

First Communion

*The school children were queuing up for lunch one day. At the beginning of the serving counter was a large pile of free apples with the sign in large print: TAKE ONLY **ONE** APPLE PLEASE - God is watching you! At the other end of the counter was a pile of chocolate biscuits with a sign cleverly posted by one of the children: TAKE ALL THE BISCUITS YOU WANT. God is down at the other end watching the apples!*

Well, we all know Jesus, who is God, is present everywhere but we believe, after the consecration of the Mass, He is present with us in a very special way under the appearance of Bread and Wine. In the bible Jesus says: 'make your home in me as I make mine in you'. That is precisely what happens when we receive Him in Holy Communion.

Jesus said to the apostles in today's gospel: "love one another". Our friendship with Jesus implies we are also trying to be better friends with one another. And when we have little fall-outs we make up and shake hands. We pray for this every time we say the 'Our Father' which is always said in the Mass prior to receiving Holy Communion. (*'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'*). Let's try and always mean these words and that applies to all of us, not just to the First communion children?

Someone who does community work said to me recently that these days the Church is becoming one of the better places where people can experience a genuine sense of belonging to a wider family outside our immediate family. We call it the family of God. That's what we are and we have a good example of it today.

Because of our baptism we are all meant to be brothers and sisters of each other. That is why we shake hands with each other at Mass before we receive Jesus in Holy Communion and offer each other our friendship. The two are connected. As

Catholics, we're not meant to be an exclusive club minding our own business. Everyone, including those who are not Christian should be the object of our love and respect. We don't just love or own. Christ came on earth to establish a universal brotherhood and sisterhood of all peoples on earth. When that happens it will be the end of war and division. Heaven awaits those who see everyone as their brother and sister in the Lord in this world.

Jesus said: "let the little children come to me and do not stop them." For the grown-ups I say: May there be nothing in our lives which would hinder these children from coming close to our Lord at Mass. As they continue to receive Jesus in Holy Communion, may they grow up to live and love like Him.