheduled lesson days, Sunday Mass for the children begins in their Sunday school classroom and then continues in the Church.***

## Application

You can apply by completing the English Sunday School Application Form and handing it in at the Cathedral Parish Office marked, **Attention: Fr. Gregoire Vignola**, together with the required relevant attachments. We will accept only properly completed applications. *Returning students must return their completed forms by 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2020* if they wish to continue. *New applicants must submit completed forms with all the required attachments by 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2020*. This time-frame is necessary to allow our volunteer staff time to process the applications and place orders for teaching and study materials to arrive in good time. Class places are limited and assigned to eligible applicants on a first-come first-served basis. Second semester applications are considered for overseas newcomers to Hong Kong only.

A monetary contribution of **HK\$500 per child** is much appreciated. This will defray the cost of teaching and study materials the children will use in their study, as well as library upkeep, stationary and classroom expenses, venue hire, and other operating costs.

The English Sunday School is reserved for families living within the **geographical boundaries** of the Cathedral Parish, whose children have been baptized and whose **first language is English**. Families living outside the geographical confines of the Parish need the special approval of the Assistant Parish Priest to enrol in the programme. Children who have not yet been baptised, and of whom at least one parent is Catholic, may be accepted at our Sunday School as a way to prepare themselves for the Sacrament of Baptism. But their acceptance will depend entirely on the decision of Fr. Gregoire Vignola after investigation concerning their family situation.

### For Essential Information, please contact:

**Fr. Gregoire Vignola**  
**(Father Greg)**

**Assistant Pastor**

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## Sacramental Preparation Programmes

In order to join the Cathedral's Sacramental Preparation Programmes in English, children must enrol in our Sunday School continuously for a minimum period of two years and attend classes regularly and punctually. Application forms for sacramental preparation will be distributed in the Autumn to eligible candidates only. *The form must be completed correctly and handed in at the Parish Office together with all the required attachments, marked, **Attention: Fr. Gregoire Vignola before 12 noon, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020.***

### A. First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

Children aged 7 by September 2020 who will have been attending our Sunday School for two school years with minimum 80% attendance, and whose parents know that they are spiritually ready, may apply for acceptance onto this programme.

### B. Confirmation

In order to join the sacramental preparation programme for Confirmation, children must have attended and actively participated in our Sunday School for two school years with minimum 80% attendance. The minimum age for the reception of this sacrament is 12 years.

The Assistant Pastor will interview each candidate for a final assessment.

### Programme timetable (provisional):-

	<b>First Reconciliation &amp; First Holy Communion Group</b>	<b>Confirmation Group</b>
<b>Doctrine sessions</b> (Saturday afternoons)	27 February, 2021 <b>6, 20*</b> , 27 March, 2021 17, 24 April, 2021 8, 15 May, 2021 (2-3:30 p.m.)	27 February, 2021 <b>6, 20*</b> , 27 March, 2021 17, 24 April, 2021 8, 15 May, 2021 (2-3:30 p.m.)
<b>Sacrament of Reconciliation</b>	Saturday 22 May, 2021 (9:30 a.m.)	
<b>Rehearsals</b>	Saturday 22 May, 2021 (To continue after Confession - until approx. 11:30 a.m.)	
<b>Celebration Mass</b> Sacraments of First Holy Communion & Confirmation	Saturday 29 May, 2021 (9:30 a.m.)	

**20 March, 2021\*** There will be a special **ESS Lenten Celebration** immediately following the Doctrine session on **20th March, 2021**, which ALL Sacramental Preparation Programme Students must attend and participate in.

**These are concise programmes and attendance at all classes is expected. Any late- or non-attendance can result in postponing the reception of a Sacrament. Parents must therefore carefully review their children's other Saturday commitments and adjust those accordingly before enrolling.** An additional monetary contribution of HK\$250 PER CHILD is much appreciated. This will defray the cost of specific teaching and study materials, and other operating costs. Children preparing for the Sacraments continue to attend Sunday School as usual.

## **Some Important Guidelines**

**Family Prayer:** We rely on parents to teach their children at home the formal prayers that every Catholic should know: the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory be to the Father, the Apostles Creed, the Rosary, etc. This should be done even before they reach primary school.

**Punctuality:** Parents must see to it that the children are punctual. Since class time is important, please do not interrupt the teacher and the class by arriving late. If for any reason children come late, it is better that their parents accompany them directly to the 9.30 a.m. Mass.

**The Library Programme:** This is coordinated by volunteer Sunday School parents. We need the help and cooperation of both adult and youth volunteers to make it run smoothly. Parents and catechists are also asked to take an active part in monitoring this service to ensure that the children follow proper procedures regarding the treatment and return of books borrowed.

**Reserved Seating:** The area behind the main altar is reserved for children and the Sunday School volunteers, but we recognize that some children are more comfortable sitting with their parents. Parents of these children should pre-arrange to meet them in the pews, and notify the Sunday School catechists or volunteers that they expect their children to join them. Parents who prefer to have their children remain with their Sunday School group in the designated children's area should collect them immediately after Mass.

### **Weather Warnings and Sunday School:**

Children's services are cancelled if: the T3 and a higher signal warning, or a red or black storm warning is announced by the Hong Kong Observatory and is still in force at 7.30 a.m. on Sunday morning.

When the Amber signal warning is up or there is heavy rain, our Sunday School will proceed as scheduled. However, we encourage parents to use their own judgment about bringing their children to Raimondi College.

### **Safety:**

**Parents should accompany their children to the classrooms for safety reasons.**

## Behaviour in Church

It is everybody's responsibility to see that the atmosphere in church is conducive to prayer, meditation and worship. Parents are the ones **primarily** responsible for teaching their children how to behave properly in church. Their religious instructors and other members of the community will also be examples for them and continue to help them by their words and actions. We are **ALL** responsible for forming our young in the ways of Christian behaviour and practice.

### **Some Practical Hints:**

Parents should make sure that their children become familiar with the activities in church: how to bless themselves with holy water from the font when they enter the church; how to speak in quiet tones; how to approach the altar and other sacred places with reverence; how to receive Holy Communion devoutly in the hand; how to fold their hands if they wish to receive a blessing.

When children are going through a difficult time and tend to act out, they may sit with their parents who will understand them better and help them through their difficulties.

While **eating in church is not allowed under any circumstances**, the younger children may find it easier if they have crayons with which to draw pictures, or books, or other more appropriate ways to keep them involved during Mass.

Catechists and volunteers can help children by instructing them carefully, by expecting them to behave appropriately, by helping them respond to the Mass prayers together with the congregation, and by encouraging them to join in the singing.

It is good to praise children when they are well-behaved, and reprimand them with courtesy when they do not behave appropriately. We should never scold them or treat them with disrespect.

***After all, behaviour in church is founded on respect for God, for others and for ourselves, a lesson we must all help to instil in our children, especially by our own example.***