



SACRAMENTAL RETREAT DAY

The children from the Bungaree Parish participated in a Retreat Day recently, to build on their preparation and help them deepen their understanding to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. This year there were five children from St Brendan's School Dunnstown and two children from St Mary's School Clarkes Hill. In most years, some of the children from the parish participating in this day also come from non-parish schools.

Sue Prendergast, Religious Education Leader at the Bungaree Parish Schools and Fr Shane Mackinlay led the day. It was a lovely day, beginning with prayer, where the children went outside and found something in nature that appealed to them. As each child placed their seed, flower, bud, weed or leaves on the prayer cloth, each expressed how they liked the pretty colour, the complex patterns or the fact that something so small could grow into a huge tree. This was a perfect opportunity to learn more about Wonder and Awe, the gift that helps us stop and appreciate the many beautiful things around us, recognizing God at work.



In the sharing of the children's workbooks that they have been working on with their families over the past six weeks and in the reading of two stories: 'Desmond and the Very Mean Word' and 'Seeds of Change', the children explored the many gifts that we have. Gifts such as courage, respect, being inclusive, kindness, generosity, wisdom, right judgement, reverence, gentleness and more. They were asked to think of a gift that they felt they had, then consider a gift that they would like to strengthen. The children were asked to think of their sponsors and identify a gift that they see in their sponsor. All of these were linked to the Holy Spirit who the children would be sealed with when they received the Sacrament of Confirmation. They were encouraged to pray that the Holy Spirit would help strengthen the gifts they have and help them to use their gifts in the best way possible.

After reading the Parable of the Sower, the children were asked to consider:

What is God's message to us?

What are we called upon to do as people who believe in God?

How would someone else know that we were people who were members of God's family?

As part of preparing for the Sacrament of First Communion, the children all brought an ingredient that was placed on the table and shared in a Subway style lunch. Together we all gathered at the table, listened to one another, ate together and then went out to play, to be the best person we could be. Just like the Eucharist!

Our day concluded with a practice in the church where Fr Shane showed the children the Easter candle, which would be used to light their own baptism candles. The children practised receiving the bread and wine and learnt the importance of being reverent when they receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

The Retreat Day is a great opportunity for the children to deepen their understanding of the sacraments but also for them to ask questions, see parts of the church up close and then ask more questions. Fr Shane was very busy providing answers for their curious minds!

It was lovely day, which helped to make the receiving of the Sacraments a richer experience for all.

Sue Prendergast, Religious Education Leader

