

FAMILY  
CATECHESIS  
FOR THE  
SEVEN  
SACRAMENTS



Strengthening Faith Formation  
in Family Life

Diocese of Ogdensburg



July 26, 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

Passing on the precious gift of our faith to future generations was an essential component in the discussions of the Envisioning Leadership Team and the several Listening Sessions that were conducted throughout the diocese during our Diocesan Envisioning Process.

Our Catholic faith is the “pearl of great price” that all of us are called to know, live and share with others. Faith is about a relationship, an encounter with Christ. More than doctrine to be learned and assimilated, Christ comes to meet us, reaches out to us in friendship and invites us to accept Him as a companion on the journey of life and faith.

The sacraments are sacred moments when Christ encounters us. “The Church, like every family, passes on to her children the whole story of her memories. . . . The sacraments communicate an incarnate memory, linked to the times and places of our lives, linked to all our senses; in them the whole person is engaged as a member of a living subject and part of a network of communitarian relationships” (*Lumen Fidei*, 40).

Where better to learn and experience faith than in the family? In the family, parents by their word and example, are called to fulfill their responsibility to be the first preachers of the faith to their children (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11). We all know how challenging this can be. We also know that faith needs to be seen and heard in the home, if it is going to take root in the lives of our children and young people. Faith – known, lived and shared within the family is essential in the transmission of our faith.

Recognizing both the indispensable role of the family in passing on our faith and the sacraments as graced occasions to encounter Christ, one of our diocesan priorities calls for the development of family catechesis for the seven sacraments.

I am very pleased with the outcome of this endeavor. The beginning pages of the document describe family catechesis and the parental and parish roles in sacramental catechesis. The section on models and strategies for family catechesis gives some practical guidance and suggestions on how to conduct family catechesis. Carefully crafted sections on each of the sacraments address not only the essentials of each sacrament but also the preparation, reception and on-going catechesis required for each of them. Of special note are the numerous resources provided for each of the seven sacraments.

The role of the pastor is critical in the implementation of family catechesis. He, however, cannot accomplish the implementation alone. He needs the assistance of competent catechetical leaders and catechists. Working together, pastors, catechetical leaders and catechists can use the *Family Catechesis for the Sacraments* to engage the family in the preparation and on-going faith development of our children and young people.

Today is the memorial of Saints Anne and Joachim, parents of our Blessed Mother. From Anne and Joachim, Mary learned about and experienced her Jewish faith and traditions. In due time, Mary and Joseph passed on their faith to Jesus. We would do well to invoke the blessings of Anne and Joachim and Mary and Joseph in our efforts to lead families to encounter Christ as He comes to meet them in the sacraments.

Be assured of my gratitude for all you do to hand on our faith to those entrusted to your care. I pray that your work to plant and nurture the seed of faith will meet with abundant fruit.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg

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# **FAMILY CATECHESIS FOR THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS**

Sr. Ellen Rose Coughlin, SSJ (Point Person)

## **Strengthening Faith Formation in Family Life**

### **Family Catechesis Committee Position Statement**

Inspired and energized by the Gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Church of Ogdensburg invites families to discover, celebrate, and deepen their relationship with Christ through the sacramental life of the People of God.



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## WHAT IS FAMILY CATECHESIS?

The word catechesis comes from the Greek meaning "to echo the teaching." Catechesis is a process in which the Word of God re-sounds between and among the proclaimer, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit! Catechesis is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and continual conversion. Through word, worship, service and community, catechesis seeks to lead God's people to a deeper relationship with God who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catechesis includes the Christian initiation of adults, teenagers and children as well as the intentional and systematic effort to enable all to grow in faith and discipleship.<sup>1</sup>



Family Catechesis provides an opportunity for all members of the family, including the extended family, to engage in the process of passing on the teachings of Christ. It includes the development of a personal relationship with Him, enabling the family to become "living stones" that build up the People of God.

Family Catechesis provides parents with the support they need to live their faith. It includes catechizing the parents as well as the children. Family catechesis nurtures parents' faith, bringing family members together to talk, listen and to discover God. The family provides a natural place for catechesis.

- All family members can make a unique contribution to creating the necessary environment in which a sense of God's loving presence is awakened, and faith in Jesus Christ is confessed, encouraged, and lived.
- "In a certain sense, nothing replaces family catechesis, especially for its positive and receptive environment, for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith."<sup>2</sup>

The family, by definition, has an essential role in the preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. Families are to raise children "committed to Jesus and the Church, participate as Catholic families in society, share together in the life and mission of their parish and the wider Church."<sup>3</sup>

### I. THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

- A. Is the primary environment for growth in faith
- B. Passes on human values in the Christian Tradition
- C. Is where faith in Jesus Christ is professed, encouraged, and lived
- D. Teaches the first steps of prayer
- E. Forms a moral conscience
- F. Teaches human love as a reflection of Divine love<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.catechesis-chicago.org/>

<sup>2</sup> *General Directory For Catechesis (GDC) no 178; National Directory for Catechesis (NDC) 48 E 1*

<sup>3</sup> *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us 77, and GDC 226-227, 255*

<sup>4</sup> *GDC I Plain English #25*

## II. PARENTS' ROLE IN SACRAMENTAL CATECHESIS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

"Catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events, care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events." <sup>5</sup>

"Parents are catechists precisely because they are parents. Their role in the formation of Christian values in their children is irreplaceable." <sup>6</sup>

Parents are entrusted by Christ and His Church with the task of teaching their children how to live the Christian life. They are called to do this by word and example through:

- A. Participating in weekly Sunday Mass with their children
- B. Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- C. Growing in the knowledge of God's Word and of the teachings of the Church
- D. Serving others especially the poor
- E. Leading a moral life
- F. Fostering an active prayer life

Parents receive in the Sacrament of Matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Catholic education of their children to whom they transmit and bear witness to human and religious values.



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<sup>5</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae* 68,

<sup>6</sup> *NDC*, No 48 E 1

### III. THE PARISH COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN FAMILY SACRAMENTAL CATECHESIS



A parish community is constantly witnessing to the seven sacraments by its values, attitudes, words, and actions. Whether conscious about this or not, the parish community by its pattern of celebration and participation is influencing the members of the community about the importance of fostering a life of faith and about the value of the sacraments as the essential foundation of a strong, resilient parish life.

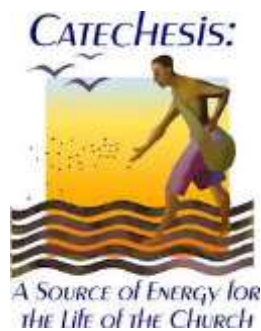
#### USCCB: A Family Perspective in Church and Society

- A. A family perspective builds on a Christian vision of family life as the Church of the Home, which develops a partnership with the family.
- B. The parish recognizes the family not as a collection of individuals but as members permanently interconnected over the course of a lifetime.
- C. The parish respects and celebrates the diversity of structure, needs, economic status, and cultural heritage of all families.
- D. The parish develops practical attitudes and methods for partnership between families and the wider community that shares family responsibilities.

“As Church leaders we must also speak words of commitment to families. An important responsibility for the Church is to support families in their mission as a “church of the home.” This is where our theological vision of Christian family life gives way to far-reaching, even radical, pastoral implications. Thus, our pledge to families should be one of partnership.”

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

Pastors have a serious obligation to assist parents and educators in their mission to hand on the faith to future generations. “This is an excellent occasion for adult catechesis.”<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> GD, No 179 and NDC, No 48 E 2





# Family Sacramental Catechesis



## Models/Strategies for Family Catechesis

### I. MODEL FOR FAMILY CATECHESIS

- A. Through the ministry of family catechesis and faith formation, the Church strives to facilitate the development of ongoing faith formation which happens formally and informally within the family structure. This can be accomplished by drawing on the gifts and faith experiences of all family members.
- B. The Catholic parishes of the Diocese of Ogdensburg journey together to explore and celebrate their Catholic faith in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church and to live a life of hope, peace, charity and justice.

### II. INVOLVEMENT IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

Involvement in the celebration of the sacraments is a further initiation into the worship and life of the Church.

- A. "The celebration of sacraments is the action of the community under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in which the Lord becomes present in a deeper and more substantial way. The preparation should lead the individual to a **greater involvement** in the community, and the community should be visibly involved in the individual's preparation."<sup>8</sup>
- B. Sacramental Preparation Programs are parish programs that receive assistance from the parish faith formation and Catholic school programs.
- C. Parents are expected to attend family-centered catechetical sessions as part of the preparation for the celebration of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.

### III. READINESS

A child's readiness is not determined by a particular age or grade level. Readiness is the **fundamental criterion** for determining when an individual should participate in the celebration of a sacrament. Those who implement the various phases of sacramental catechesis should strive to integrate the fundamental criterion listed below in their planning and implementation of sacramental preparation programs and celebrations.

- A. Adaptation of catechesis requires that one consider age, spiritual maturity, and the totality of the person, not just the exterior elements of a given situation.<sup>9</sup>
- B. "The child demands full respect and help in his/her spiritual and human growth."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> RCIA 11 and CT 24

<sup>9</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 24, GDC 170

<sup>10</sup> GDC 177

- C. Not all children at a particular grade level in the Catholic school or in the parish faith formation program will be at the same stage of readiness. The faith, attitude, and religious experience of the family are essential aspects of determining readiness.<sup>11</sup>
- D. The observations of parents, pastor, sponsors, and the sacramental preparation team members play a significant role in discerning readiness. The ultimate decision for the celebration of a sacrament is made by the Pastor,

#### IV. METHODS FOR ADULT (PARENT) LEARNING

This segment deals with adult learning principles that will assist catechists who develop and lead programs with parents and families.

- A. “Adults are generally eager for resources, guidance, and support that will help them form a community of faith within their families, grow more deeply in love with their spouses, raise children committed to Jesus and the Church, participate as Catholic families in society and share together in the life and mission of their parish and the wider Church.”<sup>12</sup>
- B. “Parish communities that help adults to be more intentional about their own faith development are contributing in a substantial way to the conversion process of the young. When parents have the opportunity to come together for faith sharing and other experiences that further their own continuing conversion, they become more eloquent advocates of the Christian way. Within the confines of the domestic church, they exercise the ministry of evangelization as they live lives that are more explicitly Christian, thus promoting the ‘primary conversion’ of their children.”<sup>13</sup>
- C. While the sacramental programs provided by parishes focus on helping children to live the sacramental life, it is essential to realize that the people who come to the parent sessions are adults. For this reason, the principles shown to be effective in enhancing learning by adults need to be carefully integrated into the design and implementation of the parent sessions.



#### V. LEARNING AS ADULTS

Learning is enhanced when adults are treated with respect as self-directing persons. Adults are constantly making decisions that significantly influence their lives. They act with much independence and usually resent being “told as if they were children.” It is crucial to be mindful of this principle when relating with adults through verbal and written communication.

- A. Adults respond more positively when ideas are “suggested for their reflection and action” or when someone is “invited to consider” an idea. Rather than saying “Parents must attend these sessions if they want their children to receive the sacrament of ...,” a more cooperative response is usually given when the letter or announcement says: “It is of vital importance that parents participate in the preparation of their children for the sacraments. The parish provides learning sessions to assist parents in their essential role.”

<sup>11</sup> CT 68

<sup>12</sup> OHWB 77, after *Familiaris Consortio*, Part 3; *A Family Perspective in Church and Society*, Chapter 4; GDC 226-227,255

<sup>13</sup> *The Christian Initiation of Children, Hope for the Future*; Duggan and Kelly, pp. 106-107.

- B. Some adults may indeed be less responsive. If they do not participate in the preparation, then they can be dealt with as the exceptions. They may need to be asked to delay the celebration of the sacrament until a later time when sufficient preparation has been fulfilled.

## VI. ENHANCED LEARNING

Learning is enhanced when adults see the learning situation as related to their past experiences.

- A. Parents have memories of their preparation and participation in sacraments, and these memories can evoke positive and/or negative feelings. Parents can be invited to recall these memories and be asked what kind of memories they would like their children to have.
- B. The **role of the family** has a very significant influence on the faith development of children. If parents are expected to be involved in their children's activities such as sports, scouting, school, social, and other activities, it is all the more important that they participate actively in preparing their children for the sacraments.

## VII. SUGGESTED MODELS OF FAMILY CATECHESIS

The following models may be used to implement Family Catechesis within a parish setting. These four models can be used individually or a combination that will meet the specific needs of families within your parish community.



# FAMILY CATECHESIS

## MODEL I – SEASONAL

**I. FOCUS:** Topics during Liturgical Seasons of the Church Year

**II. SESSION OUTCOME:** To enhance families' understanding of specific sacraments during the Liturgical Seasons of Advent, Lent and Easter

**III. FREQUENCY:** Three times a year (Approximately 90 minutes each)

**IV. LOCATION:** Parish Site

### V. CURRICULUM

- A. Advent – Sacrament of Matrimony
  - 1. Mary's response to God's call
  - 2. Joseph's acceptance of Mary
  - 3. Union of Mary and Joseph
  - 4. Holy Family as model for a family's call to holiness
  
- B. Lent - Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick
  - 1. God's unconditional love
  - 2. Acknowledging human weakness
  - 3. Confessing sin and accepting God's grace
  - 4. Remembering Jesus the healer
  - 5. Sharing God's love and peace with others
  
- C. Easter – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders
  - 1. Baptismal call - priest, prophet and king
  - 2. Eucharist - Paschal Mystery
  - 3. Confirmation - Gifts of the Spirit
  - 4. Confirmation and Holy Orders - Call to Service

### VI. PERSONNEL

The following are the responsibilities of the Parish DRE, Catechetical Leader or Trained Volunteer:

- A. Plan sessions
- B. Set-up / ambience
- C. Create and oversee activities

### VII. STRUCTURE

- A. Gathering and welcome                      5 minutes
- B. Opening prayer                                10 minutes
- C. Ice breaker activity                         10 minutes
- D. Presentation for whole family            35 minutes
- E. Activity                                         20 minutes
- F. Closing Ritual                                 10 minute

# FAMILY CATECHESIS

## MODEL II – TOPICAL

**I. FOCUS:** Topics relating to sacramental life

### II. SESSION OUTCOME

- A. To bring families together to reflect and discuss faith-based topics related to sacramental life
- B. To promote and support the “domestic church” and the family as a “locus of catechesis”  
(*General Directory of Catechesis*, 255)

### III. FREQUENCY

- A. Once a month
- B. Eight sessions (90 minutes each)
- C. September to April

**IV. LOCATION:** Parish Site

### V. \*CURRICULUM

- A. Manifestations of God’s Great Love for Us
- B. Peace and Reconciliation
- C. Courage in Hard Times
- D. Living Our Faith
- E. Compassion and Service
- F. Trust in Providence
- G. Celebration and Thanksgiving
- H. Creating Community

### VI. PERSONNEL

The following are the responsibilities of the Pastor, Parish DRE or Catechetical Leader and Parent Volunteer:

- A. Plan sessions
- B. Set-up / ambience
- C. Create and oversee activities

### VII. STRUCTURE

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| A. Gathering and welcome  | 5 minutes  |
| B. Ice breaker activity related to topic                          | 15 minutes |
| C. Divide families into small groups (Limit 5 families per group) | 5 minutes  |
| D. Facilitator begins group with silent prayer                    | 5 minutes  |
| E. Opening prayer   | 5 minutes  |
| F. Scripture reading  | 10 minutes |
| G. Reflection questions or activity/faith sharing                 | 35 minutes |
| H. Closing prayer and ritual                                      | 10 minutes |

### VIII. SUGGESTED RESOURCES

\*150 *Opening and Closing Prayers*. Carl Koch. St. Mary’s Press, 1990.

*Family Faith and Fun: Activities, Games, and Prayers for Sharing Faith at Home*. Gary J. Boelhower. Hi-Time Publishing. 1996

# FAMILY CATECHESIS

## MODEL III – SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IN THE HOME

**I. FOCUS:** Preparation for celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation

### II. SESSION OUTCOME

- A. To provide sacramental instruction and faith experiences for candidates and their families
- B. To build relationships with one another thus strengthening the parish community
- C. To give parents an opportunity to be actively involved in the faith development of their family

**III. FREQUENCY:** Four sessions before the celebration of the sacrament

**IV. LOCATION:** Family homes (Families will meet the Diocesan Safe Environment requirements of *Virtus* Training as well as background checks prior to a hosting a catechetical session in their homes.)

### V. DESCRIPTION

- A. Parish divides families into groups (4-5 families per home)
- B. Each family will host one session in its home facilitated by a member of the parish staff.
- C. Three sessions will include:
  - 1. What is the meaning of the sacrament?
  - 2. What the candidate needs to know and do to insure readiness for the celebration of the sacrament.
  - 3. Important symbols and rituals used in celebrating the sacrament.
- D. Family retreat focusing on how the celebration of the sacrament can change the way the family lives and practices its faith. (All families gather in a parish setting).

### VI. PERSONNEL

The following are the responsibilities of the Pastor, Parish DRE or Catechetical Leader and Parent Host Facilitators:

- A. Plan sessions – Who, What, Where
- B. Set Family Host schedule – Where / Time
- C. Prepare prayer, presentation and home activity

### VII. STRUCTURE

- |                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| A. Gathering and Welcome             | 5 minutes  |
| B. Family Introduction               | 10 minutes |
| C. Opening Prayer                    | 10 minutes |
| D. Instruction                       | 35 minutes |
| E. Reflection Questions / Discussion | 15 minutes |
| F. Faith Sharing                     | 10 minutes |
| G. Closing Prayer                    | 5 minutes  |

# FAMILY CATECHESIS

## MODEL IV - FAMILY RETREAT GATHERINGS

**I. FOCUS:** These family gatherings can be centered on sacramental preparation for Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

### II. SESSION OUTCOME

- A. To provide sacramental instruction and faith experiences for children and their families
- B. To give parents and children the opportunity to be actively involved in the faith development of their family
- C. To provide information and activities that parents and children can work on in the home
- D. To provide families with opportunities to pray together and to attend Mass together

### III. FREQUENCY

- A. One retreat experience for sacramental preparation for Reconciliation and Eucharist
- B. Two retreat experiences for Confirmation, one with parents and candidates and one with candidates and sponsors (Another option could be one family retreat with candidate, parents and sponsor.)

**IV. LOCATION:** Parish Site - Saturday Evening or Sunday Morning

### V. DESCRIPTION

- A. Families gather for a simple meal and are seated by family.
- B. After the meal, there is sacramental instruction for candidates and parents.
- C. Topics could include: definition, symbols, rituals and connecting family life with the sacrament
- D. Mystagogy - importance of what happens after the celebration of the sacrament (How do we continue to live and practice our faith as a family?)
- E. Faith sharing as a family after instruction and workshop
- F. Attend Liturgy together

### VI. PERSONNEL

The following are the responsibilities of the Pastor, Parish DRE or Catechetical Leader and Parent Host Facilitators:

- A. Plan sessions – Who, What, Where
- B. Set family host schedule – Where / Time
- C. Prepare prayer, presentation and home activity

### VII. STRUCTURE

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| A. Gathering and welcome                | 5 minutes  |
| B. Family introductions                 | 15 minutes |
| C. Opening prayer/ meal                 | 40 minutes |
| D. Instruction                          | 45 minutes |
| E. Reflection/faith sharing/ discussion | 15 minutes |
| F. Liturgy                              | 60 minutes |

## Models for Family Catechesis

Model	Seasonal Gatherings	Topical Family Gatherings	Home-Based Gatherings	Family Retreat Gatherings
<b>Focus</b>	Theme - Based on a faith topic	Topic related to sacramental life.	Preparation for Celebration of Sacraments	Preparation for Celebration of Sacraments
<b>Frequency</b>	Three times a year: Advent, Lent, Easter	Once a month (eight sessions)	Four sessions before celebration of Sacrament	Two-Three Sessions 2-3 hours.
<b>Description</b>	Families gather for learning about liturgical seasons or feasts. This may effectively be used to enhance weekly formation.	To bring families together to reflect and discuss faith-based topics related to sacramental life. To promote and support the "domestic church" and the family as a "locus of catechesis" (GDC, 255).	To provide sacramental instruction and faith experiences for candidates and their families. To build relationship with one another strengthening the parish community. To give parents an opportunity to be actively involved in the faith development of their family.	Families gather together for simple meal. Sacramental instruction for candidates and their families together. After catechetical session families attend Mass together. Brings the family together for spiritual nourishment, and catechetical lessons and materials they can discuss at home.
<b>Personnel</b>	Parish Catechetical Leader and trained volunteers: Plan sessions, set-up, create and oversee activities. Catechist Certification Suggested	Pastor, Catechetical Leader, Parent Volunteers. Plan Sessions, set-up oversee activities. Catechist Certification Suggested	Pastor, Catechetical Leader, Parent Host Facilitators Catechist Certification Suggested	Pastor, Parish Catechetical Leader Sacramental Catechists to plan sessions. Parish Volunteers to prepare meal. Catechist Certification suggested.

## Sample Structure of Family Catechesis Sessions Times are only suggestions

Model One	Time	Model Two	Time	Model Three	Time	Model Four	Time
<b>Gathering &amp; Welcome</b>	5 Min.	Gathering & Welcome	5 Min.	Gathering & Welcome	5 Min.	Gathering & Welcome	5 Min.
<b>Opening Prayer</b>	5 Min.	Ice Breakers	5 Min.	Family Introductions	15 Min.	Opening Prayer	15 Min.
<b>Ice Breaker Activity</b>	15 Min.	Divide Families into small groups. (5 families per group)	5 Min.	Opening Prayer	10 Min.	Opening Prayer & Meal (Breakfast or dinner)	40 Min.
<b>Catechetical Session entire family</b>	30 Min.	Facilitator begins group session with silent prayer	5 Min.	Instruction for activity	30 Min.	Catechetical Session	45 Min.
<b>Activity</b>	20 Min.	Opening Prayer	5 Min.	Reflection, Questions, Discussions	15 Min.	Reflection, Questions, Discussions	15 Min.
<b>Closing Ritual</b>	10 Min.	Scripture Reading	10 Min.	Faith Sharing	10 Min.	Liturgy	60 Min.
		Reflection, Question, Discussion on group activity	30 Min.	Closing Prayer	5 Min.		



## RESOURCES

[nyfaithformation.org/family-catechesis](http://nyfaithformation.org/family-catechesis): Catechetical Office Archdiocese of New York

[pastoral.center/](http://pastoral.center/)  
[www.ltp.org](http://www.ltp.org): Liturgy Training Publications

[www.familyformation.net](http://www.familyformation.net): Family Formation, Enabling Catholic parents to be the primary educators of their children

[www.nyfaithformation.org](http://www.nyfaithformation.org): *A Guide to Organizing Family Catechesis*. John Roberto. Lifelong Faith Associates.

[www.lifelongfaith.com/journal.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/journal.html)

[www.strongcatholicfamilies.org](http://www.strongcatholicfamilies.org)

[w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html)  
*Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* of Pope John Paul II

[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20140626\\_instrumentum-laboris-familia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html)  
*The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in Context of Evangelization. Instrumentum Laboris* 2014

[www.loyolapress.com/catholic-family.htm](http://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-family.htm)





# Sacraments of Initiation





# Sacrament of Baptism



“Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.”

Romans 6: 3-4

“Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1277

“Baptism is a call to holiness. The baptized must participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the people of God.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1270

**“Persons are meant to enjoy a full and vibrant sacramental life, and catechesis should assist them in attaining this goal.**

**Preparation for the celebration of a sacrament is seen, then, as an important priority for the person and his or her family and the parish community. This preparation occurs in several distinct phases, which are appropriately termed: remote catechesis, immediate catechesis, celebration, and mystagogical (ongoing) catechesis.”**

*Signs of God's Love 2004*  
Phases of Sacramental Catechesis & Celebration  
Archdiocese of Baltimore.





# Sacraments of Initiation

## Sacrament of Baptism

### Infant Baptism

#### Introduction

#### Pastoral Ministry: Blessing and Challenge

Recently, a local pastor was looking into a folder that contained all the data that would eventually be written in the *Baptismal Register* of the parish. There was data representing a four-year period, from May 2010 to August 2014. During this period, he had celebrated twenty-seven baptisms and had responded to the parents' requests to initiate their newborns into the life of Christ, into the life of the Christian community. He had met with the parents, many whom he knew and some whom he did not know. Some were long-standing members of the parish; some were new to the community. Some were practicing Catholics; some were not. The initial meetings went well. Materials were given to the parents to help them prepare; questions were asked; data was recorded and details of the ceremony were worked out. In short, these meetings were an opportunity for all involved to become better acquainted, to share faith and to discuss some important issues. There was a real opportunity to evangelize. Baptisms were announced ahead of time so the parish community would be able to anticipate the celebrations and pray for the families. Baptisms took place during weekend Masses. Thus, the baptismal families and the parish family were able to share the faith and joy of such an important occasion. To do otherwise would have isolated the family from the Church family and would have deprived the Church community of its role in welcoming its newest member.

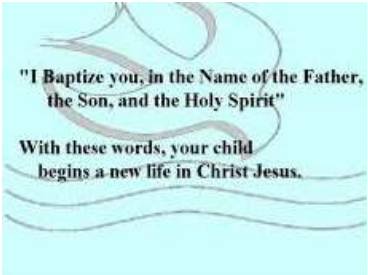
The pastor decided to look more closely at the data he had obtained in his initial meeting with the parents. This is what he discovered concerning these twenty-seven families.

- Sixteen parents had married in the Church and eleven parents had not married in the Church. Of these eleven, three were married in the Methodist tradition, four were married in a civil ceremony, and four were not married.
- Of the twenty-seven parents petitioning baptism, fifteen were welcoming their first child. Of these fifteen, eleven were married in the Church, and four were not married.
- With the exception of four sets of parents, all petitioned baptism when their infants were weeks or months old. The four exceptions: two, one-year-olds; one, two-year-old; and one, three-year-old.

The pastor asked himself the following questions: 1) What if I had denied baptism because parents were either not married, were not married in the church, or were not practicing Catholics? 2) What would be the ramifications of saying "no" to parents when they petition the baptism of their children because somehow they do not "qualify" or to suggest "postponement" until certain standards or conditions are met? 3) What effect does taking the "Good Shepherd" approach in these situations have on the Church? 4) Do we "protect" or "defend" the integrity of baptism by denying it?

To conclude, follow-up is crucial. Accepting people where they are on their faith journey, listening to them, respecting them, and leading them to something more solidifies their presence in the local Christian community. Otherwise, we risk losing them. They will go somewhere else and most likely will not come back. It is difficult to follow up with people if they are not there in the first place. If parents discover a receptive parish community, they will not be hesitant to approach that community and to request something as important as baptism.

## THE CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM



"I Baptize you, in the Name of the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit"

With these words, your child  
begins a new life in Christ Jesus.

The Sacrament of Baptism is the gateway to all the sacraments and is necessary for salvation either by actual reception or at least by desire. It is validly conferred only by washing with true water together with the proper form of words. Through baptism men and women are freed from sin, reborn as children of God, configured to Christ by an indelible character, and are incorporated into the Church.

The Church views the role of parents in the faith formation of their children as both a privilege and an obligation. When parents present their children to the Church for baptism, they are distinctly reminded that they have the responsibility of "raising them in the practice of the faith."<sup>14</sup> This obligation and privilege extends to all sacramental preparation. The *Rite of Baptism* states that parents have a duty continually to nourish the gift of faith in their children. Somehow this has to reach the hearts of the parents. Parents have to fall in love with Jesus. There is a need to talk more with parents before baptism and to follow up after baptism.

"Before the celebration of the sacrament, it is important that parents, moved by their own faith or with the help of friends or other members of the community, be prepared to take part in the rite with understanding. They should be provided with suitable means such as books, instructions, and catechisms written for families. The pastor should make it his duty to visit them, or see that they are visited, as a family or as a group of families and prepare them for the coming celebration by pastoral counsel and common prayer."<sup>15</sup>

Infant baptism celebrates the saving faith already transforming the lives of the parents and of the community – a faith that will be shared by word and example with the newly baptized infants as they grow into responsible young adulthood. This ancient practice of infant baptism continues in the Church today, but parents and community must clearly understand the meaning of Christian baptism, and parents must freely choose this sacrament for their child.

As the primary educators of their child, parents have the first and most significant influence on the faith development of their child. Parishes must provide catechesis for the parents<sup>16</sup> regarding baptism before their child is baptized. This catechesis must include the Church's rich teachings on the sacrament and the obligations attached to it. This catechesis should be designed to deepen the parents'/guardians' personal faith so that they can accept the responsibility to see that the fruits of the sacrament come to realization as their child matures.

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<sup>14</sup> *Rite of Baptism of Children*

<sup>15</sup> *Baptism of Children*, # 5.1

<sup>16</sup> The exception for parents would include guardian or single parent.



## POLICIES FOR THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

### I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES: PREREQUISITES FOR CANDIDACY



- A. A child, his/her parents from birth through six years of age, and Godparents are to be prepared for infant baptism.
- B. The prescripts of the canons on adult baptism are to be applied to all those who are no longer infants and who have attained the use of reason.<sup>17</sup> These individuals who intend to receive baptism are to be admitted to the catechumenate and be led through the several stages to sacramental initiation in accord with the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms published by it.<sup>18</sup>
- C. “Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults, their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil together with the older catechumens.”<sup>19</sup>
- D. Parents are obliged to seek baptism for their child within the first few weeks after birth.<sup>20</sup>
- E. At least one parent should be a practicing, active member of their parish faith community.<sup>21</sup>
- F. Membership in a parish is determined by domicile or unless the family has chosen to register and participate in another parish.

### II. CATECHETICAL PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

- A. The pastor<sup>22</sup> or other designated individual must meet with the parents after they have contacted the parish for the baptism of their infant child. Particular care should be taken to be welcoming at this meeting. The pastor and the parents should discuss the following:
  - 1. Reasons for requesting the Sacrament of Baptism
  - 2. Their faith and relationship with the Catholic Church
  - 3. Their understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism
  - 4. Their roles and responsibility in raising their child in the faith of the Church
  - 5. The role, choice and requirements for Godparents
  - 6. The parish policy and faith formation classes regarding baptismal catechesis
- B. When parents do not speak English, provisions should be made whenever possible for the initial meeting, the catechesis and the celebration of the rite to be in their language.

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<sup>17</sup>Canon #852 § 1

<sup>18</sup> Canon #851 § 1

<sup>19</sup> *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* #18

<sup>20</sup> Canon #867 § 1

<sup>21</sup> Canon #102

<sup>22</sup> Pastor from here on includes deacons, pastoral associate or delegate.

C. The pastor of the place where the baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the baptismal book the names of those baptized making mention of the minister, parents, Godparents, witnesses, if any, and the place and date of the conferred baptism, together with an indication of the date and place of birth.<sup>23</sup>

D. Parental responsibilities

1. Give the infant a Christian name
2. Participate in the weekly Sunday Mass
3. Choose one Godparent of either sex, or there may be two Godparents of opposite sexes, but not two sponsors of the same sex <sup>24</sup>

E. Godparents' responsibilities

1. To be admitted to the role of Godparent, a person must:
  - a. Be designated by the parents, or in their absence by the pastor, and have the qualifications and intention of performing this role
  - b. Be at least sixteen years of age
  - c. Have celebrated the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist
  - d. Practice his/her faith
  - e. Be free from any canonical impediment
  - f. Not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized <sup>25</sup>
  - g. Provide a letter from the pastor attesting that he/she is a practicing Catholic if the Godparent is not from the parish where the baptism is celebrated
  - h. Be present for the baptism, but if it is impossible to be present, to have a proxy
2. A baptized person in another Christian denomination may be a Witness to baptism. One Catholic Godparent is required.<sup>26</sup>
3. A Christian of a separated Eastern Church may be admitted not only as a Christian Witness but also as a sponsor in the proper sense, along with the Catholic Godparent, who has "the duty of looking out for the Christian upbringing of the baptized."<sup>27</sup>



### III. CATECHESIS FOR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS OF INFANTS

- A. After the initial meeting and before the celebration of the sacrament, parents are to participate in baptismal catechesis.
- B. If possible, Godparents should be involved with parents in the baptismal catechesis, or they should participate in baptismal catechesis in their local parish if distance is a factor.<sup>28</sup>
- C. Parents who were catechized within the last two years in preparation for the baptism of a previous child and are an active participant in the parish community may, at the discretion of the pastor, be excused from the formal sessions of baptismal catechesis. However, if they have not been active in the sacramental life of their Church community, they should once again revisit the baptismal preparation process and be encouraged to participate in the life of the parish in order to deepen their own faith.

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<sup>23</sup> Canon #871

<sup>24</sup> Canon # 873

<sup>25</sup> Canon #874 § 1

<sup>26</sup> Canon #874 § 2

<sup>27</sup> n.48 *Documents on the Liturgy* 1002; see *RBaptC10,3*: DOL 2259

<sup>28</sup> Canon #851 § 2

- D. While it is reasonable and expected that each parish establish a regular program for baptismal catechesis, the number of sessions for this catechesis is left to the discretion of each pastor or parish director and the available staff and resources. It is to be remembered that the primary element in determining the appropriate amount of catechesis is the need of the parent/guardian and not the fulfillment of a set program *per se*.
- E. Baptismal catechesis should include:
  - 1. Church's teaching on infant baptism
    - a. Baptism as entrance into the family of God
    - b. Baptism and salvation
    - c. Baptism, grace and original sin
  - 2. Role of the Faith Community
    - a. Importance of the faith practice of parents and Godparents
    - b. Importance of the parish community in fostering faith
    - c. Importance of family prayer, faith formation, and Christian parenting
  - 3. Liturgy of Baptism
    - a. *Rite of Baptism*
    - b. Symbols of baptism
    - c. Planning the ceremony of baptism

#### IV. PARENTAL READINESS



- A. The parents or at least one parent or the person who lawfully takes their place must give consent for the lawful baptism of an infant.<sup>29</sup>
- B. Good pastoral practice presumes that parents who petition the sacrament for their child are persons of good will who ask in faith and have a basic understanding of their obligations.<sup>30</sup>
- C. It is ultimately the responsibility of the pastor or other designated individual in collaboration with the catechist entrusted with the task of preparation to ensure that the parents and Godparents presenting an infant for the Sacrament of Baptism are properly disposed and prepared to celebrate the sacrament.<sup>31</sup>
- D. There must be a well-founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic faith. If such a hope is altogether lacking, the baptism should be delayed according to the prescriptions of particular law, and the parents are to be informed of the reasons.<sup>32</sup>

#### V. CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM

- A. The sacrament is to be celebrated according to the *Rite of Baptism for Children*.
- B. The Sacrament of Baptism is a communal celebration ordinarily celebrated on Sunday, the Lord's Day.<sup>33</sup> This is the optimum manner of welcoming the child into the faith community.

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<sup>29</sup> Canon #868 § 1

<sup>30</sup> Canon #843 § 1

<sup>31</sup> Canon #843 § 2

<sup>32</sup> *Instruction on Infant Baptism by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith*, #28.2, October 20, 1980

<sup>33</sup> Canon # 856

- C. The place for the celebration of baptism is the parish church of the parents.<sup>34</sup> When, for a just cause, an infant is to be baptized in a church other than the parish church of the parents, permission from both parish pastors is required.
- D. The sacrament itself consists of the washing in water by way of immersion or pouring the water over the candidate's head<sup>35</sup> and saying the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

## VI. POST BAPTISMAL MYSTAGOGY FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS

Following the celebration of the sacrament, the pastor should:

- A. Talk with the family and provide support for them to become active members of the parish community
- B. Gather small groups of parents of newly baptized infants to deepen their understanding of the baptismal event, their own faith, and their critical role as Christian parents in the faith formation of their children
- C. Provide opportunities for adult catechesis toward lifelong conversion

## VII. RECORDS

The names of those who are initiated through the Sacrament of Baptism, the minister, the Godparents, and the place and date of the ceremony are to be written in the *Baptismal Register* of the parish where the baptism takes place.<sup>36</sup>

## VIII. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS OF ADOPTED CHILDREN

Taking into account all the legal aspects of adoption, it is appropriate that only after the adoption is finalized a parent may request the sacrament for their child.

### Bibliography of References Used for the Policies for the Celebration of Infant Baptism

- *Code of Canon Law*
- *Baptismal Guidelines*, Diocese of Ogdensburg
- *Instruction on Infant Baptism by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith*, October 20, 1980
- Diocese of Colorado Springs, *The Celebration of Infant Baptism*

<sup>34</sup> Canon #857. § 1, # 860 § 1

<sup>35</sup> Canon #854

<sup>36</sup> Canon #877 § 1

# Family Catechesis Model for the Preparation of the Sacrament of Baptism



Walking with prospective parents as they prepare for the birth of a child is a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege because this is a sacred time. While the parents are concerned with physically preparing for a child, this can also be a time of spiritual growth. We have a responsibility to present formation sessions not as a “requirement for baptism” but rather as a gift to the parents from a community who supports them in their spiritual formation, who rejoices with them during this life event, and who will continue to journey with them throughout their faith life.

If we look at this catechesis through an evangelizing lens, we shall see it as an opportunity to help couples explore how God is present in their lives, to come to a deeper appreciation of their own baptism, and to discern ways to create and maintain a “domestic church” within their own family. It also helps parents carry the value of the Gospel into all aspects of their lives. Catechesis for the baptism of children is to be presented in the context of the lived experience of the family.

Other parents can effectively help facilitate these sessions, since they know the challenges and realities of family life and can share their own experiences of Christian living. Sessions should include opportunities for parents to reflect with each other, with other parents, and with pastoral ministers about their lives. What are their hopes and dreams for their child, what are their fears, and what difficulties are they facing? Children, while a blessing, also add stress to relationships. An honest discussion of these stressors and how to deal with them should take place.

## I. KEY ELEMENTS FOR SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

Even though there can be variety in the design of parish baptismal preparation, there are certain key elements which deserve serious consideration in order to insure an effective and fruitful program for all.

- A. We respect adults as persons of Catholic faith.
- B. We explore the parents' role as primary educators of their children in the faith.
- C. We are faithful to the catechetical principle of the rite.

## II. PHASES OF BAPTISMAL SACRAMENTAL FAMILY CATECHESIS

The **best practices** for preparing families to celebrate the baptism of their child are important to keep in mind and integrate into parish practice. A first step in any planning process is to ask: “What is the goal in preparing a family for the baptism of its baby?” Is it to get ready for a day, or is it to lay the foundation that will assist parents (Godparents, etc.) to take on the role as “first catechist” and primary educator and leader of faith in their family? Therefore, this time provides a tremendous opportunity for the parish community to

establish and strengthen its relationship with the parents and to be attentive to the following elements that can serve to catechize and evangelize.

A. Period One - Inquiry

This period includes the basic announcement of the kerygma and is an opportunity to form relationships and build rapport. Preparing the soil for an acceptance and response to God's love becomes the primary mission of this period.



1. Welcoming conversation with the pastor prior to the celebration of baptism:

- a. Express the joy at the birth of their child
- b. Help parents recognize the significance of this event
- c. Discuss the role of a Godparent and the importance of carefully choosing Godparents
- d. Extend an invitation for parents to enter more fully into the life of the Church
- e. Affirm the parents' response to their baptismal call by nurturing the faith in their own child
- f. Help parents to recognize how the presentation of their child for baptism illustrates the work of the Spirit and to understand the indelible mark of baptism
- g. Discern parents' readiness and sincerity to live the Christian life and clearly establish a reasonable hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith

2. Group Sessions

- a. Create a community among those presenting children for baptism.
- b. Set clear expectations for parents who are preparing for the baptism of their child.
- c. Incorporate Godparents into the process.
- d. Introduce the family to the parish community at Sunday Mass the week prior to baptism.
- e. Encourage the parish community to welcome this family and their child who will be baptized.

B. Period Two - Catechumenate

"A parish's catechetical mission is to foster mature adult faith—a faith that is living, explicit, and fruitful."<sup>37</sup> A parish that fosters adult faith formation through vibrant liturgies, a welcoming and hospitable climate, opportunities for practicing charity and promoting justice, and effective adult catechesis is the optimum environment for preparing families for the baptism of their children. An evangelizing parish affirms the gift we have received in baptism—becoming children of God and members of God's Church. Helping all adults appreciate and respond to their baptismal mission as disciples of Jesus Christ and as participants in the Paschal Mystery prepares husbands and wives for the unique and sacrificial role of parenthood.

"We seek to form parishes that are vitally alive in faith. These communities will provide a parish climate and an array of activities and resources designed to help adults more fully understand and live their faith."<sup>38</sup>

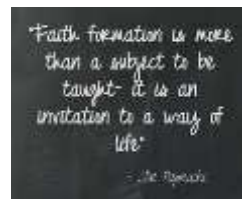
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<sup>37</sup> *Our Heart Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (USCCB) (1999) #49

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid* #17

This period includes the prayerful reflection and proclamation of faith

1. Planting the seeds for a lifelong relationship with Christ and His Church
2. Reviewing the theology of baptism
3. Discussing the roles of the faith community
4. Offering the opportunity for a personal response to the activity of God in the life of the family and of the child being presented for baptism
5. Creating the domestic church through testimonies of active families



#### C. Period Three - Immediate Catechesis and Celebration

The parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of Godparent are to be instructed properly about the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The pastor personally, or through others, is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer by bringing several families together and, where possible, by visiting them.<sup>39</sup>

This period includes a more immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism as well as joining with the community for prayer and celebration of the sacrament.

1. Present ideas for activities at home which incorporate prayer and scripture and that will more spiritually prepare the family for the celebration of baptism. These activities can be completed after the last formation class and before the day of the celebration of the sacrament.
2. Visit and bless the home.
3. Encourage spiritual reading and personal study opportunities for the family.
4. Use an explanation of the *Rite of Baptism* as a starting point for a brief introduction to baptismal theology and to baptism as the foundation of the call to discipleship.
5. Help adults understand the ritual and their role in it - what they do and say.
6. Lead adults to an awareness of, and an openness to, the symbolic depth and power of the *Rite of Baptism*.
7. Allow adults to be involved in the planning of the baptismal celebration.
8. Offer the family the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### III. CELEBRATION OF THE RITE

“The people of God, that is the Church made present in the local community, has an important part to play in the baptism of children. Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the parish community. It is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family but is the common treasure of the whole Church of God.”<sup>40</sup>

In the celebration of baptism, the father and mother have special parts to play. They listen to the words addressed to them by the celebrant, they join in prayer along with the congregation, and they:

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<sup>39</sup> Code of Canon Law 851 #2

<sup>40</sup> Rite of Baptism for Children 4

- A. Publicly ask that the child be baptized
- B. Sign their child with the sign of the cross
- C. Renounce Satan and make their profession of faith
- D. Carry the child to the baptismal font
- E. Hold the lighted candle
- F. Are blessed with special prayers for the mother and the father
- G. Dress the child in a white garment



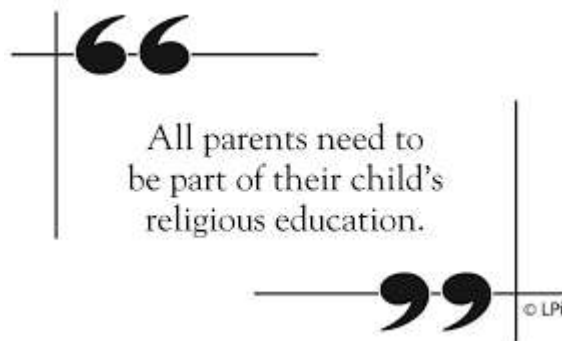
#### IV. PERIOD FOUR – MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS (ONGOING)

“By its very nature, infant baptism requires a post baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth.”<sup>41</sup>

“Those who have given life to children and have enriched them with the gift of baptism have the duty continually to nourish it.”<sup>42</sup>

No matter how carefully we plan and execute the pre-baptismal catechesis and how exquisitely and jubilantly we celebrate the Rite of Baptism, we do parents a grave disservice if we do not continue to support and affirm them in their parental role. Parishes need to give the ongoing catechesis of parents serious consideration and effort. The challenges of parenthood can be daunting, and raising a child in the Catholic faith requires the best of a parish’s resources and efforts. These might include:

- A. A follow-up letter from the pastor to the parents of the newly baptized
- B. Inviting those who have had children baptized during the year to come forward for a special blessing on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
- C. Placing a white rose by the statue of Mary or by the Holy Family on the day of baptism and then presenting it to the family the following week at Mass
- D. Providing an opportunity (with childcare) for new parents to meet and socialize with each other
- E. Scheduling workshops on: praying with children, storytelling, and family rituals
- F. Providing parents with printed and media resources
- G. Supplying information about services available to parents with special needs
- H. Providing family catechesis from baptism until children reach the age where they can continue in a faith formation program



<sup>41</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1231

<sup>42</sup> *General Directory of Catechesis* # 177





Sample Letter/Application  
Parish Letterhead  
Pastor's Name

**Being a Catholic Godparent**

Peace of Christ to you! You are being asked to be a Godparent for a child being baptized in our parish. The parents and our Church are asking you to fulfill a unique role for this child. This is a special calling for you! You are professing your willingness, readiness, and ability to help the parents of this child bring him/her up in the faith and to grow in a relationship with Christ and the Church.

These parents and the parish community are asking you to set an example for this Godchild by living out your faith, by sharing your faith with your Godchild, and by praying for your Godchild. Being a Godparent is different from being a relative, a friend, or a good acquaintance of the parents, though these are all beautiful things! A Godparent has the special role of helping the parents share the joy, truth, and light of the Catholic faith with their child and of providing further example and guidance in the Godchild's life.

Baptism is the beginning of our lifelong journey of faith. As we grow, our faith lives change—sometimes we feel very close to God, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we have many questions, and sometimes we feel like we understand it all. Throughout the ups and downs, Christ is with us! You will help these parents pass on our Catholic faith to the child so that each child may grow in his or her relationship with Christ and freely profess it as an adult. You will be the presence of Christ and the Catholic community to this child.

As you prepare to be a Godparent, you should ask yourself if you are indeed ready to take on this responsibility. Are you able to share your faith? Are you an active member of your parish? Will you be able to give your Godchild the attention and care he/she needs?

If you are someone who is already actively living your faith, these answers may come easily. If not, now may be an opportunity to grow in your own faith so you can pass it onto your Godchild. Or, you may decide that you are not ready to be a Godparent at this time.

So, what does a Godparent do? Godparents are active in their Godchild's life in many ways. You can prepare with the parents and be there for the baptism! You will be asked if you are ready to assist the parents in raising the child in the practice of the faith to which you will respond with the other Godparent, "We are." You may be asked to clothe the child in the white baptismal garment, which symbolizes the child's new purity in Christ. You may be asked to hold the baptismal candle and to help "keep the light of Christ burning in the child's heart."

After the big day, you can make it a tradition to remember the child's baptismal day every year—the child's "birthday" into the Body of Christ. Call your Godchild, visit, or send a card. Spend time with your Godchild. Each year, this day can be a special celebration for you.

Keep your Godchild in your prayers and share your faith with the child. Prayer is always a gift to anyone! You can also share your faith by giving the child age appropriate books, by teaching him/her about the saints, by attending the child's First Communion and Confirmation, and by sharing other important moments in the child's life. A Godparent has a lifelong bond with his/her Godchild, and it is a unique and wonderful relationship.

## Why is it important to be registered in a parish?

Our faith journey is not walked alone. One of the joys of being a Catholic is that we are one body in Christ, and we are connected as a family with God as our Father. Active parish membership indicates that we take our faith life seriously. We need a community of believers to support and nourish our faith life and with whom we can celebrate the Eucharist.

We ask you to show your involvement and membership in your parish and to express your commitment to the larger Church community. It is not merely another hoop to jump through. Active parish membership helps us to become connected and to stay connected with our Church! So, it is more than simply signing a form and filling out your mailing address. It is standing up to say that you will not just go to Mass but that you will also be an active member of the parish, contributing to the life of the community. The people make the parish, so your life gives Christ's light to others and vice versa.

## What if I'm not registered in a parish?

Registering in a parish shows our commitment to worshiping with the larger Church community and to living out our Catholic faith. If you are not currently registered, you may take this opportunity to register in the parish in which you are currently involved. If you have recently moved or are in the process of doing so, you may wish to contact your former parish and have the priest sign your certificate. It is also a good time to establish membership in a parish in your new location.

Feel free to call (**Pastor's Name**) with any questions or concerns. Please fill out the provided form to give us your "yes" to your commitment to being a Godparent, and have your parish sign and return the form to us (Fax and address are at the top of the Godparent form). Thank you for your wonderful witness to Christ's life, and God bless you now and always!



**Parish Letterhead**  
*Pastor's Name*

**FORM FOR CATHOLIC GODPARENTS**

You have been asked to be a Godparent for an upcoming baptism at **Name of Parish**. We ask you to reflect on your responsibilities as a Godparent and to fill out the commitment form. Then have a priest or staff person from the parish in which you are registered sign the bottom portion and affix the parish seal. **Please return this form to our parish by mail or fax as soon as possible, attn: Pastor's Name**

Full Name of Godparent: \_\_\_\_\_

Person to be baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a registered and participating member of \_\_\_\_\_

(City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State) \_\_\_\_\_

**Check all that apply:**

\_\_\_\_ I am a Catholic and have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. I regularly participate in Sunday Mass and give witness to my faith in Jesus Christ.

\_\_\_\_ I am a Catholic and am currently in the Confirmation preparation class at \_\_\_\_\_ parish. I intend to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation prior to this child's baptism. You may reach the director of the Confirmation program at this phone number \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_ I actively strive to live out my commitment to Christ, and I participate in my parish community.

\_\_\_\_ I promise to give my support to my Godchild and to his/her parents by my prayers and by the example of my Catholic faith practiced in my daily life.

**For priest or parish staff at the parish at which you are a member (This form must be completed before sending it back to parish name where baptism will take place.)**

Person requesting to be a Godparent: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ The person named above is a confirmed Catholic or is in preparation for Confirmation in our parish.

\_\_\_\_ I verify that this person is a registered member of our parish who regularly participates at Sunday Mass and participates in our parish community.

Pastor/Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Godparent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please affix Parish Seal:**





**Sample Letter and Application for Christian Witness  
Parish Letterhead  
Pastor's Name**

**Your Role as a Christian Witness**

Peace of Christ to you! You are being asked to be a Christian Witness for a child being baptized in our parish. The parents and our Church are asking you to fulfill a unique role for this child. This is a unique calling for you! You are professing your willingness, readiness, and ability to help the parents of this child bring him/her up in the faith and to grow in a relationship with Christ and the Church.

These parents and the parish community are asking you to set an example for this child in living out your faith, in sharing your faith with this child, and in praying for this child. Being a Christian Witness is different from being a relative, a friend, or a good acquaintance of the parents though these are all beautiful things! A Christian Witness has the special role of helping the parents share the joy, truth, and light of their Catholic faith with their child and of providing further example and guidance in the child's life.

Baptism is the beginning of our lifelong journey of faith. As we grow, our faith lives change—sometimes we feel very close to God; sometimes we don't. Sometimes we have many questions, and sometimes we feel like we understand it all. Throughout the ups and downs, Christ is with us! You will help these parents in passing on our Catholic faith to the child so that each child may grow in his or her relationship with Christ and freely profess it as an adult. You will be the presence of Christ and the Catholic community to this child.

As you prepare to be a Witness, you should ask yourself if you are indeed ready to take on this responsibility. Are you able to share your faith? Are you an active member of your parish? Will you be able to give this child the attention and care he/she needs?

If you are someone who is already actively living your faith, these answers may come easily. If not, now may be an opportunity to grow in your own faith so you can pass it on to this child. Or, you may decide that you are not ready to be a Christian Witness at this time.

So, what does a Christian Witness do? Christian Witnesses are active in the child's life in many ways. You can prepare with the parents and be there for the baptism! You will be asked if you are ready to assist the parents in raising the child in the practice of the faith to which you will respond with the Godparent, "We are." You may be asked to clothe the child in the white baptismal garment, which symbolizes the child's new purity in Christ. You may be asked to hold the baptismal candle and to help "keep the light of Christ burning in the child's heart."

After the big day, you can make it a tradition to remember the child's baptismal day every year—the child's "birthday" into the Body of Christ. Call the child, visit, or send a card. Spend time with the child. Each year, this day can be a special celebration for you.

Keep the child in your prayers and share your faith with the child. Prayer is always a gift to anyone! You can also share your faith by giving the child age appropriate books, teaching him/her about the saints, attending the child's First Communion and Confirmation, and sharing other important moments in the child's life. A Christian Witness has a lifelong bond with the child, and it is a special and wonderful relationship.

## Why is it important to be active in a Christian church?

Our faith journey is not walked alone. One of the joys of being a Christian is that we are one body in Christ, and we are connected as a family with God as our Father. Active church membership indicates that we take our faith life seriously. We need a community of believers to support and nourish our faith life. We ask you to attest to your involvement and membership in your church and to express your commitment to the larger community. It is not merely another hoop to jump through. Active church membership helps us to become connected and to stay connected with Christ! So, it is more than simply signing a form and filling out your mailing address. It is standing up to say that you will not just go to church but that you will also be an active member in the Church, contributing to the life of the community and receiving life and joy in return.

## What if I am not registered in a worshiping community?

Now is a great time to get involved! We invite you to think about finding a Christian community to call “home” and to be nourished by this worshiping community. Feel free to call **Pastor's Name** with any questions or concerns. Please fill out the provided form to give us your “yes” to your commitment to being a Witness, and have your parish sign and return the form to us (Fax and address are at the top of the Godparent form). Thank you for your wonderful witness to Christ’s life, and God bless you now and always!



**Parish Letterhead  
Pastor's Name**



**FORM FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

You have been asked to be a Christian Witness for an upcoming baptism **Parish Name**. We ask you to reflect on your responsibilities as a Christian Witness and to fill out the commitment form. **Please return this form to our parish by mail or fax as soon as possible, attn: Pastor's Name**

Full Name of Christian Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Person to be Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness's place of baptism: Name of church \_\_\_\_\_

Denomination \_\_\_\_\_

(City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Check all that apply:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I regularly participate in worship at my church.

\_\_\_\_\_ I actively strive to live out my commitment to Christ through my actions in daily life and through involvement in my church.

\_\_\_\_\_ I promise to give my support to the child I am sponsoring and to his/her parents by my prayers and by the example of my Christian faith practiced in my daily life.

**Christian Witness Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample  
Pastor's Letter for Parents  
Parish Letterhead  
Pastor's Name**

*"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age."*

*Matthew 28:19-20*



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Greetings in the joy of Christ. Congratulations on being called to the vocation of parenthood. Be assured of our prayers for you as you seek to provide for your child's physical, mental and spiritual needs. You have responded to the call of the Holy Spirit and have requested baptism for your child, the first step in the sacramental life. We are excited to begin this journey with you and your child. It is our sincere desire that the preparation for your child's baptism will be faith-filled and joyful. We will do our part to insure that you receive the formation necessary to be the parents that God has called you to be.

One of the central responsibilities of parents is to be the primary evangelists and catechists of their children, teaching them to joyfully and faithfully know, love and serve God so as to be happy with Him in this life and in the next. We are honored and privileged to help you teach your children about the love of God and are blessed to welcome \_\_\_\_\_ as a new Christian and member of the Catholic Church at \_\_\_\_\_.

As the pastor of \_\_\_\_\_ I want to personally invite you to a more profound relationship with Jesus Christ, and to a greater love for your Catholic faith. As a minimum expression of your sincere desire to raise your child in a Christian home, I invite you to do the following:

1. Pray as a family each day
2. Eat meals together as frequently as possible
3. Keep holy the Sabbath, attend Mass every Sunday and commit to Sunday as a family day
4. Study the faith: read Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
5. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently

If you need help in any of these areas, or if you need to have your marriage convalidated in the Church, I invite you to contact \_\_\_\_\_.

In His service,  
Fr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_

## Resources Available in the Diocesan Faith Formation Offices

O = Ogdensburg P = Plattsburgh W = Watertown

### Parents of Children to be Baptized

O	<i>Preparing For Your Child's Baptism</i> (VHS)	Explanation of the meaning of baptism through symbols, theology, and the story of Christians - may be used as part of baptismal catechesis for parents requesting the Sacrament of Baptism for their child	90 min.
O, W	<i>Your Baby's Baptism</i> (VHS)	This brief presentation introduces the various symbols of baptism, offers a broad overview of the theology of the sacrament, and discusses the important roles the parents and Godparents play. It also contains highlights from the rite itself.	15 min.
P, W	<i>New Life – A Parish Celebrates Infant Baptism</i> (VHS)	Celebrates the <i>Rite of Baptism of Infants</i> with the parents at Sunday Mass, breathing new life into the Church community as well as into the children	30 min.
P	<i>What Catholics Believe about Baptism</i> (DVD)	Multiple choice and true/false questions are asked about the topic of baptism. Even among Catholics there is a wide variety of answers – some right, some wrong.	30 min.
W	<i>I Am Only A Child</i> (VHS)	Perfect for pre-baptismal classes, parent meetings in religious education programs or as a gift to parents - This program explores practical ways to pass on the faith to their children.	14 min.
W	<i>Baptism, Celebrating Life</i> (VHS)	Emphasizes the fact that through baptism each of us “proclaims Christ” as our Savior and is “claimed by Christ” to become a member of the Church and begin a new life in Him	17 min.
W	<i>Lord of Life: Baptism</i> (VHS)	Using scripture, history, and theology, Father Hilary Ottenmeyer, OSB, explains that by baptism children are followers of Christ and that the parents are the “primary caretakers” of God’s gift to the child in baptism.	19 min.
W	<i>The Sacrament of Baptism: A Guide to this Celebration of New Life</i> (VHS)	Father Scirghi walks through the “Five parts of the <i>Ritual of Baptism</i> ” one-by-one, explaining what each step means. He explains what it means to “remember” our baptism and how, as Catholics, our baptism carries us through until our death.	64 min.

### Baptismal Material for Family Catechesis in the Home

P	<i>Brother Francis: Born into the Kingdom</i> (Ages 5-9) (Animated) (DVD)	Brother Francis invites us to share in the realities of the Sacrament of Baptism and how it unites us with God’s family!	25 min.
O	<i>Baptism: Sacrament of Belonging</i> (VHS)	Alfredo, disfigured in a fire, asks to be accepted in an orphanage. Children welcome him, a gift he dearly needs.	15 min.
O	<i>Come to the Water: The Adult Journey to Baptism</i> (VHS)	This video follows both catechumens and candidates in the year-round RCIA process of adult education and initiation into the Catholic community, culminating in their baptism at the Easter Vigil.	58 min.
W	<i>From the Ends of the Earth</i>	This program invites us to become more aware of our baptismal call to continue the mission of Jesus.	60 min.
W	<i>The Baptism of Susan</i>	Presents parents and Godparents with an interwoven message about their own faith, the new life in the Spirit within their child, and the Sacrament of Baptism	14 min.

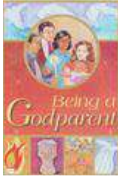
### On Line Videos

<i>Sacraments 101: Baptism</i>	<a href="http://bustedhalo.com/">bustedhalo.com/</a>
Fr. Robert Barron Comments on the Sacrament of Baptism	<a href="http://www.wordonfire.org">www.wordonfire.org</a>



# RESOURCES FOR INFANT BAPTISM

## FOR GODPARENTS



### **Being a Godparent**

[www.litpress.org/Products/4797/Being-a-Godparent](http://www.litpress.org/Products/4797/Being-a-Godparent)

Both inspirational and informative, this booklet celebrates the honor and responsibility that come with being a Godparent. It is a valuable guide for those who want a deeper understanding of this role along with the role the Godparent has at baptism. This book emphasizes nourishing the new life received in baptism as well as the importance of setting an example of Christian living. The gift of sharing in the growth of a child's faith is described, and the tradition of being a Godparent is explained.



### **Catholic Parent Know-How: How to Be a Godparent**

Lorene Hanley Duquin.

[www.osv.com/Shop/Sacraments/Baptism.aspx](http://www.osv.com/Shop/Sacraments/Baptism.aspx)

Our Sunday Visitor

This book explains everything a Godparent needs to know.



### **Catholic Parent Know-How: How to Be a Godparent**

[www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html](http://www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html)

Liguori Publications

An informative, practical guide on how to become a Catholic Godparent, this excellent pamphlet explores the theory and practice behind this sacred trust, helping both new and soon-to-be parents and Godparents better understand their roles and responsibilities in the process. Godparenting casts light on the theological and spiritual significance of this time-honored practice.

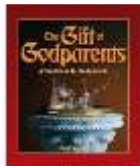


### **Godparenting for Life**

[www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html](http://www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html)

Liguori Publications

You have been asked to be a Godparent! This rewarding, lifelong commitment is a very special one that you will share with your Godchild. *Godparenting for Life* identifies ways to be a witness to Christian living and to support the Christian values of the parents. It also gives suggestions for Godparenting when you do not live near your Godchild. This wonderful resource will help guide you on your journey to being a loving and supportive Godparent.

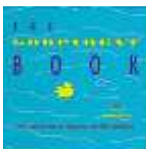


### **The Gift of Godparents for Those Chosen with Love and Trust to be Godparents**

Tom Sheridan

[actapublications.com/the-gift-of-godparents/](http://actapublications.com/the-gift-of-godparents/) ACTA Publications

This explanation of the sacrament of baptism and the responsibilities of Godparenting blends touching stories of real-life Godparents with suggestions about how to help a Godchild grow in the faith from baptism to adulthood.



### **The Godparent Book**

Elaine Ramshaw

[www.ltp.org/p-1525-the-godparent-book.aspx](http://www.ltp.org/p-1525-the-godparent-book.aspx) Liturgy Training Publications

This book offers an abundance of ideas for things that Godparents and Godchildren can do before baptism and through adulthood.



### **Welcomed by Name: Our Godchild's Baptism**

Peg Bowman

[www.loyolapress.com/welcomed-by-name-godchilds-baptism-booklet-25-pack.htm](http://www.loyolapress.com/welcomed-by-name-godchilds-baptism-booklet-25-pack.htm) Loyola Press

This Godparent booklet helps prepare sponsors for their role in the Sacrament of Baptism and encourages continued involvement in their Godchild's spiritual growth.



**Your Godchild: What It Means to be a Catholic Godparent**  
[www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html](http://www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html)  
 Liguori Publications.

This informative booklet has activities for Godparents and Godchildren, tips on spiritual nurturing, and ways to explore this significant commitment. It explains the Sacrament of Baptism, what it means to be a Godparent, prayer and more.

## FOR PARENTS



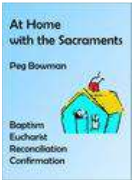
**About the Sacrament of Baptism** CHBT-17715  
[shop.faithguides.com/onlinestore/storeitem.html?iid=169406&cid=130280&item=The+Sacrament+Of+Baptism](http://shop.faithguides.com/onlinestore/storeitem.html?iid=169406&cid=130280&item=The+Sacrament+Of+Baptism)  
 Channing L Bete Co Inc.

This book explains the purpose, history and meaning of baptism. It describes both infant and adult baptism and discusses the role of parents, sponsors, and the Church community. It is illustrated with simple black and white line drawings.



**At Home with Our Faith**  
[homefaith.wordpress.com/](http://homefaith.wordpress.com/)

This book offers parents fresh new insights on important parenting topics. Parents are in the best position to positively influence their children's lives for good. *At Home with Our Faith* helps them take advantage of the ordinary opportunities family life offers to nourish spiritual meaning and to evoke religious commitment. It helps increase parents' own religious literacy and points to the ways in which religion is fostered in the course of ordinary daily life.



**At Home with the Sacraments -Baptism: Entry into God's Family**  
 Peg Bowman

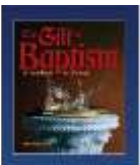
[store.pastoralplanning.com/athowisa.html](http://store.pastoralplanning.com/athowisa.html) Twenty-Third Publications  
 You're warmly invited to renew your faith, sharpen your Catholic commitment, and go on a family faith-journey. Consider this little booklet your guide as you prepare with your child to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Brush up on its history, meaning, and ritual (and even learn something new so you can feel comfortable and confident in your role as your child's first teacher of the faith).



**Catholic Parent Know-How: Preparing for Your Child's Baptism**

Janet Schaeffer, OP  
[www.osv.com/Shop/Sacraments/Baptism.aspx](http://www.osv.com/Shop/Sacraments/Baptism.aspx)  
 Our Sunday Visitor

This book provides an overview of the Church's teaching about the Sacrament of Baptism and includes an introduction to the *Rite of Baptism* with reflection questions for parents based on the rite.



**The Gift of Baptism: A Handbook for Parents.**

Tom Sheridan.  
[actapublications.com/the-gift-of-baptism/](http://actapublications.com/the-gift-of-baptism/) ACTA Publications

This welcoming approach to baptismal preparation helps parents understand the meaning of the sacrament for their child and helps them to recognize their important role as parents and to appreciate the support they receive from their parish faith community.



**Prayerbook for Parents at Baptism**  
[store.pastoralplanning.com/prforpaatba.html](http://store.pastoralplanning.com/prforpaatba.html)



**Together at Baptism**

Robert Hamma  
[www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com) Ave Maria Press, Inc.

These new, free downloadable materials include a simple program guide for leaders and tips for Godparents. A selection sheet for recording reading choices is also provided for parents, creating a meaningful memento of the joyous occasion.



**Touched by Grace: Baptism**

Kathleen Chesto

[www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html](http://www.liguori.org/for-everyone/sacraments-everyone/baptism-everyone.html)

Written for a broad audience -- everyone from catechumens to the people in the pew -- the *Touched by Grace* series takes a vibrant look at how the sacraments affect Catholics in their daily lives.

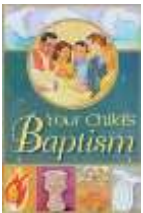


**Your Child's Baptism**

Paul Turner

[www.ltp.org/p-1640-your-childs-baptism.aspx](http://www.ltp.org/p-1640-your-childs-baptism.aspx) Liturgy Training Publications

What should parents know as they prepare to have their child baptized? This book provides parents with answers to their most frequently asked questions and addresses their most frequently voiced concerns. Topics include the age of the child, parental consent, church attendance habits, qualifications for eligibility to serve as a Godparent, the number of Godparents, Non-Catholic Godparents, proxies, and more. The *Rite of Baptism* is also outlined. Keep copies of this well-priced book on hand to give to new or expecting parents and those inquiring about baptism. This book is great for baptismal preparation programs.

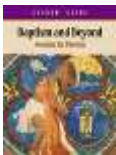


**Your Child's Baptism, Revised Edition**

[www.litpress.org/Products/3158/your-childs-baptism.aspx](http://www.litpress.org/Products/3158/your-childs-baptism.aspx) Liturgical Press

This revised edition guides parents through the experience of their child's baptism. *Your Child's Baptism* is a useful resource for reflecting on baptism. This full-color booklet explains the meaning of the rite and provides a step-by-step guide of what to expect during the baptismal ceremony. Through this book, parents can explore the first steps in their child's journey of faith. It will leave readers with a new appreciation for the baptismal tradition and its importance in becoming a member of God's family. Additionally, *Your Child's Baptism* reflects on the joys, fears, and obligations that accompany parenthood.

## INFANT BAPTISM - PREPARATION SESSIONS



**Baptism and Beyond - Leader Guide**

Kathy Coffey

[www.churchpublishing.org/products/baptismandbeyondleadersguide](http://www.churchpublishing.org/products/baptismandbeyondleadersguide) Church Publishing Inc.

This is a parent guide for preparing for baptism and for nurturing their child's spirituality. It contains everything a leader needs to lead two parent sessions including six reproducible letters to send to the parents, keeping them in touch with the parish and encouraging them to work with their child at home. It complements the parent guide that parents use for preparation and follow-up of the two sessions.

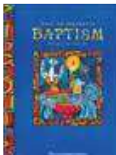


**Baptism Is a Beginning**

Edited by Rebekah Rojcewicz

[www.ltp.org/p-1877-baptism-is-a-beginningel-bautismo-es-un-comienzo-bilingual-reproducible-handouts-for-infant-baptism-preparation.aspx](http://www.ltp.org/p-1877-baptism-is-a-beginningel-bautismo-es-un-comienzo-bilingual-reproducible-handouts-for-infant-baptism-preparation.aspx)

This book with CD-Rom provides parishes with all they need to prepare parents and families, Godparents, and sponsors for the baptism of a child and provides continuing support and formation after baptism. Eighteen different pamphlets can be reproduced for distribution to families and are enriched by the insights of Sofia Cavalletti, founder of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.



**Call to Celebrate Baptism** (available in English and Spanish)

[www.osvcurriculum.com/baptism/index.html](http://www.osvcurriculum.com/baptism/index.html) Our Sunday Visitor

Our Sunday Visitor's baptismal preparation program is engaging, reflective and flexible. This four-lesson program can easily be adapted to a half day retreat or two, two hour sessions.



# *Sacrament of Confirmation*



**Confirmation marks a unique moment in a person's life when one is invited to grow in faith and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, embrace a *new maturity*\* where all that has gone before takes on richer and deeper meaning, further forming one as faithful disciple, grateful steward, and active evangelist of the *Risen Christ*.**

**\*As defined in *Secularity and the Gospel* by Rev. Ronald Rolheiser**



## INTRODUCTION



Paul said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They answered him, “We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (*Acts 19:2, 5-6*)

Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Since Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that “the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time,” for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete.<sup>43</sup>

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit’s actions, gifts, and biddings in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church, as well as to the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.<sup>44</sup>

To receive Confirmation, one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.<sup>45</sup>

The Church must make every effort through a revised and revitalized catechesis to ensure that adolescents do not view their preparation for and reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation as the end of their formal catechesis. They must be encouraged to continue to participate in catechetical programs, the celebration of Sunday Eucharist, and the practice of Christian living.<sup>46</sup>



<sup>43</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1306

<sup>44</sup> CCC 1309

<sup>45</sup> CCC 1310

<sup>46</sup> *National Directory of Catechesis (NDC)* 48D



*“When the day of Pentecost came it found them gathered in one place. . . All were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamations as the Spirit prompted them.”*  
(Acts 2:1)

## I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A. The entire Body of Christ is charged with supporting every person in faith development. It takes an entire parish community to minister effectively to the youth entrusted to it. Parishes should promote a sense of shared mission, never leaving total responsibility for sacramental faith formation to one or a few members of the community. The whole community should support the Confirmation candidates by prayer and good example, by living out the Christian way of life (discipleship). “...that will help [them] obey the Holy Spirit more generously.”<sup>47</sup>
- B. Each parish community – parents, pastors, pastoral associates, parish life coordinators, catechetical leaders, catechists, and parishioners – shares the following responsibilities:
  - 1. Invites adolescents to participate in Confirmation catechesis and liturgical celebrations
  - 2. Prepares young people to **Discover, Celebrate** and **Live** their Catholic faith as a faithful disciple, grateful steward and active evangelist
  - 3. Accompanies young people and their parents on their spiritual journey – uniting Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist
  - 4. Creates and fosters in young people a commitment to the Risen Christ by sharing, affirming and modeling the lifelong faith practices of worship, prayer, study, stewardship and moral decision-making
  - 5. Keeps families in mind when designing sacramental preparation programs
  - 6. Acknowledges the important role of families in the Confirmation process
  - 7. Provides families with helpful resources for continued family faith growth
- C. Confirmation is one of the Sacraments of Initiation. Adolescents, ages 12 and older/grades 7 – 10 should be involved in a remote, proximate and immediate preparation process. Following the celebration of the sacrament, they enter into mystagogy (lifelong catechesis) which continues and supports their faith formation.
- D. While Catholic schools provide faith formation, it is the parish faith community that is responsible for providing the immediate catechesis for Confirmation
- E. Under extenuating circumstances, the pastor, after consultation, may determine that an individual begin Confirmation preparation and be confirmed at a younger age.

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<sup>47</sup> Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults #4



## F. Persons with Disabilities

The following guidelines which offer “a set of general principles to provide access to the sacraments for persons with disabilities” were approved by the U.S. Bishops. By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.



1. Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as fully functioning members of the local ecclesial community.<sup>48</sup>
2. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.<sup>49</sup>
3. Pastors are to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, their advocates, and their families as well as those knowledgeable in serving persons with disabilities can make a most valuable contribution to these programs.<sup>50</sup>
4. Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities.
5. Further, parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry according to their abilities. Every Christian community considers those who suffer handicaps, physical or mental as well as other forms of disability, as persons particularly beloved of the Lord. A growth in social and ecclesial consciousness, together with undeniable progress in specialized pedagogy, makes it possible for the family and other formative bodies to provide adequate catechesis for these individuals. The love of the Father for the weakest of his children and the continuous presence of Jesus and His Spirit give assurance that every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.<sup>51</sup>

## G. Sponsors

*The Rite of Christian Initiation* describes sponsors as “persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidate’s moral character, faith and intention.” Guidance regarding selection of a sponsor is addressed in the immediate preparation phase.

1. A sponsor must:
  - a. Be at least sixteen years of age.
  - b. Be a fully initiated Catholic who has celebrated Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and who leads a life of faith - Verification of a sponsor’s suitability is to be provided to the pastor by the proposed sponsor if the sponsor is not a member of the candidate’s parish.
  - c. Be free to celebrate the sacraments and not bound by any canonical penalty.
  - d. Not be the parent or legal guardian of the one to be confirmed. It is advisable that a boyfriend, girlfriend, or fiancée not serve as sponsor.
2. A candidate’s Godparents may be considered (but not required) as sponsors if they meet requirements and expectations.<sup>52</sup>
3. It is ideal that a sponsor be invited to participate in the immediate preparation process and be willing to serve as a guide, confidant and listener.

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<sup>48</sup> Code of Canon Law #213

<sup>49</sup> Canon #843 §1

<sup>50</sup> Canon #777 §4

<sup>51</sup> General Directory of Catechesis (GDC) #189

<sup>52</sup> Canon # 874

## II. CATECHETICAL PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION

### A. Pastor

The catechumenate model requires the whole-hearted support of the pastor. Pastors are responsible for ensuring that the goals of the diocesan catechetical mission listed below are achieved.

1. The baptismal catechumenate inspires all parish catechesis.
2. Catechesis emphasizes age-appropriate opportunities for adults, youth and children and includes a comprehensive plan for youth ministry and for the formation of catechetical leaders.
3. Catechists are provided with the formation, support, and resources they need to guide and prepare young people, their parents, and their sponsors for celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
4. Best practices and resources are implemented and are adaptable to a variety of parish settings to enrich and complement adolescent Confirmation preparation.
5. An Enrollment Ceremony is celebrated to introduce the candidates to the parish.
6. Confirmation documentation is sent to the parish church of baptism of each candidate.

### B. Sacramental catechesis for Confirmation is directed by a pastoral team especially trained for this ministry.

1. **Remote** preparation includes family catechesis at home, regular participation in a Catholic school or parish faith formation program following the celebration of Reconciliation and First Eucharist and continuing until proximate preparation for Confirmation.
2. **Proximate** preparation, approximately ages 12 and older/ grades 7 – 10, is the adequate period of time for discernment and preparation of young people who have not participated regularly in a Catholic school or in a parish faith formation program. During this period, young people will become familiar with Sacred Scripture, especially the ministry of Jesus, and with the teachings and practices of the Catholic faith. They continue on the path of discipleship and share their faith through witness and service. The candidates for Confirmation are expected to participate in the Sunday Eucharist and to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly. The candidates may celebrate an Enrollment Ceremony. This ceremony gives the candidates the opportunity to state publicly before the community that they are taking this step in their sacramental lives seriously.

Prior to beginning the period of immediate preparation, the pastor and/or his delegate will interview the potential candidate and his/her parents addressing the following;

- a. Regular participation in Sunday Eucharist
- b. Participation in remote preparation or proximate preparation for the sacrament
- c. Desire to freely commit to the immediate preparation for the sacrament
- d. Commitment to on-going faith formation following the reception of the sacrament
- e. Involvement in parish ministry and service opportunities
- f. Selection of their sponsor

3. **Immediate** preparation follows the proximate preparation. Parents and sponsors are involved in this period of preparation. The candidates may celebrate an Enrollment Ceremony as they begin this final period. This ceremony recognizes the progress the candidates have made in their spiritual formation. At this time, they also receive the



assurance of blessings and prayers from their parents, sponsors and members of the parish community.

A sufficient number of sessions should address the following:

- a. The meaning of the Sacrament of Confirmation and its relationship to Baptism and Eucharist
  - b. An understanding of the Rite of Confirmation
  - c. Role of the Holy Spirit in one's personal life and in the life of the Church
  - d. Meaning/choice of a saint's name
  - e. Opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
  - f. A retreat experience
  - g. Opportunities to engage in parish ministry/service with particular attention to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy
4. Family Catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Confirmation preparation provides the opportunity for continuing formation for the Confirmation candidates and their parents. Therefore, parish Confirmation preparation should include opportunities for parents to gather as a group to:
- a. Be informed about the practical aspects of the Confirmation process and its history
  - b. Be encouraged to deepen their adult understanding of the faith and the role of the sacraments in their own lives
  - c. Understand their role as models in the faith development of their son/daughter
  - d. Strengthen their family relationships so that all may grow in their relationship with God
  - e. Support the candidate through Confirmation preparation and continue that support after Confirmation by modeling and encouraging lifelong faith development.



- C. Candidates for the sacrament should be encouraged and not coerced into preparation for Confirmation. An individual who chooses not to celebrate Confirmation at a particular time should be given further opportunity to discern.

### III. CELEBRATION



- A. Bishop - The bishop is the visible source and foundation of unity of the local Church and is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The bishop may delegate the faculty to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to a priest in a local parish under certain circumstances. A pastor is obligated to request permission to confirm individuals who were baptized Catholic as children but now seek Confirmation as adults.
- B. Liturgical Rites - The Department of Worship will assist local parishes in planning the celebration of Confirmation and will provide final approval for all liturgical planning.
- C. If the family wishes the candidate to celebrate Confirmation at a parish other than the one his/her family attends, then the parents need formal permission from both pastors.

#### IV. MYSTAGOGY – THE MISSION AND CONTINUING FORMATION

Faith formation should continue after Confirmation beginning with a period of mystagogy and then continuing in ongoing faith formation/youth ministry. Parishes need to provide the opportunities for this, and parents need to be informed during the period of immediate preparation for Confirmation of the necessity for this formation and the expectation that their sons and daughters will continue to participate in the life and ministry of the parish. Although this faith formation may take on the elements of a youth ministry program, catechesis will continue to be an integral aspect of the formation program. The Diocesan Vision for Parish Youth Ministry states, “The goal of diocesan and parish youth ministry is to provide age-appropriate opportunities which will lead our youth to a life-changing encounter with Christ which will nourish a faithful, fruitful and joyful friendship with Him and His Church.”

- A. Mystagogy is the ongoing catechesis and support of the newly confirmed. It is a transition from the heightened experience of the celebration of the sacrament to everyday life as a faithful Catholic.
- B. Mystagogy enables young people to live a life of committed discipleship in a world of multimedia and globalized culture. Sessions encourage the newly confirmed to grow in their Christian faith through prayer, reflection, scripture study, and active participation in the life of the Church and the wider community.
- C. Mystagogy should include but not be limited to an understanding of the Church’s teachings on:
  - 1. Catholic marriage
  - 2. Relationship-building skills and conflict resolution skills
  - 3. The difference between sex and sexuality from a Catholic perspective
  - 4. Procreation and contraception
  - 5. Responsible Christian parenthood and family life
  - 6. The call to a vocation –married life, single life, priesthood, or consecrated life
  - 7. Catholic Social Principles
  - 8. Living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society
  - 9. A committed approach to service and discipleship
- D. Mystagogy should provide opportunities through youth ministry and/or faith formation classes
  - 1. To explore relationships as Catholic youth
  - 2. To explore meaningful roles in community and society
  - 3. To explore values and to gain decision making skills
  - 4. To explore questions of faith

## RESOURCES

According to Robert J. McCarty and Lynn Tooma in *Training Adults in Youth Ministry*, the developmental characteristics of younger adolescents are as follows:

### Profile of the Young Adolescent

#### A. Adolescent Development and Overview

For purposes of distinction the term “adolescent” is often divided into two categories: younger adolescents (aged 11 - 14) and older adolescents (aged 15 -19). By and large these categories represent the Middle School population and the High School population, respectively. The characteristics and needs of these populations are diverse. Sensitivity to stages of adolescent development is crucial in order for our ministry to be effective.

#### B. Physical

1. In a period of rapid change
2. Developing secondary sex characteristics and mature reproductive systems
3. Sensitive to physical changes and confused over sexual identity
4. Body image greatly influences self-image

#### C. Cognitive

1. Begin abstract thinking
2. Base reasoning on possibilities, not only on experience
3. Use a more complex decision-making process
4. Develop reflective thinking
5. Tend to be self-conscious and critical
6. Begin to base behavior on abstract thinking
7. Are often idealistic, argumentative, and self-centered

#### D. Identity

1. Want to belong
2. Begin self-questioning
3. Distance self from childhood (family, parental figures) and identify with peers
4. Seek limited independence and autonomy

#### E. Moral

1. Reason morally at a conventional level (see Kohlberg’s Stages)
2. Resolve dilemmas on the basis of expectations outside of self, such as peers, law and significant adults

#### F. Interpersonal

1. See peer group identification and friendship as important
2. Value friendships based on mutuality, trust, and loyalty

#### G. Faith

1. Reflect and affiliate style of faith (see below)
2. Desire active involvement and are open to doing service
3. Depend on the community for the content and expression of their faith
4. Begin to define their own image of God and explore a personal relationship with God<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> McCarty, Robert J. and Lynn Tooma. *Training Adults for Youth Ministry*. Winona: Christian Brothers Publication. 1990.

## RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Craughwell, Thomas J. *Prayers*. Our Sunday Visitor.

Break out of the prayer book mode with these linked prayer cards. Included are all the standard Catholic prayers as well as biblical prayers, the way of the cross and the rosary. It also includes interesting notes about the origin and meaning of the prayers.

England, Fsp. *Celebrating My Confirmation*. Pauline Books and Media. 2004.

Givens, Steven J. *Getting Confirmed – A Journey of Questions and Answers*. Redemptorist Publications. Catholic Cardlinks.

Liturgy Training Publications. *Come Holy Spirit*.

A prayer book

Luebering, Carol. *Your Child's Confirmation*. St. Anthony Messenger Press Books.

Book for parents regarding Confirmation candidates

Pauline Books and Media. *Celebrating My Confirmation*.

Schaeffler, Janet L., OP. *Preparing Your Child for Confirmation*. Our Sunday Visitor.

Book for parents

Vurst, Friar Jim Van, OFM. "What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?" AmericanCatholic.org.

## TEXTBOOKS

No ranking for these resources is suggested by the order. It is most appropriate for the parish personnel to choose those texts and resources that best suit the local situation.

### Proximate Preparation

Loyola Press	<i>Christ Our Life</i>	www.loyolapress.com	Spiral curriculum designed to help young people turn their learned faith into a lived faith
	<i>Finding God</i>		Offers relevant faith experiences with a focus on drawing youth into a closer, lifelong relationship with Jesus
RCL/Benziger	<i>Blest Are We: The Story of Jesus, The Story of the Church</i>	www.rclbenziger.com	Emphasizes building Catholic identity with age-appropriate lessons that encourage fuller participation in the life of the Church
	<i>Christ Jesus The Way</i>		Invites adolescents to share the truths, history, language, and traditions of the Catholic Church
RCL/Benziger	<i>Faith First: Junior High Edition</i>	www.rclbenziger.com	Designed to challenge young people to make faith decisions while exploring doctrine, scripture, and the liturgical year
William H. Sadlier, Inc.	<i>We Believe</i>	www.sadlier.com	Each lesson designed around <i>We Gather, We Believe, We Respond</i>
William H. Sadlier, Inc.	<i>One Faith, One Lord</i>	www.sadlier.com	A resource that can be used in conjunction with the parish's primary catechetical text when there is a need for a more general yet comprehensive overview of the Catholic faith (A resource for a young person who has not been receiving systematic catechesis)

### Immediate Preparation

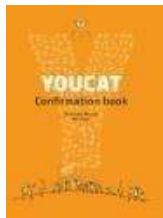
Ava Maria Press	<i>Send Out Your Spirit</i>	www.avemariapress.com	A comprehensive program for young people preparing for Confirmation (Confirmation as the sacrament of the Holy Spirit as well as the basic Rite of Confirmation are fully presented.)
Our Sunday Visitor	<i>Call to Celebrate: Confirmation</i>	www.osv.com/MyFaith/Sacraments/Confirmation	Weaves together both liturgy and catechesis to prepare young people for the celebration of Confirmation
Loyola Press	<i>Confirmed in the Spirit</i>	www.loyolapress.com	Integrates with any school or parish curriculum to prepare adolescents for Confirmation
Saint Mary's Press	<i>Confirmed in a Faithful Community</i>	www.smp.org	Designed to help adolescents embrace their baptismal call and experience deeper initiation into a welcoming Church community
RCL/ Benziger	<i>Confirmation</i>	www.rclbenziger.com	Invites adolescents to experience God through ritual, to reflect on the eight aspects of the Rite of Confirmation, and to become full and active disciples of Jesus Christ
	<i>The Gift of the Spirit</i>		Invites candidates to become actively involved in their preparation for Confirmation through reflection, prayer, Scripture, doctrinal review and faith sharing activities



[dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation/view-program](http://dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation/view-program)  
*Decision Point - Matthew Kelly*



[ascensionpress.com](http://ascensionpress.com)  
*Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation*



YOUCAT Confirmation Book  
 Written for the candidates in junior high and high school (or older) and provides in-depth preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation

### On- line Videos

- Sacrament of Confirmation  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHxOTVYvkmM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHxOTVYvkmM)
- The Sacrament of Confirmation (USCCB)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7368ukZctY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7368ukZctY)
- Sacraments 101  
[bustedhalo.com/](http://bustedhalo.com/)

### Other On- Line Resources

- [catholicteacher.com/](http://catholicteacher.com/)
- [www.thereligionteacher.com](http://www.thereligionteacher.com)

### Diocesan Video Library

(Lists VHS/DVD's available in the Regional Faith Formation Offices, a description and the viewer age)

All of the following listings are in VHS format unless otherwise noted.

- Altaration (DVD)*
- Confirmation: A Commitment to Life*
- Confirmation: Rite for Life (DVD)*
- Confirmation: Sealed With the Spirit*
- Confirmation: Stories of Discipleship (DVD)*
- Do We Go To Mass?*
- Gifted by God: A Confirmation Retreat Kit (DVD)*
- He Will Send You the Holy Spirit*
- Lord of Light: Confirmation*
- Sacraments: We Belong: Baptism and Confirmation*
- Sealed with God's Spirit*
- The Apostles' Creed (Knowing What We Believe)*
- The Choice*
- The Spirit and Confirmation*



# Sacrament of the Eucharist



## INTRODUCTION

As a sacrament of Christian initiation, the Eucharist stands at the heart of the Christian Community's celebration of the Paschal Mystery. "The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation of a child's understanding of the Eucharist."<sup>54</sup>

Children receiving baptism in infancy and nurtured within the domestic Church continue their sacramental journey when at the age of reason (seven years of age) they are led to the table of Eucharistic communion. Preparation for participation in this central mystery of our life in the Church is the "responsibility of the entire Christian community."<sup>55</sup>

The First Holy Communion of a child marks a highpoint in the journey of Christian initiation. Every effort must be made in catechesis to help the communicant see First Communion as the beginning of a Eucharistic life.<sup>56</sup>

## I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A. "A child who has been baptized in the Catholic faith and has reached the age of reason (normally considered to be about seven years of age) and has been properly catechized" may celebrate First Eucharist.<sup>57</sup>
- B. Celebration of First Eucharist follows the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.<sup>58</sup>
- C. Parents are to provide parish staff with documentation of their child's baptism, if baptized in another parish, prior to the celebration of First Eucharist.
- D. Children baptized in the Catholic faith who have reached the age of reason and who are candidates for full communion are to be prepared for the Sacrament of the Eucharist in accordance with the provisions of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children*.
- E. Those children who have been baptized in another ecclesial community, have reached the age of reason, and seek full communion with the Catholic Church are to be considered candidates. They are to be initiated according to the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, 30-37, respecting the traditional sequences of Confirmation before Eucharist at the same celebration.



<sup>54</sup> *National Directory of Catechesis* (NDC) 36a, 3a

<sup>55</sup> *General Directory of Catechesis* (GDC) 91

<sup>56</sup> Archdiocese of Seattle, *Policies & Guidelines at a Glance* p.3

<sup>57</sup> *Code of Canon Law* #97, §2

<sup>58</sup> Canon #914

F. Unbaptized children who have attained the age of reason have the same rights as adults for the purpose of Christian initiation.<sup>59</sup> These children are to be admitted to the catechumenate and be led through the several stages to sacramental initiation.<sup>60</sup> They should receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.<sup>61</sup>

#### G. Persons with Disabilities

The following guidelines which offer “a set of general principles to provide access to the sacraments for persons with disabilities”<sup>62</sup> were approved by the U.S. Bishops. By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.

1. Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as fully functioning members of the local ecclesial community.<sup>63</sup>
2. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.<sup>64</sup>
3. Pastors are to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, their advocates, and their families as well as those knowledgeable in serving persons with disabilities can make a most valuable contribution to these programs.<sup>65</sup>
4. Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities.
5. Further, parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry according to their abilities. Every Christian community considers those who suffer handicaps, physical or mental as well as other forms of disability, as persons particularly beloved of the Lord. A growth in social and ecclesial consciousness, together with undeniable progress in specialized pedagogy, makes it possible for the family and other formative bodies to provide adequate catechesis for these individuals. The love of the Father for the weakest of his children and the continuous presence of Jesus and His Spirit give assurance that every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.<sup>66</sup>



## II. CATECHETICAL PREPARATION FOR FIRST EUCHARIST

A. The pastor is to make particular provision that:

1. Suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacrament<sup>67</sup>
2. Children are adequately prepared for the celebration of the sacrament by means of catechetical formation given over an appropriate period<sup>68</sup>
3. Children with disabilities should be included in the parish sacramental celebrations according to their capacity<sup>69</sup>

B. Candidates should include those in Catholic schools, parish faith formation programs, and homeschoolers.

<sup>59</sup> Canon #852, §1

<sup>60</sup> Canon #851, §1

<sup>61</sup> RCIA, National Statutes, #18

<sup>62</sup> USCCB Guidelines for the Celebrations of the Sacraments with Person with Disabilities, General Principle, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Canon # 213

<sup>64</sup> Canon # 843, §1

<sup>65</sup> Canon # 777, § 4

<sup>66</sup> GDC #189

<sup>67</sup> Canon #777, § 1

<sup>68</sup> Canon #777, § 2

<sup>69</sup> See Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, General Principle 3

C. Sacramental catechesis for First Eucharist is directed by a pastoral team especially trained for the ministry. This team guides parents as they journey with their children. This catechesis includes:



1. Remote preparation with parents,<sup>70</sup> the child and other members of the family actively participating in Sunday Eucharist and in the life of their parish.
2. Proximate catechesis begins at least two years prior to the celebration of First Eucharist.
3. Immediate preparation for First Eucharist includes three or more sessions of family catechesis Directed toward this sacrament. These sessions will assist the parents in their role as primary educators of their children. Programs are to be designed to nourish the faith life of the participants as well as to provide theological understanding of the sacrament.
4. Session topics include:
  - a. Importance of family mealtime as an opportunity to talk about the Eucharist as a shared meal
  - b. Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist
  - c. Ways to share Scripture stories of Jesus with their child
  - d. A Eucharistic centered retreat for candidates and their families
  - e. Guidelines for receiving Eucharist (state of grace, fasting, receiving the Holy Eucharist at least once a year)
  - f. Prayerful reception of the Eucharist

D. Catechetical formation for children's celebration of First Eucharist should follow the principles incorporated in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, 36 A, 3a and the Diocese of Ogdensburg publication *Knowing Jesus and His Message: A Tool for Parish Catechesis*. Catechetical resources should also include materials and textbooks approved by the USCCB.

E. Family Catechesis should:

1. Nurture an understanding of God's love
2. Nurture a relationship with Jesus through prayer and worship
3. Enhance an appreciation for and an active participation in the Mass
4. Develop a sense of belonging to a parish community of disciples who love as Jesus loved
5. Be in keeping with the intellectual, emotional and faith development of the child

F. A child's readiness to celebrate First Eucharist is determined by a:

1. Desire to receive the Eucharist
2. Growing relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church
3. Familiarity with the movements, prayers, and gestures of the Mass
4. Sense of the "real presence" – that the bread of Eucharist is not ordinary bread, but Jesus present to us in a special way
5. Attentiveness and focus at the celebration of Mass



<sup>70</sup> Term "parents" also includes single parents, grandparents, guardians

### III. PLACE OF CELEBRATION

- A. The parish is the ecclesial community in which the First Eucharist is celebrated.
- B. If the family wishes the child to celebrate First Eucharist at a parish other than its own, then the parents need formal permission from the pastors of both parishes.

### IV. MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS

- A. A loving family and a caring parish support the newly initiated child by encouragement and good example, which nurture a continuing relationship with God. The parish, home, and school faith formation programs promote the development of deeper intellectual awareness and provide opportunities for related prayer experiences as the child continues to grow and mature in the faith.
- B. Systematic catechesis needs to convey the message of the Gospel: commitment to further involvement in the community, manifesting that “the Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church’s life.”<sup>71</sup> Understanding and celebrating this central reality will help the child continue to become what he or she is called to be. The Eucharist will sustain and bind the child to Christ.
- C. It is essential that the link between the child, family and parish be encouraged and maintained so that all will have a wider sense of the faith community. Following the celebration of First Eucharist, families should be encouraged to live out the Eucharist by contributing to the life of the parish and by regular participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.

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<sup>71</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) #1407*

## RESOURCES

### Books and Articles

Baron, Reverend Robert. *Eucharist*. Orbis Books/RCL Benziger. 2008.

This is a lively, readable book about what really matters and about what the Eucharist really means. It is also available as a book on tape.

Diocese of Albany's Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Family Life. *The Family Celebrates Eucharist: Nourishment for Life's Journey*. Used by permission from the Diocese of Albany

Diocese of Ogdensburg. *Knowing Jesus and His Message: A Tool for Parish Catechesis*. 2008.

This book provides sacramental preparation for children celebrating penance/reconciliation.

Grassi, Father Dominic and Joe Paprocki. *Living the Mass: How One Hour a Week Can Change Your Life*. Loyola Press.

2005.

Loyola Press. *Adaptive First Communion Preparation Kit*.

McDonald, Mary J. *Building a Eucharistic Community: A Handbook for Liturgical Catechesis*. Resource Publications. 2001.

Chapter 6 – “Rites, Signs and Symbols” – Parts of this chapter can be used for a presentation. Reflection questions for leaders may help with preparing a presentation about the Mass.

Murphy, Doris. *Learning Centers for Reconciliation, First Eucharist and the Whole Community*. Twenty-Third Publications.

2013.

Pierce, Gregory F. Augustine. *The Mass is Never Ended: Rediscovering Our Mission to Transform the Word*. 2007 Avenue:

Notre Dame, Indiana. Ave Maria Press.

This book explains how the Mass equips us for the workday world.

Pope Benedict XVI. *The Sacrament of Charity (Sacramentum Caritatis)*. USCCB Publication 7-002. 2007.

The Holy Father's post-synod apostolic exhortation is a readable update on the theology of the Eucharist.

### Tools

*Knowing Jesus and His Message: A Tool for Parish Catechesis*

To access:

- A. Go to [www.rcdony.org](http://www.rcdony.org)
- B. Go to Offices and click on “more”
- C. Click on “Faith Formation”
- D. Click on “A Tool for Parish Catechesis”
- E. User name: tools    password: Tool123

## Diocesan Video Library

(Lists VHS/DVD's available in the Regional Faith Formation Offices,  
a description of each and the viewer age)

To access:

- A. Go to [www.rcdony.org](http://www.rcdony.org)
- B. On the toolbar click on "Office"; then click on " Faith Formation"
- C. Under Services, click on " Resources," then click on " AV Material," then choose format PDF, Excel, Web

### VHS/DVD

(All of the following listings are in VHS format unless otherwise noted.)

#### Ogdensburg (Western Region)

*A Child's First Communion*  
*Celebrating Our Faith Series*  
*First Communion: Taking a Place at the Table*  
*First Communion: A Family Journey (DVD)*  
*Maria's First Communion*  
*Sunday Morning*  
*The Angel's First Communion Lesson (DVD)*  
*Understanding the Mass for Children.*

#### Watertown (Western Region)

*Eucharist: Celebrating Our Faith- Children*  
*First Communion: Taking a Place at the Table*  
*Grandma's Bread*  
*Preparing for Your First Communion*  
*Sacraments, We Feed: Eucharist*  
*The Angel's First Communion Lesson*

#### Plattsburgh (Eastern Region)

*A Child's First Communion and So Much More (DVD)*  
*Brother Francis: The Bread of Life – Celebrating the Eucharist (DVD)*  
*Brother Francis: The Mass*  
*Eucharist: Rev. Robert E. Barron (DVD)*  
*First Communion: A Family Journey (DVD)*  
*How to Prepare Your Child for First Eucharist*  
*The Angel's First Communion Lesson (DVD)*

## **Websites**

The CatholicToolbox  
[catholicblogger1.blogspot.com/](http://catholicblogger1.blogspot.com/)

The Religion Teacher: First Communion Activities  
[www.thereligionteacher.com/](http://www.thereligionteacher.com/)

## **YouTube**

Busted Halo: Sacraments 201 Eucharist  
[bustedhalo.com/video/sacraments-201-eucharist-what-we-believe](http://bustedhalo.com/video/sacraments-201-eucharist-what-we-believe)





# SACRAMENTS OF HEALING

## ANOINTING OF THE SICK



and



## RECONCILIATION



# Anointing of the Sick

## INTRODUCTION



Suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death.<sup>72</sup>

Part of the plan laid out by God's providence is that we should fight strenuously against all sickness and carefully seek out the blessings of good health. At the same time, the sick who receive this sacrament, "by freely uniting their sufferings to the Passion and Death of Christ," contribute to the good of the People of God.<sup>73</sup>

The Lord Himself showed great concern for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the sick and commanded His followers to do likewise. This is clear from the Gospels and, above all, from the existence of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which He instituted and which is made known in the Letter of James. "Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the presbyters of the church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name (of the Lord)."<sup>74</sup>

Those who are seriously ill need the special help of God's grace in this time of anxiety lest they be broken in spirit and, under the pressure of temptation, perhaps weakened in their faith. Through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Christ strengthens the faithful who are afflicted by illness by providing them with the strongest means of support.

## I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A. The priest, who acts in *persona Christi* and *persona ecclesiae* (representing Christ and the Church), is the only proper minister of the anointing of the sick.<sup>75</sup>
- B. All priests to whom the care of souls has been entrusted have the duty and right of administering the anointing of the sick for the faithful entrusted to their pastoral office. For a reasonable cause, any other priest can administer this sacrament with at least the presumed consent of the priest mentioned above.<sup>76</sup>
- C. Pastoral Implications  
Those who exercise the sacramental ministry of anointing of the sick are responsible, with the assistance of religious and members of the laity, for preparing both the person being anointed and those who are present with the proper understanding of the sacrament.

## II. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK

- A. The Sacrament of the Sick may be celebrated under many circumstances:
  - 1. With those whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age
  - 2. Before surgery

<sup>72</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1500

<sup>73</sup> *Lumen Gentium (LG)* # 11 § 2

<sup>74</sup> James 5:14

<sup>75</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick* #16

<sup>76</sup> *Code of Canon Law* 1003 § 2

3. With elderly people who have become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present
4. With sick children, if they have sufficient use of reason, to be strengthened by this sacrament - In case of doubt whether a child has reached the use of reason, the sacrament is to be conferred.<sup>77</sup>
5. With those who have been anointed and who relapse after recovery or if their condition becomes more serious
6. With those who are unconscious or who have lost the use of reason if there is probability they would have asked for the sacrament were they in control of their faculties
7. With those who are judged to have a serious mental illness

B. Judgment on the suitability of a candidate for anointing should be made prudently and without scruple.<sup>78</sup>

### III. ANOINTING AFTER DEATH

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is not to be administered to those who are already dead. The minister should instead pray for the deceased.<sup>79</sup>

### IV. PURPOSE OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

- A. In the past, “*Extreme Unction*” (or “Last Rites”), as the sacrament was known, was reserved for those at the point of death. Today, the grace and strength of the sacrament can be given to any member of the faithful who is seriously ill, infirmed, or facing surgery.
- B. The purpose of this sacrament is:
  1. To bring spiritual and even physical strength during an illness, especially near the time of death
  2. To bring God’s grace to the recipient through the power of the Holy Spirit
- C. Just as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist initiate us into the life of Christ and the Christian community, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and Eucharist prepare us for the final journey from our earthly life into unity with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### V. THE PROPER MATTER FOR THE SACRAMENT

- A. The proper matter for this sacrament is the oil of the sick (*oleum infirmorum*), blessed by the bishop each year at the Chrism Mass.
- B. If this oil is not available, the priest may bless any plant oil, according to the rite, but this should be burned following the anointing.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, # 12, CIC, Canon 1005

<sup>78</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick* #8-12, 14, 53

<sup>79</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick* #15

<sup>80</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick* #20-22

## **VI. ANOINTING AND RECONCILIATION**

- A. If one who is ill wishes to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as well as the Anointing of the Sick, Reconciliation should be celebrated during a prior visit or prior to the actual anointing.
- B. The anointing should not be viewed as a substitute for Reconciliation, especially if the individual is in serious sin.<sup>81</sup>

## **VII. VIATICUM: THE LAST SACRAMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

- A. The Christian faithful who are in danger of death from any cause are to be nourished by the Eucharist in the form of Viaticum.
- B. Practical Implications
  1. Viaticum can best be described as Eucharist for the dying. Those facing imminent death should receive the Eucharist in the form of Viaticum. Anointing of the Sick strengthens one in the face of illness or sickness. Eucharist as Viaticum is the sacrament along with Reconciliation which prepares an individual for the final journey through death into everlasting life with Christ. Eucharist as Viaticum is “food for the journey.”
  2. All baptized Christians who are able to receive Eucharist are bound to receive Viaticum by reason of the precept to receive Communion when in danger of death from any cause.<sup>82</sup>
  3. Priests with pastoral responsibility must see that the celebration of this sacrament is not delayed but that the faithful are nourished by it while still in full possession of their faculties.
  4. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick may be given after Reconciliation but before Viaticum.
  5. The Church teaches that Viaticum is the essential sacrament when one is facing death. A person who is unable to swallow is unable to receive Viaticum.
  6. Anyone who is conscious should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of the “continuous rite” if he/she is in need of it. An unconscious person can be anointed and receive absolution through this sacrament.
  7. The prayers that accompany the Rite of Viaticum comfort and strengthen the person who is dying. It is best to administer the Eucharist while the person is still conscious and able to swallow. Once death has become imminent, the person may receive Viaticum every day for as long as he/she is able. Viaticum should be brought to the person before the condition deteriorates to the point where the sick person is unable to receive the Eucharist.

## **VIII. CATECHESIS**

- A. The faithful should receive a thorough and ongoing catechesis related to the Anointing of the Sick. This catechesis may be incorporated into Sunday homilies when the Scriptures are about sickness, healing, forgiveness and mercy.

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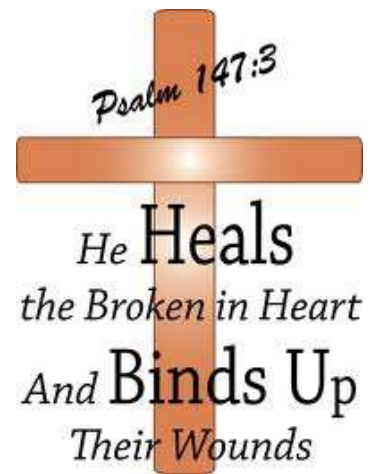
<sup>81</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick #101*

<sup>82</sup> *Pastoral Care of the Sick #27*

- B. Catechesis about Anointing of the Sick should include the following:
1. The sacrament should be requested as soon as a serious illness is apparent.
  2. The sacrament should not be delayed, particularly until the moment of death.
  3. The sacrament should, whenever possible, be celebrated with family and/or those providing health care to the individual within the context of the faith community in the parish or institution.
  4. Whenever possible, individuals should celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in their home parishes before entering the hospital.
  5. Regular communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick, with adequate catechesis to deter abuse, should be celebrated in parishes.
  6. Priests, deacons, and others who serve in ministry to the sick and in catechesis should be grounded in the meaning and celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

## IX. CATECHETICAL THEMES

- A. Ages 6-8
1. Develop an understanding of illness and healing.
  2. Develop an understanding of God as one who can heal.
  3. Learn prayers requesting healing for illness.
- B. Ages 8-11
1. Develop the Old Testament understanding of illness and suffering as a way to conversion. God's forgiveness initiates healing.
  2. Develop the Old Testament understanding that faithfulness to God according to His law restores life.
  3. Develop a sense of prayer for forgiveness and healing.
  4. Introduce the symbols related to the Sacrament of Anointing and their meaning: prayer of faith, oil, anointing.
- C. Ages 11-14
1. Develop the Old Testament understanding that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others.
  2. Develop the understanding of Jesus as Divine Physician who shows compassion towards the sick through His many healings. He has come to heal the whole person.
  3. Develop the understanding of Jesus' redemptive suffering.
  4. Introduce an understanding of the healings of Jesus as signs of the coming of the Kingdom.
  5. Introduce the importance of Jesus' touch in the healing of the sick in the New Testament.
  6. Introduce the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy in the context of the moral life.
- D. Ages 14-18
1. Introduce the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the sacrament which gives spiritual healing and strength to a person seriously ill or in danger of death. During this sacrament one also prays for physical recovery.
  2. Catechesis for the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick includes:
    - a. The celebration of the sacrament
      - 1) Individual celebration for sick or elderly at home, in a nursing home or in the hospital
      - 2) Communal celebration
    - b. Essential elements (matter and form of the sacrament)



- c. Anointing with oil on the forehead and hands along with the spoken words of the formula
- d. The effects of the sacrament
- e. Union of the sick person with Christ
- f. Strength, peace and courage in illness
- g. Forgiveness of sins (if the person is truly sorrowful but unable to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation)
- h. A hope to be healed or preparation for a peaceful death
- i. Minister of the sacrament: bishop and/or priest

#### E. Ages 18-35 (Young Adults)

1. Introduce the new healing of Christ who brought a more radical healing through His victory over sin and death. Jesus takes away the “sin of the world” of which illness is only a consequence.
2. Develop the understanding that by His passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering. “It can henceforth configure us to Him and unite us with His redemptive passion.”<sup>83</sup>
3. Note the importance of caring for sick family members and of offering prayerful support for the sick in the parish and the world.
4. Emphasize the importance of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life as connected with bodily health.

#### F. Older Adults

1. Develop the importance of prayer in the family as part of the pastoral care of the sick and elderly.
2. Explain the circumstances for individual and communal celebrations of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
3. Explain the ritual of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the meaning of the essential elements of the sacrament.
4. Develop an understanding of the effects of the celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
5. Explain Viaticum as the “Last Sacrament of the Christian.”<sup>84</sup>

## X. METHODS OF CATECHESIS

### A. Parish Model

#### 1. Formation of Adults

- a. While parish faith formation programs for children, youth and Catholic school classes are the most prevalent models for appropriate catechesis, opportunities for formation of adults in a structured environment should be provided regularly.
- b. Particular attention should be given to reminding older adults of the importance of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum.
- c. Additional effort should also be made to catechize those adults who are providing care for elderly parents.

#### 2. Lifelong Catechesis

- a. Parishes implementing a model of lifelong catechesis with the whole parish will find the catechetical themes for this sacrament useful in planning catechetical activities.

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<sup>83</sup> CCC #376

<sup>84</sup> CCC #381

- b. It is important that preparation for The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick as well as pastoral care of the sick and dying not be overlooked.
  - 3. Parish Bulletins
    - a. Parishes should also implement other means of catechesis including the use of the parish bulletin to provide information about this sacrament.
    - b. Bulletin inserts and articles as well as information on the cover of the bulletin are all means of providing further catechesis.
  - 4. Literature Racks: Printed materials may also be made available in literature racks and book stores.
  - 5. Parish Web Site
    - a. In parishes where it is possible, information should be provided on the parish web site. This is one more way of catechizing and evangelizing the faithful regarding care of the sick and dying. Specific information about The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum could be made available in this way.
    - b. Pastors may also choose to include specific links to useful information about The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. (Example: Online information from the USCCB - Office for the Catechism)<sup>85</sup>
- B. Family Preparation
  - 1. Care for the sick in the home
    - a. As first teachers, parents should begin to instruct and catechize their children regarding care for the sick in the home.
    - b. Parents may utilize prayers made available through the parish or through other resources when caring for sick children.
    - c. When parents pray with and for their children in times of sickness, they begin the process of catechesis in the home.
  - 2. Catholic understanding of suffering and death
    - a. It is also important that parents instruct their children appropriately about the Catholic understanding of suffering and death.
    - b. Special opportunities arise for instruction with the death of a family member or close friend.
    - c. The parish should provide sufficient resources for parents to draw on at that important moment.
  - 3. Resources: Resources for assisting parents can be distributed in various ways. Printed materials may be distributed through faith formation classes, the bulletin or on the parish web site.

## **XI. THE COMMUNAL CELEBRATION OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

- A. Communal anointing unites the community in prayer with its sick members and provides an opportunity for the seriously ill to receive the sacrament.
- B. Since at Sunday Mass there is a greater possibility for indiscriminate reception of the sacrament, a proper and clear catechesis should precede the anointing.

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt2sect2sect2chpt2ind.htm>



## RESOURCES



### Websites

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*

[www.vatican.va/archive/cccl/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cccl/index.htm): 1499-1532

*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*

[www.vatican.va/archive/compendium\\_ccc/documents/archive\\_2005\\_compendium-ccc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html)  
313-320

*Code of Canon Law*

[www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM) 844

Outside Da Box

[outsidedabox.com/film/suffering-and-glorified/](http://outsidedabox.com/film/suffering-and-glorified/)

Video: Rome Reports: Pope Francis explains the meaning behind the Anointing of the Sick, which “expresses God’s merciful presence to the sick, the suffering and the aged.”

[www.romereports.com/2014/02/26/pope-francis-explains-the-anointing-of-the-sick-during-general-audience](http://www.romereports.com/2014/02/26/pope-francis-explains-the-anointing-of-the-sick-during-general-audience)

### YouTube

Sacraments 101: Anointing of the Sick (who it is for)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEppjWNO2y4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEppjWNO2y4)

Anointing of the Sick: Loyola University Chicago 2013; (Class Presentation)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A5FjxkZJHw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A5FjxkZJHw)

Video: Pope Francis: “*The Beauty of the Anointing of the Sick*”

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2k-tn0Lepw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2k-tn0Lepw)

# Sacrament of Reconciliation/Penance



## INTRODUCTION

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Penance or Confession) is an encounter through which we receive forgiveness for our sins by a representative of both Christ and the Church community.<sup>86</sup>

Preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a time to focus on God's mercy and to experience forgiveness among our family, friends, and community. Children of the parish who have reached the age of reason or beyond are invited to begin the formal preparation to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.<sup>87</sup>

### I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A. A candidate is ready to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation when the pastor, parents, pastoral life coordinator and the catechetical leader have discerned that the candidate:
  1. Is aware that God's love is unconditional
  2. Understands that Jesus died for the sins of all
  3. Distinguishes between good and evil, recognizes the capacity for both and the importance of making right choices
  4. Comprehends and can express sorrow for sin and forgiveness of others
  
- B. The norm of the Church is that first sacramental confession should precede the reception of First Eucharist. It is the responsibility of the parents, those who take the place of parents and the pastor to see that children who have reached the age of reason are adequately prepared.<sup>88</sup>
  1. This norm affirms the ability of children to realize that their actions and attitudes impact their relationships with God and with other people. They are to be encouraged to grow in a greater awareness of the graces received through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (e.g., forgiveness, peace, joy, love, holiness).
  2. The celebration of this sacrament can help children to know more personally and experience more fully Jesus' love, mercy, and forgiveness and thus lead them to the fullness of life.

<sup>86</sup> *At Home with the Sacraments: Reconciliation – A Forgiving Encounter*, Peg Bowman. Twenty-Third Publications. P.1 (Introduction)

<sup>87</sup> Holy Family Catholic Community Webpage: [www.hfccmd.org](http://www.hfccmd.org) 7321 Burkittsville Road, Middletown, MD 21769

<sup>88</sup> *Code of Canon Law* #914

C. Persons with Disabilities

The following guidelines which offer “a set of general principles to provide access to the sacraments for persons with disabilities”<sup>89</sup> were approved by the U.S. Bishops. By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.



1. Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community.<sup>90</sup>
2. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.<sup>91</sup>
3. Pastors are to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, their advocates, and their families, as well as those knowledgeable in serving persons with disabilities can make a most valuable contribution to these programs.<sup>92</sup>
4. Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities.
5. Further, parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry according to their abilities. Every Christian community considers those who suffer handicaps, physical or mental or some other form of disability, as persons particularly beloved of the Lord. A growth in social and ecclesial consciousness, together with undeniable progress in specialized pedagogy, makes it possible for the family and other formative bodies to provide adequate catechesis for these individuals. The love of the Father for the weakest of his children and the continuous presence of Jesus and His Spirit give assurance that every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.<sup>93</sup>

## II. CATECHETICAL PREPARATION FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

A. The pastor is to make particular provision that:

1. “Suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments”<sup>94</sup>
2. Children are adequately prepared for the celebration of the sacraments by means of catechetical formation given over an appropriate period<sup>95</sup>
3. Children with disabilities should be included in the parish sacramental celebrations according to their capacity.<sup>96</sup>

B. The systematic catechetical program in the parish or Catholic school has a significant responsibility for assisting the family in providing remote catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

C. Sacramental catechesis for First Reconciliation is directed by those especially trained for this ministry. They will guide parents as they journey with their children. This catechesis includes:

1. **Remote Preparation**

- a. Pastors and catechetical leaders have the right to recognize different options (e.g. homeschooling).

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<sup>89</sup> USCCB *Guidelines for the Celebrations of the Sacraments with Person with Disabilities*, General Principle, 3.

<sup>90</sup> Canon #213

<sup>91</sup> Canon #843 § 1

<sup>92</sup> Canon #777 § 4

<sup>93</sup> *General Directory of Catechesis (GDC)* #189

<sup>94</sup> Canon #777 § 1

<sup>95</sup> Canon #777 § 2

<sup>96</sup> See *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, General Principle, 3

- b. Parents play a primary role in catechizing their children. Their attitudes, practices, and participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation will play an important role in the celebration of the sacrament.
- c. Parish and Catholic school leaders provide assistance and direction for parents and families so they might foster the practice of forgiveness in the context of the home.
- d. Families are expected to participate weekly in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.

## 2. Proximate Preparation

*“Jesus calls us to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.”<sup>97</sup>*

- a. Parents and catechetical leaders need to work together in providing children with an understanding of:
  - 1) A brief history of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
  - 2) The concept of sin as a reality in human life
  - 3) Sin as alienation from God, others, creation, and self
  - 4) Sin (fundamental attitude), sins (individual acts), communal sin
  - 5) God’s merciful forgiveness of our human sinfulness (Isaiah 49, The Book of Jonah)
  - 6) Gospel stories such as “The Prodigal Son” and “The Lost Sheep”
  - 7) Differences between objective moral wrong and sinfulness
  - 8) Ministering to one another in the healing process (a reconciling assembly)
  - 9) Contrition and ongoing conversion of heart
  - 10) Fidelity to God, others, creation, and self
  - 11) Christian hospitality and communication
  - 12) Encouragement to regularly examine one’s conscience and celebrate the sacrament
- b. Families are expected to participate in the parent sessions during the proximate preparation.
- c. Preparation for Reconciliation precedes and is separate from the preparation for Eucharist. This order exists so that each sacrament may receive the attention it deserves.



## 3. Immediate Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation begins with the call to conversion in our lives.

Parishes provide opportunities for:

- a. The love and mercy that is extended to God’s people through this sacrament
- b. Personal growth in their understanding of the meaning of sin and conversion
- c. Conscience formation, including the psychological, moral, and spiritual
- d. The understanding of the Rite of Reconciliation

<sup>97</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1427

### III. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- A. The priest is the celebrant of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He is to imitate the Good Shepherd in this ministry and to possess a spirit of love for children as Jesus did. "When he celebrates the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation), the priest is fulfilling the ministry of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, of the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds, of the Father who awaits the prodigal son and welcomes him on his return, and of the just and impartial judge whose judgment is both just and merciful. The priest is the sign and the instrument of God's merciful love for the sinner."<sup>98</sup>
- B. The parish may provide options for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These options include the regularly scheduled times for individual confession, communal opportunities that involve both children and families, or seasonal communal celebrations of the sacrament such as during Advent, Lent, and other appropriate times.

### IV. MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS

- A. Continuing lifelong conversion is an essential element of growing in faith. Therefore, catechesis for Reconciliation is ongoing. Children have a right to an ever developing catechesis and to an opportunity for celebrating Reconciliation.
- B. Continued catechesis on Reconciliation, adapted to the readiness level of the learner, is an essential part of the systematic catechetical effort in the parish or Catholic school faith formation programs.<sup>99</sup> As the children grow and mature, the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) will offer them new possibilities for conversion and restoration of the grace of justification.<sup>100</sup>
  - 1. Parishes provide opportunities for adults, youth, children, parents, and the parish community to deepen their understanding of and participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The parish also provides catechesis for families as well as home activities so that appreciation for this sacrament can grow.
  - 2. Both parish and Catholic school faith formation programs, along with homeschooling parents, provide yearly catechesis for Reconciliation and pay special attention to the moral growth and development that occurs in children as they experience puberty. Parents are also to be involved in this expanded catechesis.
  - 3. The invitation to prepare for and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be continually offered to those who have chosen to delay preparation for personal reasons, especially in these critically formative years.
  - 4. Children and their parents are encouraged to participate in this sacrament regularly, and periodic celebrations of the sacrament are provided for children.

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<sup>98</sup> CCC 1465

<sup>99</sup> DM: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia*

<sup>100</sup> CCC #1446

## V. SUGGESTIONS FOR FORMING YOUR CONSCIENCE

- A. Ten Commandments/Family Examination of Conscience<sup>101</sup>
- B. Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy
- C. Beatitudes

## VI. PRAYERS TO KNOW

- A. Sign of the Cross
- B. Our Father
- C. Hail Mary
- D. Glory Be...
- E. Act of Contrition/Prayer of Sorrow (Your parish may suggest a different one.)



## VII. STEPS IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- A. Examination of conscience by the penitent
- B. Welcome and blessing
- C. Confession of sin
- D. Assignment of penance
- E. Act of Contrition
- F. Absolution

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<sup>101</sup> Mary Carty is the Home and Family editor of Catholic Online ([www.Catholic.org](http://www.Catholic.org))

## RESOURCES

*“Knowing Jesus and His Message: A Tool for Parish Catechesis”*; Diocese of Ogdensburg - 2008;  
Sacramental Preparation for Children Celebrating Penance/Reconciliation

To access *“A Tool for Parish Catechesis”*

- F. Go to [www.rcdony.org](http://www.rcdony.org)
- G. Go to Offices and click on “more”
- H. Click on “Faith Formation”
- I. Click on “A Tool for Parish Catechesis”
- J. User name: *tools* password: *Tool123*

### Websites

[www.faithfirst.com/RCLsacraments/reconciliation/kids0710/funReviews/journeyCH03.html](http://www.faithfirst.com/RCLsacraments/reconciliation/kids0710/funReviews/journeyCH03.html)

[www.archbalt.org/evangelization/elementary-sacramental/upload/SignsOfGodsLove.pdf](http://www.archbalt.org/evangelization/elementary-sacramental/upload/SignsOfGodsLove.pdf)

[www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=first%20penance%20activities](http://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=first%20penance%20activities)

[www.catholicicing.com/reconciliation-craft-for-catholic-kids/](http://www.catholicicing.com/reconciliation-craft-for-catholic-kids/)

## YouTube

Sacrament of Penance (Why We Confess?) Video  
Confession 101: Parts 1/2

### Diocesan Video Library

(Lists VHS and DVD's available at the Regional Faith Formation Offices, a description of each, and the viewer age)

To access the Diocesan Video Library

- D. Go to [www.rcdony.org](http://www.rcdony.org)
- E. On the toolbar click on "Office"; then click on "Faith Formation"
- F. Under Services, click on "Resources"; then click on "AV Material," then choose format PDF, Excel

### VHS/DVD'S

(All listings are in VHS format unless otherwise noted.)

#### Ogdensburg: (Western Region)

*A Child's First Penance*  
*Celebrating Our Faith Series (Reconciliation with Children (Grades 2-6), With Families (Adult)*  
*First Reconciliation: A Family Journey (DVD)*  
*Forgive and Forget*  
*How to Prepare Your Child for Reconciliation*  
*Penance- A Story of Forgiveness*  
*Preparing Your Child for First Reconciliation*  
*Reconciliation: A Sacrament of Healing*  
*Reconciliation: Celebrating Forgiveness*  
*Ricky's First Reconciliation*  
*The Angel's First Reconciliation Lesson (DVD)*  
*The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God*  
*The Gift of Reconciliation*  
*The God Who Reconciles*  
*The Promise*  
*The Sack*  
*The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Past and Present*

#### Plattsburgh (Eastern Region)

*Brother Francis: Forgiven- The Blessings of Confession (DVD)*  
*Celebrating Our Faith Series*  
*Cherub Wings Collection – And It Was So! God's Power and Forgiveness (DVD)*  
*First Reconciliation: A Family Journey (DVD)*  
*Hermie and Friends: The Flo Show Creates a Buzz: Saying You're Sorry (DVD)*  
*How to Prepare Your Child for Reconciliation*  
*Kids and the Sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation (DVD)*  
*Pardon and Peace*



*Pardon and Peace ...Remembered*  
*Reconciliation: Celebrating Forgiveness*  
*Ricky's First Confession*  
*Sacraments (DVD)*  
*The Angel's First Reconciliation Lesson (DVD)*

Watertown (Western Region)

*A Child's First Penance (DVD)*  
*First Reconciliation: A Family Journey*  
*Forgive and Forget*  
*Kids and the Sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Communion, Confirmation (DVD)*  
*Lord of Mercy: Reconciliation*  
*Penance: A Story of Forgiveness*  
*Penance: Sacrament of Peace*  
*Preparing Your Child for First Reconciliation*  
*Preparing Your Child for Reconciliation in Four Creative Ways (DVD)*  
*Reconciliation: Celebrating Forgiveness*  
*Reconciliation: Celebrating Forgiveness – Revised*  
*Reconciliation: Celebrating Our Faith*  
*Reconciliation: Celebrating Our Faith –Families*  
*Sacraments, We Forgive: Reconciliation*  
*The Angel's First Reconciliation Lesson*  
*The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God*  
*The God Who Reconciles*  
*The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Past and Present*  
*Walks With Jesus: Mediations for Quiet Moments*  
*What Changed Michael?*



# The Sacraments at the Service of Communion



**and**

**Matrimony**





# Matrimony



Sacrament of Christ's Love

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5:31–32)*



# The Sacrament of Matrimony

## The Catholic Vision for Marriage



"What is marriage? It is a true and authentic vocation, as are the priesthood and the religious life. Two Christians who marry have recognized the call of the Lord in their own love story, the vocation to form one flesh and one life from two, male and female."

(Pope Francis, Meeting with the Young People of Umbria, October 4, 2013)

"By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope and charity."<sup>102</sup> The Church's hope for married couples is that they and the entire community of believers find in marriage a "specific source and original means of sanctification"<sup>103</sup> with an assurance of peace, happiness, and permanence.

Marriage is a lifelong process, an unfolding of the mystery of God working in our lives. The wedding is the event that celebrates within the faith community the formal and public declaration of this process.

### Introduction

Now more than ever, we are witnessing an accentuated deterioration of the family and of the values of marriage. Marriage is usually celebrated at a later age, the number of divorces and separations are increasing, and co-habitation is the norm of today's society. This is a great pastoral concern for the Catholic Church. A question that confronts us: Are the couples really prepared for marriage and the life that follows it?

St. John Paul II speaks of marriage as a saved and saving community. The couples are saved because of the redemptive love of Christ and are agents of salvation because their love is a participation in God's love made present in the world. While engaged couples today face many challenges, there are many reasons for hope. The Church's vision of marriage, even while involving expectations, is always an invitation to the fullness of life. This invitation resonates in the hearts of the engaged. May the marriage preparation process continue to extend Christ's invitation to the benefit of married life with joy and clarity!

The three stages of marriage preparation – remote, proximate, and immediate - according to *Familiaris Consortio* teach that marriage preparation is to be seen and put into practice as a gradual and continuous process beginning with the family, the domestic Church. "By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of the sacrament."<sup>104</sup>

### I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Changes that have taken place within almost all modern societies demand that not only the family but also society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities. The Church must, therefore, promote better and more intensive programs of marriage

<sup>102</sup> *Familiaris Consortio (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World)* #56

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* USCCB Marriage, *The Nature of Marriage*

<sup>104</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1660

preparation in order to eliminate as far as possible the difficulties that many married couples find themselves in and in order to favor positively the establishing and maturing of successful marriages.<sup>105</sup>

- A. The conditions for a valid marriage are: freedom of consent, understanding of the permanence of marriage, openness to procreation and education of offspring, and the promise of fidelity.
- B. Canon Law  
The *Code of Canon Law* has provisions for valid and licit marriages. (Canons 1055.1; 1063-1130)
- C. Church Requirements
  1. Baptismal certificates dated within six months of the wedding date
  2. Initial interview with officiating clergy at least six months prior to the planned marriage date (The initial interview, set within the context of evangelization, sets the tone for the rest of the marriage preparation process.)
  3. Completion of Pre-Marital Inventory
  4. Certificate of participation in a Pre-Cana program or a diocesan approved plan
  5. Either the bride or-groom-to-be should be a registered, practicing member of the parish. (Non-registered Catholic parties must obtain a letter of permission from their own parish.)
  6. Except for extraordinary circumstances, Catholics celebrate marriage in a parish church.<sup>106</sup>
- D. Civil Documents
  1. Certified copies of birth certificates
  2. Marriage license

## II. CATECHETICAL PREPARATION

The various periods of marriage preparation cannot be rigidly defined. However, it is useful as a working model to divide marriage preparation into three stages: remote, proximate, and immediate.

### A. Remote Marriage Preparation

1. A lifelong process central to remote preparation is what occurs in the family. the domestic church. Christian parents are the first and most important witnesses and educators of their children in the growth of faith, hope and charity. Remote preparation begins “in the womb” and continues throughout childhood, adolescence, and up to the period of engagement. It is based primarily in the family with the assistance of the Church. “For every couple, marriage preparations begins at birth. What they received from their family should prepare them to know themselves and to make a full and definitive commitment. Those best prepared for marriage are probably those who learned what Christian marriage is from their own parents, who chose each other unconditionally and daily renew this decision.”<sup>107</sup> During this period of preparation, children learn to give and receive love through spiritual and catechetical formation focusing on vocational choices.



<sup>105</sup> *Familiaris Consortio (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World)* #66

<sup>106</sup> *Roman Catholic Diocese of Ogdensburg Pastoral Handbook*. 86

<sup>107</sup> *Amoris Laetitia-The Joy of Love (On Love in the Family/Pope Francis)* #208; 2016; Libreria Editrice Vaticana



2. "There is a need to encourage shared spiritual moments such as participating in the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, daily prayer in the family, and practical signs of charity. This will strengthen fidelity in marriage and unity in families. In such a family setting, it will not be difficult for children to discover a vocation of service in the community and the Church and to learn especially by seeing the example of their parents that family life is a way to realize the universal call to holiness" (CA 46).<sup>108</sup>
3. In assisting the Christian family to hand down the faith, Catholic schools and parish faith formation programs have a serious responsibility to be faithful to the teachings of the Church.
4. Family Catechesis on the Sacrament of Matrimony for "couples and parents should be properly appreciated as active agents in catechesis...Family catechesis is of great assistance as an effective method in training young parents to be aware of their mission as the evangelizers of their own family."<sup>109</sup>
  - a. Nurture an understanding of God's love
  - b. Reinforce the truth that the human person is called to live in truth and love
  - c. Emphasize the virtue of sincere self-giving
  - d. Involve formation of character, self-control and self-esteem
  - e. Enhance the proper use of one's inclinations and gifts
  - f. Foster growth in virtue and respect of persons of the opposite sex
5. Suggestions for Parents
  - a. Birth to Age 6
 

The best gift parents can give their children is role-modeling a healthy and vibrant marriage allowing children to "catch" a vision of marriage from their parents' daily living by:

    - 1) Sharing personal stories about people who have loved and encouraged them to develop their gifts of respecting others and staying close to God
    - 2) Reminding their child that he/she is created in God's image with strengths and limitations
    - 3) Guiding their child's recognition of right and wrong
    - 4) Carefully choosing and expressing words, emotions, and actions that reflect the dignity of each person.
    - 5) Showing warmth and affection through words, appropriate touch, and non-verbal gestures
    - 6) Providing opportunities for their child to experience shared family mealtimes
    - 7) Establishing consistent prayer time
    - 8) Modeling common courtesies (please, thank you)
    - 9) Setting aside quality time to read appropriate Bible stories about God's loving care
  - b. Ages 7-9
    - 1) Conveying to their child that he/she is loved, valued, and cherished
    - 2) Speaking positively to their child
    - 3) Modeling for their child faithful attention and participation in the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation
    - 4) Discussing the importance of modesty, self-discipline, and the need for privacy
    - 5) Moderating and supervising television, technology, and printed materials

<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *The Church in America* (January 22, 1999)

<sup>109</sup> *Amoris Laetitia-The Joy of Love (On Love in the Family/Pope Francis #287 p. 127; Libreria Editrice Vaticana*

- 6) Developing honest communication skills involving listening, sharing, forgiving, and trusting
- 7) Helping the child to recognize through conscience formation the difference between what is loving and what is harmful to a relationship
- 8) Inviting Godparents and other trusted adults to share their time and gifts with their child

c. Ages 10-11

- 1) Recognizing that a child has a growing, active role in the faith community as Christ's light
- 2) Developing age-appropriate understandings of the biological processes and the relationship to Christian marriage
- 3) Exercising problem-solving skills based on the Ten Commandments
- 4) Becoming familiar with Scripture and demonstrating how it can be applied to his/her life
- 5) Leaving notes for their child (e.g., in the lunch bag) reminding them that they pray for them daily
- 6) Taking time to pray with their child when things go wrong and to find constructive responses to handling defeat
- 7) Making sure television, music, movies, and internet usage reflect Christian values (discuss positive examples of these and offer explanations why certain programming is "off limits")
- 8) Continue to work on their own marriage relationship modeling for the child the importance first and foremost of covenantal marriage

d. Ages 12-14

- 1) Inviting their adolescent to answer the call to holiness by developing a personal relationship with Christ
- 2) Helping their adolescent develop appropriate physical and emotional expressions of love and affection
- 3) Helping their adolescent develop relationship-building skills and conflict resolution skills
- 4) Explaining the importance of having a sense of responsibility for actions and consequences
- 5) Giving their adolescent practical suggestions for dealing morally with pornography, abusive language, the exploitation of sex and sexuality in movies, television, advertising, music, etc.
- 6) Teaching their adolescent how to invite God into their personal decision making

e. Ages 15-18

- 1) Using Jesus as the model for personal maturity and committed friendship
- 2) Promoting a positive self-image, including appreciation of ethnic culture and a humble acceptance of one's self as lovable and loved by God and others
- 3) Helping their adolescent develop a healthy sense of equality and mutuality between the sexes
- 4) Helping their adolescent to develop Gospel and Church-based moral decision making
- 5) Guiding their adolescent to an understanding of the Church's teachings on Christian marriage, divorce, annulment and remarriage
- 6) Discussing procreation, contraception, abortion and other life issues
- 7) Helping their adolescent recognize a call to marriage as a vocation
- 8) Continuing to model and discuss responsible Christian parenthood and family life
- 9) Distinguishing dating from mating, which involves a level of personal and interpersonal sharing which begins to prepare a couple for giving themselves totally to each other
- 10) Communicating clearly that marriage is the proper context that God has established for intimate physical expressions of this total sharing of self with another

- 11) Identifying choices that support the development of healthy, chaste relationships
  - 12) Teaching how to recognize signs of healthy relationships as well as warning signs of unhealthy relationships
- f. Ages 19 – young adulthood
- 1) Listening and responding to their questions
  - 2) Listening and guiding them when needed as they continue to develop their spiritual lives
  - 3) Encouraging them to join Campus Ministries or Young Adult Ministries
  - 4) Reinforcing the human and spiritual aspects of marriage that foster basic healthy relationships and developing an understanding of what is needed for family life: work, finances, Natural Family Planning, responsible parenthood, and a reliance on the resources of the Catholic Church
  - 5) Redefining a relationship with their child as an adult
  - 6) Catholic Schools and Faith Formation Programs

Our Catholic schools' classrooms and parish faith formation programs support the mission of the domestic Church by offering a "broad catechetical effort regarding the Christian ideal of conjugal communion and family life, including a spirituality of fatherhood and motherhood and responsible parenthood."<sup>110</sup> Catholic education will allow the students to have a beautiful and inspiring understanding of marriage and of the love of Jesus Christ when it clearly and unambiguously presents Catholic teaching on the sacrament at the theological, anthropological and spiritual levels.

#### B. Proximate Marriage Preparation (8-12 months before the wedding)

1. Proximate marriage preparation builds the foundation for marriage by providing a more specific preparation for the sacrament, presenting marriage as an interpersonal relationship of a man and a woman that has to be continually developed over a lifetime.
2. It begins with the earliest days of a couple's engagement (minimal 8–12 months before the wedding) and concludes approximately 10 weeks prior to the wedding. It is a process of evangelization similar to the catechumenate and should be a collaborative approach between the couple and the parish.
3. Instruction in the natural requirements of marriage should include: freedom of consent, the unity and indissolubility of marriage, the correct concept of responsible parenthood, the human aspects of conjugal sexuality, the conjugal act with its requirements and ends, and the proper education of children.<sup>111</sup>
4. This stage of preparation includes:
  - a. Pre-marriage relationship inventory such as FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) or PREPARE (Premarital, Preparation, and Relationship Enhancement)
  - b. Pre-nuptial investigation
  - c. Weekend retreat for engaged couples, or alternatively, a series of weekly evening marriage preparation meetings (such as Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter)
  - d. The Catholic Church is vitally interested in the sanctity and success of marriage. The Church wants couples to take time to reflect on the holiness of their vocation and on the importance of the step they are about to take. She wants them to understand that

#### **MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

So that the "I do" of the spouses may be a free and responsible act and so that the marriage covenant may have a solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation for marriage is of prime importance. CCC, 1632

<sup>110</sup> *Ecclesia In America*, January 22, 1999 #46

<sup>111</sup> "What God has Joined..." (Particular Norms for Christian Marriage) by Archdiocese of Denver.

marriage is a way of life designed by God to include the very presence of Jesus Christ Himself. That is why the Church insists that couples who present themselves to have their marriage blessed in a sacramental way participate in a marriage preparation program. The diocesan marriage preparation program, Pre-Cana, is held at various times in many of the deaneries. Marriage preparation programs, such as sponsor couple programs, are held in various parishes. Couples should check with their parish priest or deacon to see if the parish offers a sponsor couple program.<sup>112</sup>

- e. Pre-Cana Marriage Preparation is for engaged couples planning to be married in the Catholic Church. The choice of a one-day preparation or two evenings of presentation enables couples to have an opportunity to share honestly with each other the strengths and gifts they will each bring to the marriage. The couples will also look at the challenges and opportunities that come with married life. The topics that will facilitate this discussion will be about family living, communication, finances, Christian sexuality, parenting, Natural Family Planning and the Sacrament of Matrimony.<sup>113</sup>
- f. According to the guidelines outlined by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops
  - 1) Pre-Cana preparation should cover the following important areas:
    - a) Spirituality/Faith – Marriage as Sacrament, Couple Prayer, and an understanding of the teaching of the Church about marriage and family life
    - b) Explore the 5 C's of Marriage Preparation
      - 1) Commitment
      - 2) Communication
      - 3) Conflict Resolution
      - 4) Children
      - 5) Church
    - c) Reflection on the past and on future expectations
  - 2) Other topics that are appropriate to be covered during Pre-Cana include:
    - a) Unique Challenges of Military Couples
    - b) Stepfamilies
    - c) Children of Divorce
    - d) Ceremony Planning
  - 3) Marriage preparation - partner with married volunteers
    - a) One-on-one sponsors
    - b) Small group sessions
  - 4) Marriage preparation sessions with a priest, deacon, pastoral associate, parish life coordinator or trained lay minister

### C. Immediate Marriage Preparation (10 weeks before the wedding)

1. Immediate preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is a part of the larger pastoral responsibility to assist the Christian faithful in preparation for marriage and to support them in living out this sacrament. This preparation should take place in the weeks immediately preceding the wedding so as to give a new meaning, content, and form to the premarital inquiry required by Canon Law. This preparation not only is necessary in every case but also is urgently needed for engaged couples who still manifest shortcomings or difficulties in Christian doctrine and practice.
2. This stage of preparation should include:
  - a. Catechesis on the Rite of Marriage
  - b. Liturgy planning, that is, choice of readings, music, blessings

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<sup>112</sup> [www.rcdony.org](http://www.rcdony.org), Marriage Preparation, Family Life Office

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

- c. Rehearsal planning
- d. Reflection of their marriage preparation experience
- e. Invitation to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- f. Completion of all paperwork and canonical requirements



### III. Enriching and Supporting the Newly Married

- A. Pastors are obliged to ensure that the parish community provides assistance to those who have entered marriage so that while faithfully observing and protecting their conjugal covenant, they may achieve a holier and fuller family life.<sup>114</sup>
- B. A sacramental marriage is a journey of faith that continues through the many stages of family life.<sup>115</sup>
- C. The parish community should support the newly married couple by such means as notes, phone calls, a follow-up meeting after the wedding, and faith formation opportunities throughout their lives.
- D. The parish community could invite couples to consider serving in the parish in its various ministries.
- E. The parish community should sponsor a regular social group for those married five years or less and offer the opportunity for childcare for couples who attend this social activity.
- F. Dinner for Two: Couples interested in providing a marriage enrichment evening for other couples in their own parish communities
- G. New marriages need extra support. Suggested topics might be:
  - 1. Lack of Married Friends!
  - 2. Cohabitation's Habits
  - 3. The "Three-Year Itch"
- H. On-going Care for Marriage - Young couples need to know they are not alone in their married vocation.
  - 1. Engage all parishioners in praying for married couples.
  - 2. Welcome new couples to the wider parish family.
  - 3. Support couples transitioning into parenthood.
  - 4. Provide activities to form a sense of community among young couples.

<sup>114</sup> Canon #1063

<sup>115</sup> Diocese of Rockville Center, *Guidelines for Marriage Preparation and Liturgical Celebrations* p.27

## Resources

### USCCB Website

- Theological Reflection “Marriage: Sacrament of Enduring Love” - Most Reverend Danial Flores, Bishop of Brownsville, Texas
- *Formation in Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Life* by John S. Grabowski, PhD
- Engaging Ecclesial Movements and Association in Support of the Church’s Ministry to Marriage and Families

### On-line Marriage Preparation Courses

- Catholic Marriage Prep Class - Archdiocese of Chicago Marriage Ministries - includes online instruction and video components, individual feedback, and discussion inventory, [www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com)
- Theology of the Body Marriage Preparation Program based on St. John Paul II Theology of the Body. [www.catholicmarriageprep.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com)

### Diocese of Ogdensburg Family Life Office Webpage

(Excellent website resources on the topic of Marriage.)

- [www.SusanVogt.net](http://www.SusanVogt.net) - An online resource for married couples, parents, and leaders to support marriage and family life. Family Matters includes articles, resources, and activities on marriage, parenting, and spirituality plus over 150 archived “Marriage Moments” and “Parenting Pointers” for leaders to use in newsletters, bulletins, and on websites.
- [www.smartmarriage.com](http://www.smartmarriage.com)
- [www.americanvalues.org/](http://www.americanvalues.org/)
- [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)

### YouTube Videos

- *Busted Halo* - Sacraments 101: Matrimony (Why Make it Catholic?)
- *Busted Halo* - Sacraments 102: Matrimony (More Questions Answered)
- USCCB: “The Sacrament of Matrimony”
- Bishop Robert Barron on Marriage and Relationships
- *The Word Exposed-Catechism, Matrimony* - Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

### Regional Faith Formation Office Resources

- “Building a Lasting Friendship/Marriage” - 4 VHS format set (Watertown, Ogdensburg)
- “Marriage and Scripture” - 3 VHS format set for engaged couples and couples preparing them for marriage (Ogdensburg)
- *The Sacrament of Matrimony: Past and Present* - Kathleen Chesto (Plattsburgh, Watertown)
- “Your Marriage” - 4 VHS format set: 1) As Christ Loves the Church 2) Two Becoming One 3) Can Love Conquer All? 4) Areas of Special Concern (Watertown)

### DVD Set

- Beloved, Home Edition – DVD Set : [www.augustineinstitute.org](http://www.augustineinstitute.org)



Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

Matthew 19:14





# FAMILY CATECHESIS

## HOLY ORDERS

### INTRODUCTION

Parents desire to see their children fulfilled, happy and successful in life. Children who truly seek and find God's will in their lives will be fulfilled, happy, and successful. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God."<sup>116</sup> "They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation."<sup>117</sup>

### I. UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

#### A. From Early Childhood to the Primary Level

1. Prayer is a time of speaking and listening to our loving God.
  - a. Children should see their parents pray, and they should see them show God's love for them, other people, and all of creation.
  - b. Families are encouraged to pray together at mealtime and bedtime, on family trips, and when they have special needs.
2. Fostering a culture of vocations may include:
  - a. Reading and discussing together stories from the Bible (e.g. Jesus calling the apostles and Mary saying "yes" to God's call)
  - b. Giving children when they celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation an age-appropriate Bible and a book about the saints
  - c. Getting to know the pastor – inviting him to tell his vocation story

The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ. (CCC 1551)

#### B. From the Intermediate Level to the Junior High Level

1. Parents are encouraged to pray for their children daily especially during the years when they are making important life decisions.
2. They should find opportunities to:
  - a. Talk about using their gifts and talents to serve others
  - b. Pray as a family for vocations
  - c. Provide literature and/or media about people who have responded to God's call to serve Him
  - d. Talk about the various roles parish ministries provide
  - e. Participate in parish and diocesan activities
  - f. Engage in open and healthy conversations with their children about their hopes and dreams

<sup>116</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 2226

<sup>117</sup> CCC 1656

## C. From High School to Adulthood

1. Throughout the high school years parents should:
  - a. Encourage their child to pray, reflect upon, and seek God's desire for his/her life
  - b. Discuss all options for their adolescent's future including a life of service in the Church
  - c. Encourage their child to participate in service projects offered by the parish and by the diocese
  - d. Be honest and fair when they talk about vocations within the Church
  - e. Encourage their child who has indicated an interest in priesthood, diaconate, or consecrated life to talk to their parish priest, a member of the consecrated life, and the Diocesan Director of Vocations
2. College students
  - a. Should be encouraged to become involved in campus ministry (e.g. the Campus Ministry Center or a chapel affiliated with their local college)
  - b. Parents are encouraged to pray for their children daily especially during these years when they are making important decisions about their future.
  - c. Parents should be confident that God knows what is best and that His love and guidance will never fail them or their children.

## II. DISCERNMENT

### A. Discernment

1. Discovering God's will for one's life through prayer, reflection and discussion
2. God calls each person to love Him as a priest, deacon, consecrated religious man or woman, married person or single person.

### B. Discernment to Holy Orders

1. Once a person discerns God's call to priesthood, he needs to continue to explore the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the sacrament which continues the mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to His apostles.
2. The three degrees of Holy Orders are bishop, priest and deacon.<sup>118</sup>
  - a. Bishops
    - 1) Are successor of the apostles
    - 2) Lead the Church, teach the Faith, administer the sacraments, and ordain priests and deacons to assist them
    - 3) Receive the fullness of Holy Orders and are the living image of God the Father<sup>119</sup>
  - b. Priests
    - 1) Are co-workers with the bishop
    - 2) Preach the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments (except for Holy Orders), and shepherd the faithful
    - 3) Make a promise of obedience to the bishop at ordination
    - 4) Act in the person of Jesus Christ the head, *in persona Christi Capitis*<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> CCC 1533-1600

<sup>119</sup> CCC 1549, 1555-1561

<sup>120</sup> CCC 1548, 1562-1568

c. Deacons

- 1) Are ordained to the ministry of service in word, sacrament and charity
- 2) Administer the Sacrament of Baptism, witness marriage, distribute the Eucharist (but not celebrate it), and preach if they have the faculty to do so.

**C. Ongoing Discernment and Formation**

1. Begins when an individual formally enters a seminary, a diaconate formation program, or a religious congregation
2. Deacon Formation – Ordained ministry consists of:
  - a. Permanent diaconate
    - 1) Men who do not plan to be ordained priests
    - 2) Can be married.
    - 3) Single men may be ordained with a commitment to celibacy.<sup>121</sup>
    - 4) Must complete the Formation for Ministry Program before being eligible for the Deacon Formation Program
    - 5) Deacon Formation Program
      - a) Four-year period of discernment and classes in preparation for ordination
      - b) Classes include theology, scripture, ecclesiology, sacraments, liturgy, Canon Law, catechesis, spirituality, social justice, pastoral practice and public speaking
  - b. Transitional diaconate – deacons preparing for priesthood
3. Priesthood
4. Episcopacy

**D. Four Pillars for Priesthood**

Being a priest or a permanent deacon is a vocation, not a job. It is taking on a new identity; it is becoming *alter Christus*, another Christ. To this end, the Church requires rigorous formation in four key areas:

1. Human formation: learning how to form the future priest's personality to be a bridge to Christ and also learning how to be an effective public spokesperson for the Church
2. Spiritual formation: developing a deep and mature relationship with Christ through prayer and virtuous living
3. Intellectual formation: understanding the truths of our faith and cultivating the skills to teach the faith to others
4. Pastoral formation: learning how to be a "shepherd of souls," helping parishioners through the joys and trials of life

**E. Three Levels of Seminary**

Pope Saint John Paul II wrote the seminary is "a community established by the bishop to offer to those called by the Lord to serve as Apostles the possibility of reliving the experience of formation which our Lord provided for the Twelve ... Such an experience demands of the Twelve ... a detachment that in some way is demanded of all the disciples, a detachment from their roots, from their usual work, from their nearest and dearest (cf. Mark 1:16-20; 10:28; Luke 9:23,

<sup>121</sup> <http://uscbb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/diaconate/>

57-62; 14:25-27). The seminary is called to be ... a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered about Jesus, listening to his word, proceeding towards the Easter experience, awaiting the gift of the Spirit for the mission.”<sup>122</sup>

1. College Seminary: men who obtain a baccalaureate degree while at the same time undergoing the formation required to enter major seminary
2. Pre-Theology: men who already have a college degree but who need to satisfy the requirements of two years of formation and study of philosophy before entering major seminary
3. Major seminary (Theology): men who have completed either college seminary or pre-theology who now begin the final four years of priestly formation

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<sup>122</sup> *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 60

## RESOURCES

### Beatitudes for Nurturing Vocations in the Family

Blessed are the children of parents who... <sup>123</sup>

- + witness love for their spouse, their children, their neighbor and the world
- + lead their family in prayer
- + talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of their lives
- + remind their children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others
- + are welcoming and supportive to priests, brothers, sisters, deacons, and lay ministers in the Church
- + participate in the lay ministries and activities of their parish and community
- + encourage their children to consider the priesthood, diaconate, or religious life

### Prayer for Vocations for Parents

Heavenly Father, You have blessed us with children. We sometimes forget that they are not ours but Yours and that You have asked us to bring them up in Your ways. O gracious and loving God, we pray that our children will discover and respond enthusiastically to Your desire for them whether it be to the vocation of single, married, ordained or religious life. Please help our children to have open hearts and minds to hear Your call. Help us to support and encourage our children to seek Your will in choosing a vocation. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***We Are Called: "Creating A Culture of Vocations Plan"*** (Diocese of Ogdensburg)

Family Resources:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 1. Page 175      | Family Life and Vocation                        |
| 2. Page 17       | Practical Suggestions for Parishes              |
| 3. Pages 179-181 | Suggestions to Promote Vocations in Your Family |
| 4. Page 182      | Family Vocation Day – (How to Organize one)     |
| 5. Page 183      | Sample "Family Vocation Day" Brochure           |
| 6. Page 196      | Ten Things We Can Do As Parents                 |
| 7. Page 197      | Ten Things I Can Do As a Family                 |

### USCCB Articles

- "ABC's of Fostering Vocations – for Parents"
- "Parent Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)"
- "Tools for Building a Domestic Church - for Parents"
- "Top Ten Things to Promote Vocations"
- "Parents' Concerns"
- "Family Vocations Ministry"

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<sup>123</sup> Adapted from National Religious Vocation Conference

## **Websites/Videos**

Interview with Bishop LaValley and Fr. Bryan Stitt (search for “Ogdensburg Vocations” on YouTube.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4vXhuMVTcQ>

Activities for Teaching the Sacrament of Holy Orders  
[www.catechist.com/blog/archives/191-20100111.html](http://www.catechist.com/blog/archives/191-20100111.html)

*Fishers of Men:* [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqtOvt7d490](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqtOvt7d490)

*A Day in the Life of a Catholic Priest*  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsLtYfPtNG0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsLtYfPtNG0)

Busted Halo; *Sacraments 101: Holy Orders (What does ordination mean?)*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q904xlwxnSc>:

*The Sacrament of Holy Orders* (USCCB) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWu9PalmjUM>

## **Vianney Vocations**

Vianney Vocations is a Catholic company that provides professional services to the vocation offices of dioceses and religious orders. Their mission is to help create a culture of vocations and to inspire more men to consider the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Contact the Diocesan Director of Vocations for more information.

[www.vianneyvocations.com/](http://www.vianneyvocations.com/)

## **Curriculum**

Vocation Lessons-Online curriculum supplement for schools, parishes, and youth ministry.  
[www.vocationlessons.com](http://www.vocationlessons.com)