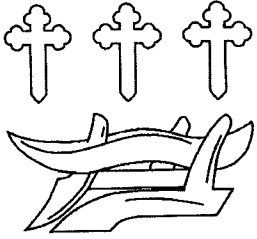


# **SACRAMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Office of Evangelization and Catechesis  
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

2005

Archdiocese of Cincinnati



**Office of  
The Archbishop**

100 East Eighth Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

513-421-3131

August 17, 2005

Dear Friends,

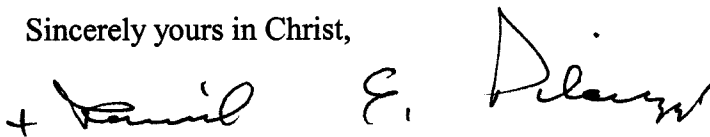
The celebration of the sacraments is at the very heart of the Church's mission. *Sacraments for Young People* presents a vision and a challenge to our parishes and schools in their role of ministry to families and to persons of faith. The working together of catechetical leaders, catechists, parents, pastors, and staffs makes the vision a reality and offers direction for meeting the challenge.

This document, *Sacraments for Young People*, implements the *National Directory for Catechesis* and *The General Directory for Catechesis*. It offers a practical model for parish sacramental catechesis. I am grateful to the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for their development of this resource.

I encourage all those involved in sacramental catechesis to use this resource as a foundation and guide in the preparation and the celebration of Sacraments.

May God bless all those who teach in the name of Christ and His Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ 

Most Reverend Daniel E. Pilarczyk  
Archbishop of Cincinnati

## ***SACRAMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE***

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<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Conference, 2000	CCC
<i>The Code of Canon Law</i> The Canon Law Society Trust, 1983.	Canon
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<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i> United States Catholic Conference, 1997	GDC
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## I. PREFACE

The parish is challenged today to be a visible part of the life of its members. Parishes are called to be evangelizing, to be vibrant and fruitful. The parish plays an important role in each member's life.

For most Catholics, the parish is their primary experience of the Church. It is where they gather for weekly worship, celebrate their most joyous occasions, and mourn their deepest losses. There they are called to repentance and renewal, finding and celebrating God's forgiveness and reconciliation. Embracing the dying and rising of Jesus in their lives, they are challenged to holiness and strengthened for self-giving love and Christian service. (*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* #114)

One of the primary works of evangelizing parishes is catechesis. The evangelizing parish is the setting for faith formation. The purpose of *Sacraments for Young People* is to present a vision for the whole parish for preparation and celebration of the sacraments. Sacraments are special times in the life of the parish. These are times of ritual experience in which we encounter God and are drawn to community. The celebration of a sacrament presents both a challenge and a gift to the parish as it prepares and celebrates each occasion. The role of the faith community is essential. The preparation of the candidate, the family and the parish to enter into celebration is paramount.

The parish assists its members to encounter God and develop a continuing relationship with Jesus. Sacraments involve the whole community at prayer. Sacraments are celebrated in the name of Jesus. They are the work of the Spirit and they are a gift and call to everyone who receives them. We are invited into a deeper relationship with Jesus through the celebration of ritual. Through the celebration we engage people in the mystery of Jesus and upon reflection we understand what it means to be followers of Jesus. Ongoing conversion is the work of an evangelizing parish when preparing for the celebration of sacraments.

*Sacraments for Young People*, which replaces earlier documents for sacrament preparation, is meant to help parishes of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati revitalize sacrament catechesis and the celebration of sacraments. The parish community acts as the locus for catechesis and celebration. Each parish is an evangelizing community that provides catechetical formation for those preparing for celebration of the sacraments. All preparation for celebration of sacraments should provide assistance for parents / guardians in assuming their responsibility to prepare their children to celebrate the sacraments. The active involvement of all in the life of the parish when preparing for sacraments can lead to a richer church community. The catechesis for sacraments should look and feel like church and should be based on the liturgy and the rite celebrated at each sacrament.

In order to grasp the importance of the relationship of the sacraments to each other and to the community, all persons involved in the catechesis and celebration of sacraments are encouraged to read this entire document.

## II. INTRODUCTION

“The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and sacraments. (Cf. SC #6.) There are seven sacraments of the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. (Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274) DS 860; Council of Florence (1439); DS 1310; Council of Trent (1547); DS 1601.)” (CCC #1113) Because of teachings in Sacred Scripture, in apostolic tradition and in on-going theological reflection we believe that the sacraments of the new covenant were instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord. The following excerpts from Scripture are by no means exhaustive but give some insight into how the sacraments are rooted in Scripture. The translations are from *The New American Bible* (bold added for emphasis).

*Rom. 6:3-4* Or are you aware 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.

*Acts 8:14-17* Now when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might **receive the Holy Spirit**, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

*Lk 22:19-20* Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given up for you; do this **in memory of me.**” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.”

*2Cor. 5:18* And all of this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of **reconciliation**.

*Lk. 5:17* ...and the power of the Lord was with him for **healing**.

*Jas. 5:14-15* Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will **save the sick person**, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

*Eph. 4:11* ...and he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers.

*Mt. 19:5-6* ...“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”... So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what **God has joined together**, no human must separate.

The purpose of the sacraments as stated in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* Chapter III and reiterated in the CCC #1123 is “to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God.”(SC 59)

With this understanding it can be said that the Church is the sacrament of Christ as Jesus is the Sacrament of God. Jesus is often referred to as the first sacrament, the primordial sacrament. Both are outward signs, given us by God so that we can increase in grace. “The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.” (CCC #1999)

What is written here touches only the surface of the many facets of the gems of our faith, the sacraments. We encourage further reading and reflection on pertinent sections of Scripture, The Documents of Vatican Council II, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*. Deeper insights into the works which Christ performed during his earthly life can be gained. We can better understand the sacraments as a continuation of that work, knowing that each person is called to live a sacramental life.

### III. A. PARISH CELEBRATIONS OF SACRAMENTS

Holiness is centered in Christ. We are made holy through Christ, who calls us into the community of the Church. In the community of believers we grow in faith and holiness. “No one can believe alone....You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others.” (CCC #166) We grow in faith, we worship and are made holy within the faith community. We know of Christ through scripture and the prayer of the community—through the Liturgy, the Eucharist and through all sacrament celebrations. Our faith is not about individual holiness, but about our growth in holiness together as we worship in the assembly, especially at the Sunday liturgy.



There are other communities to which we belong. Our family is a community. Our religion or school class is a community. Any small group can be a community. Our club, meeting group, or friends are examples of community. In matters of faith we look to the worshipping community, our Sunday Assembly, where we gather every week to celebrate our faith. Here we assemble to celebrate Jesus Christ, the foundation of our Catholic way of life and to celebrate the experience of God in our lives. This is where we gather to celebrate sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist and Reconciliation are all celebrations of the worshipping community.

The celebrations of sacraments are not just about the candidates' Baptism and Confirmation, or receiving Communion or Penance for the first time. Sacraments are the assembly's dying and rising in Christ; sacraments are about the assembly's recognition of God in their lives and the need for God in their lives. The candidates are part of the assembly and take a fuller role with the assembly at the celebration of each sacrament.

For this reason, Baptism, Confirmation and the reception of First Communion should be celebrated at a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass.

The parish Sunday Mass, or Divine Liturgy, is the normative celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is the whole parish community's central act of worship, through which Christ unites the faithful to himself and to one another in his perfect sacrifice of praise. While every parish is made up of different groups, associations, and smaller religious communities, through the Sunday Eucharist Christ provides the opportunity for everyone to move beyond their particular circles to celebrate in common the sacrament of unity. (NDC p. 128)

John Paul II in *On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy*, states:

This is why on Sunday, the day of gathering, small group Masses are not to be encouraged: it is not only a question of ensuring that parish assemblies are not

without the necessary ministry of priests, but also of ensuring that the life and unity of the Church community are fully safeguarded and promoted. (# 36)

In *The Rite of Baptism for Children*, we hear the statements, “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus the Lord.” Faith is manifest in worship, hearing God’s word, interceding, praising, and offering thanks to God at the Sunday Eucharist. Faith is the work of the community as a whole.

### **III. B. LITURGICAL TEXTS TO BE USED IN CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND PENANCE**

The texts of Masses for the celebrations of Baptism and Confirmation are found in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*. If Baptism takes place during Sunday Mass, the Mass for that Sunday is used. (*The Rite of Baptism for Children* #29) These ritual Masses may be celebrated on any day except Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week and any feast day which holds the rank of Solemnity. On the days when the ritual Mass is not used, the texts of the Mass of the Day are used. The texts for the Rites of Baptism, Confirmation and Penance are found in *The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume One*. The rites are also published as individual books.

There is no special ritual or text for the celebration of First Communion. First Communion is the first of many receptions of the Body and Blood of the Lord to be celebrated every Sunday. If not celebrated on Sunday or on a Solemnity, the scripture readings may be taken either in whole or in part from the Mass of the Day or from the Mass of Christian Initiation or from the Votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist found in the *Lectionary for Mass*. First Communion is appropriately celebrated on Sundays, especially Sundays in the Easter Season, and the Mass of the Day is always used.

Various scripture readings to be used in the Rites of Baptism, Penance or Confirmation can be found in the *Lectionary for Mass* and in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*.

### III. C. MINISTERS AND ROLES

The celebration of any sacrament is a Church event. The focus is not on the person receiving the sacrament but on the celebration of the entire assembly gathered to celebrate the sacrament. We honor this important aspect when considering ministries and roles in celebrating liturgy.

The ordinary ministers for Baptism are bishops, priests and deacons. However, in case of emergency, when there is no ordinary minister available, a lay person can confer Baptism. (Canon 230 and 861§2) The ordinary minister for the Sacrament of Confirmation is the bishop. Under special circumstances priests may administer Confirmation. (See chapter VIII Confirmation in this document for more information.) For the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation only bishops and priests are ministers.

All parishioners participate in the mission of the Church. Liturgical ministry is one way of carrying out that mission. Lay persons in a parish can be commissioned as lectors, cantors and extraordinary ministers for the distribution of the Eucharist. All lectors, cantors, and extraordinary ministers are to be properly trained and able to carry out their mission for the benefit and well being of all who participate in liturgy. At any liturgical celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist and Penance, the lectors, cantors, and extraordinary ministers should be those persons who are properly trained and commissioned to fulfill these roles.

Being part of the assembly is the liturgical role of the candidates. Candidates participate fully as members of the assembly, as in all liturgical celebrations, in the singing, the spoken prayer, and by actively listening to the scriptures and other liturgical texts spoken in their name by the presider. They are not to be lectors, readers of general intercessions, cantors, servers or extraordinary ministers of Communion.

Candidates and their families are sometimes included in the entrance procession. The purpose of a procession is to help unify the assembly and to draw those already in place into the action of gathering for the celebration. If the candidates and their families are in the entrance procession they should have the necessary hymnal or worship aid that will allow them to participate in the singing of the entrance hymn. Whether or not to include the candidates and their families in the procession is a parish decision. There is no liturgical requirement to do so.

The procession with the gifts could include candidates and their families. There should be as few vessels of bread and wine as possible. The bread and wine should not be divided into smaller vessels merely to increase the number of persons in the procession. Persons in the procession with the gifts are not required to have something in hand.

It is appropriate to include gifts of food for the poor in the procession with the gifts. Only the gifts of bread and wine, food for the poor and the collection are appropriate. Gifts other than

the bread and wine are not to be placed on the altar or positioned so as to block the view of the altar.

The procession at the end of a celebration does not fulfill any liturgical function or need. It serves to get the ministers out of the sanctuary in some sense of order and dignity. Those in the entrance procession may, but are not required to be in the closing procession.



### III. D. MUSIC AND CATHOLIC WORSHIP

Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to the words it forms an integral part of solemn liturgy. (*Music in Catholic Worship*, # 23)

The purpose of music in worship in the Roman Rite is to glorify God and to sanctify and edify the faithful. It helps increase the beauty and splendor of the ceremonies of the Church and makes the text more efficacious so that the faithful may be roused to devotion and be better able to receive the grace which comes from the celebration.

Yet the function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. It should heighten the texts so that they speak more fully and more effectively. The quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way. It imparts a sense of unity to the congregation and sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration. (*Music in Catholic Worship*, # 23)

Consequently, sacred music also has a distinct catechetical purpose. Sacred music invites the faithful to give glory to God; it enhances their prayer, fosters the unity of their minds and hearts, and aims to draw them closer to Christ. (*National Directory of Catechesis*, p. 151)

Since music fosters active participation in the liturgy, which is the work of the people, familiar and accessible music must be used. Great care should be used in choosing music for the celebrations of sacraments. Involvement of the parish music minister is essential.

The music used should be within the competence of most of the worshippers. It should suit their age level, cultural background, and level of faith. (*Music in Catholic Worship*, # 15)



Song is not the only kind of music suitable for liturgical celebration. Music performed on the organ and other instruments can stimulate feelings of joy and contemplation at appropriate times. (Cf. SC 120; MS 63-65; LI 3c.) This can be done effectively at the following points: an instrumental prelude, a soft background to a spoken psalm, at the preparation of the gifts in place of singing, during portions of the communion rite, and the recessional (*Music in Catholic Worship*, # 37).

## Music at Masses for Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion

The preference for Baptism being celebrated within Mass is receiving greater attention. First Communion is always celebrated within Mass. Confirmation is most often celebrated within Mass. Following are ideas on the various parts of Mass conducive to singing and music. For more information, see the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Music in Catholic Worship* and *The Rites, Volume One*.

### Procession/Gathering Hymn

The purpose of the processional or gathering hymn is to accompany the procession of the ministers and to unify the assembly. It should have the feel of a strong beat to accompany the procession. The assembly is called to join together as a community in one voice and one heart to begin the work of worship. Singing the gathering hymn is the first action of the liturgy that involves the whole assembly. The hymn helps to draw all into this action. It has an evangelization dimension, as the assembly sings at its best, right from the start. The gathering hymn leads the assembly's thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity.



### Sprinkling Rite

If the Sprinkling Rite is used, an appropriate sung text can accompany it at First Communion and Confirmation Masses to concretely show a connection to Baptism.

### Gloria

This ancient hymn of praise and prayer has been included in all Sunday (except Advent and Lent) and feast day liturgies since the twelfth century. It should be sung because it is a hymn.

### Psalm

The psalm encourages meditation on the Word of God. It gives a sense of emotion or spirit to the liturgy. It is preferable that it be sung. Since the psalm is the Word of God it should not be a mere paraphrase of the scripture or a hymn, but should be the actual scriptural text.

### Alleluia or Verse before the Gospel

The Alleluia lifts our hearts in joy and praise as we welcome and greet the Lord and prepare to hear the Gospel. All stand and sing the Alleluia led by the cantor or choir. The verse is sung by the cantor or choir. The Alleluia is sung in every season except Lent, when it is

replaced by another Gospel acclamation. The Alleluia or verse before the Gospel may be omitted if it is not sung.

### **Preparation of the Gifts**

The procession of bringing the gifts to the priest or deacon may be accompanied by instrumental music or a song sung by the whole assembly or by the choir or a cantor. If music is used it must end when the preparation of the altar is completed. If incense is used, music should be planned to cover the extra time. The preparation of the gifts may take place in silence.

### **Eucharistic Prayer**

On solemn occasions, the Eucharistic prayer may be sung or chanted entirely. On less solemn occasions, the opening dialogue and the preface may be sung.

### **Eucharistic Acclamations: Holy, Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen**

These are to be sung. Their purpose is to facilitate the assembly's participation in the prayer and its assent to what is being prayed. Familiar acclamations sung well by the assembly manifest the unity of the prayer.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer of unity meant to be prayed by all in attendance. It may be recited aloud or sung by all.

### **Sign of Peace**

There is no song called for during the brief Sign of Peace.

### **Fraction Rite/Lamb of God**

As a rule, the Lamb of God is sung. When a large amount of bread is to be broken and placed on plates, musicians should use a familiar setting of the Lamb of God with variable invocations. In light of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, the cups will have been prepared at the Preparation of the Gifts.

### **Communion**

The Communion hymn should begin when the people have completed, "Lord I am not worthy...." and continue as long as the faithful are receiving Communion. A hymn with a refrain that the assembly knows by heart works well for people in the Communion procession. The Communion hymn expresses the assembly's unity in spirit by unity of voices. It gives evidence of joy of heart. The singing continues until all the faithful have received the sacrament. After Communion, a hymn of praise may be sung by the entire assembly. This is

not the time for recipients of the sacrament (First Communion or Confirmation) to sing a hymn or "perform."

### **Recessional/Closing Hymn**

No closing hymn is listed in *The New General Instruction for the Roman Missal*. Although it is common at most Masses, it is not required. A strong organ selection or instrumental work may accompany the recessional.

### **Music at the Rite of Penance**

Music during the celebration of the Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution can help the assembly join together into a community of one voice and one heart. It can lead the assembly's thoughts to the mystery of reconciliation and God's mercy.

#### **The Gathering Hymn** (The Rite of Penance, # 23)

When all are assembled, a suitable hymn (Reconciliation, Mercy of God, the Liturgical Season, etc.) will draw all into the mystery of reconciliation and God's love and mercy.

#### **The Celebration of the Word of God** (# 24)

If more than one reading is chosen, a psalm, another suitable song or a period of silence should be inserted between the readings.

#### **Rite of Reconciliation** (# 27)

After all say a general prayer of sorrow, a litany or suitable song of contrition or trust in God's mercy may be sung.

#### **Proclamation of Praise for God's Mercy** (# 29)

When all the confessions are over, the presider invites the assembly to make an act of thanksgiving to praise God for his mercy. This may be done in the form of a psalm, hymn or litany.

### III. E. ART AND ENVIRONMENT

When celebrating a sacrament we are doing so in union with the prayers of the whole Church throughout the world. Respect for the liturgical season is one way of reminding us of this. It is the liturgical season that serves to give focus to the choices made for the art and environment of the worship space. The environment should be beautiful and hospitable, and clearly invites and needs an assembly of people to complete it. The church “should be expressive of the dignified beauty of God’s holy people who gather there and of the sacred rites they celebrate.” (*Built of Living Stones*, #44) Art is used to enhance, support and illumine a part or parts of the liturgical action. Art should be of fine quality and appropriate to the occasion and season. (*BLS* #146)

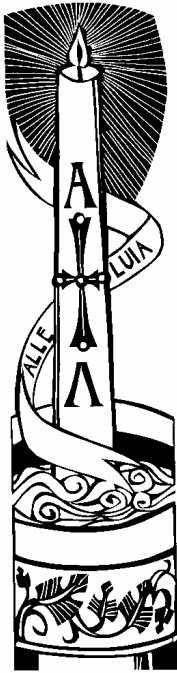
“Sacramental celebrations depend on signs, symbols, and gestures to effect the grace they signify.” (*NDC* p. 148) Therefore, all symbols, whether word, gesture or object should be real, rich, and genuine. The bread and wine, water, oil, light, white garment and laying on of hands should be experiences of authentic symbolic value. Vessels used should be made of quality materials in accordance with liturgical norms. (*Redemptionis Sacramentum* #117) Ritual books should be of good quality. It is also acceptable for the liturgical texts to be reproduced for the occasions and inserted into a book or binder that is liturgically attractive.

Within the worship space there are three important focal points: altar, ambo, and font. It is important to respect the sacredness of these focal points and to decorate them so that they are highlighted and not obscured. The altar, ambo and font are to be treated with great reverence. These are not the appropriate place to hang projects, names, pictures or drawings, nor should any such item be attached to an altar cloth or vesture of the priest. Banners, names or pictures could be part of a decorative display in the narthex, the gathering space, of the church.

Incense can be used to venerate the altar, the Gospel book, the gifts of bread and wine, the cross, the presider, the ministers, the assembly and the Eucharistic elements. Incense is a rich symbol expressing the Church’s honor of sacred objects and realities as well as expressing the sweet aroma of God’s mercy and love.

The use of flowers, a festive altar cloth and candles all contribute to the celebrations and are used to enhance but not overwhelm the focal points.

The baptismal font reflects the Christian journey through water to life in Christ. Water is the key symbol of baptism and the focal point of the font. (*BLS* #66-67) Reverence and care should be given the Baptistery and nothing should interfere with the ritual action of Baptism which has its own rhythm and movement.



The holy chrism used for anointing during Confirmation can be carried in procession in an appropriate vessel and placed near the Paschal Candle in an area decorated with flowers or plants. It is always good to connect the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The Paschal Candle should have a prominent place in church. The carrying of candles by the candidates in procession or during renewal of baptismal promises helps to make the connection between Baptism and Confirmation. The candles should be of good quality but should not be carried at the time of Anointing.

The connection of the initiation sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, is also expressed by variations within the celebration of the liturgy. The Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water may replace the Penitential Rite on Sundays. At celebrations of Confirmation and First Communion the use of the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water places the assembly in the context of Baptism. At the celebration of Confirmation the renewal of baptismal promises replaces the Creed.

Although Sacraments of Initiation can be celebrated at any time, it is very appropriate to celebrate them on Sundays, especially Sundays in the Easter Season. The Easter decorations of the church will contribute to the festive nature of the celebration. During the Easter Season the Paschal Candle is in a place of prominence.

The Sacrament of Penance celebrates righting relationships and healing. The imposition of hands by the priest is a powerful sign of the healing touch of Christ. Gospel stories that reflect Jesus' healing touch will help the presider and penitents focus on this gesture. The processing of the penitents to the priest for confession symbolizes the pilgrim journey of the people of God. The use of candles is another important sign. Having candles lit near the altar and ambo and throughout the church is a reminder of the light of Christ. This is an important image that communicates the grace of the sacrament. Often penitential services take place during the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent but are by no means limited to these seasons. These seasons can serve to give focus to the service in the choice of prayers, scripture readings and music.

Our sacraments are rich in signs and symbols. These signs and symbols should be used well. Do not skimp or be miserly in their use. We should hear and see the water flow, smell the rich oil, witness the gestures, taste the fullness of bread and wine, and know that light fills the worship space. No other sign or symbol should overshadow the primary symbols and gestures of the sacraments. Using the primary symbols in a memorable and reverent way is essential. We do not need to introduce or add other signs or symbols.

### **III. F. PHOTOGRAPHY**

One of the challenges that presiders and liturgy planners face is setting guidelines concerning photography during the celebration of sacraments. It is important that parish guidelines be formed, made public and upheld so that the dignity of the celebration is maintained. In keeping with the spirit of sacredness, the guidelines might disallow photography or at least flash photography and/or movement of the photographer during the liturgy itself. Make sure that the parents are given the guidelines ahead of time so that they can pass them along to anyone planning to photograph or videotape the celebration of the sacrament.

## IV. LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

### A WHOLE PARISH EXPERIENCE

Preparation time for sacraments is important for the candidate and family as well as the church community. The goal of preparation for the sacraments is full and active participation in liturgy and a conscious living of the faith. This preparation is not just a concern at the time of reception of the sacrament, but is part of a lifelong commitment to a sacramental way of life. Preparation is about conversion, not just knowledge. It is about being an active member of a church community.

“Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ, (Cf. *Lk* 5:17; 6:19; 8:46.) which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in His Body, the Church.” (CCC #1116) This statement sets the stage for how parishes should address the issue of sacramental preparation and how the sacrament will be celebrated. It is not enough to think that the school or religious education program can do justice to any sacrament when the communal/parish dimension is missing.

With liturgical catechesis the liturgy itself becomes the source of catechesis. The rituals, rites, scripture readings, gestures, symbols and signs illuminate our Christian story, impact our lives, and nourish our living. The church community is enriched by its liturgy and in turn the community is better prepared to celebrate Mass. “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.” (*Constitution on Sacred Liturgy* #10) Our weekly Eucharistic celebration is vital to living a full Christian life. Eucharistic spirituality should permeate our lives. Liturgical catechesis is an occasion to foster this spirituality.

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1Pet 2:9, 4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. Therefore, in all their apostolic activity, pastors of souls should energetically set about achieving it through the requisite pedagogy. (CSL #14)

The *General Directory for Catechesis* states that “catechesis must have a catechumenal style, as of integral formation rather than mere information; it must act in reality as a means of arousing true conversion.” (#29, Cf. CT 19b.) “This catechumenal formation should inspire the other forms of catechesis in both their objectives and in their dynamism.” (#59) “Catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action.” (#30, CT 23.) This calls for a strong link between catechesis and liturgy: being attentive to rites, exploring



the rich use of signs and symbols, and connecting sacramental celebration with the liturgical year.



While all Liturgy has a catechetical dimension, liturgical catechesis is most explicit in the form of the homily received during the celebration of the sacraments. As such, liturgical catechesis within the context of the sacred action is an integral part of that action. (Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* (SC), no. 35.) Its function is ‘the immediate preparation for the reception of the different sacraments, the celebration of sacramentals and above all of the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, as a primary means of education in the faith.’ (GDC, no. 51) (*NDC* p.50)

The catechumenal style has an effect on 1) those who are participating in preparation, 2) the method chosen for preparation and 3) the candidates and their families who are participating more fully in the sacramental life of the church. Each of these is further explained below.

### 1) Those who are participating in preparation

The responsibility of preparing candidates for the celebration of sacraments rests with the baptized community. (*GDC* #91) The community “knows, lives, celebrates, and bears witness to the faith.” (*NDC* p.58) This community itself must be prepared for its role in spreading the faith. In adapting the catechumenate model:

- ❖ The community should be ready to show the spirit of the church by welcoming candidates into activities and gatherings of the church.
- ❖ Active and conscious participation of the community is important. The community should take an active part in the responses, prayers, singing and acclamations of liturgical celebrations.
- ❖ Some members of the community should participate in immediate preparation by the witness they can share with the candidates.
- ❖ The celebrations of sacraments should take place within the community where all are renewed by the celebrations.
- ❖ The ongoing work of the community is to help the candidates and their families feel at home in the church. The candidates and their families are called to be active members of the church community.

The catechesis for sacrament preparation is intended for, takes place within and involves the whole community. (*NDC* p. 114) The church community can be made aware of and reminded of their role through the Prayers of the Faithful, special blessings for the candidates, bulletin inserts and announcements, and opportunities for activities that enhance the faith life of the community.

Sacramental catechesis is an opportunity for all in the church community to deepen their faith life and renew their commitment to Jesus Christ and his promise of salvation. The

community at prayer is not only a rich example, it is a splendid experience for the candidates and their families.

## 2) The method chosen for preparation

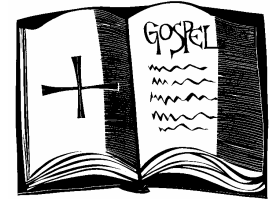
“Catechesis is thus a fundamental element of Christian initiation and is closely connected with the sacraments of initiation, especially with Baptism, ‘the sacrament of faith.’ (CCC 1253. In the baptismal catechumenate of adults in the mission *ad gentes*, catechesis precedes Baptism. In the catechesis of the baptized, formation is subsequent to Baptism. However, also in this case a function of catechesis is to help to discover and bring to life the immense richness of Baptism already received. CCC 1231 uses the expression *post-baptismal catechumenate*.

ChL 61 calls it post-baptismal catechesis.)...The aim of catechetical activity consists in precisely this: to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith.” (Cf. CCC 1229; CD 14.) (GDC #66)

Liturgical catechesis based on the Catechumenate model calls for systematic formation in the faith that deepens one’s grasp of the mystery of Christ. This includes knowledge of faith and immersion in the life of faith. Each candidate and his / her family will live, celebrate, and bear witness to the faith. (GDC #68)

The use of Ritual texts and Sacred Scripture to achieve this goal is important.

The GDC further states, “Liturgical catechesis, prepares for the sacraments by promoting a deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy. This explains the contents of the prayers, the meaning of the signs and gestures, educates to active participation, contemplation and silence. It must be regarded as an ‘eminent kind of catechesis.’” (CT 23. Cf. SC 35 ad 3; CIC 777, 1 and 2.) (GDC #71)



Liturgical catechesis disposes the candidates to be transformed and shaped by the celebration of the sacrament and leads them to a deeper awareness of the salvation in Jesus Christ. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

“Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men.” (John Paul II, CT 23.) (CCC #1074)

Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is “mystagogy.”) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries.” (CCC #1075)

Using the liturgical prayers in catechesis acknowledges the formative role that liturgy has in our lives.

Preparation processes should not only prepare the candidates to celebrate the sacraments, but should be formative in their living out the sacraments in everyday life. Preparation processes need to foster an intimate relationship between the sacraments celebrated and their meaning in everyday life.

“The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”: (SC 9.) it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity. (CCC #1072)

Through the liturgical prayers and scripture readings used for each celebration of a sacrament, as well as the gestures, signs, and symbols of celebration, the essential components of sacramental catechesis are available to form and nourish the candidates and the community. The symbols, words, rituals, and liturgies that we experience become modes that deepen faith and methods that give voice to catechesis.

### **3) The candidates and their families who are participating more fully in the sacramental life of the church**

Sacramental preparation is not only a time for the candidates to be formed in their faith, it is also a time of conversion for parents and families. Parents have the primary role in the catechesis of their children. The religious experience that a child has within family life is irreplaceable. It can provide the formation and memories that last a lifetime. Parents witness values to their children.

It is for this reason that the Christian community must give very special attention to parents. By means of personal contact, meetings, courses and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility—which is particularly delicate today—of educating their children in the faith. (GDC #227)

Parents and the whole faith community should view sacramental preparation time as an opportunity to reflect on their own experience of Christian life as part of a faith community. No celebration of a sacrament is ever individual. By recognizing the communal dimension all members come to a clearer understanding of the importance of their faith, their unique role as sacrament people and the desire to pass that faith on to children.

When envisioning a process of preparation for a sacrament we must keep in mind that catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it. (*General Catechetical Directory* #20)

This being the case, sacramental preparation goes far beyond the children who are celebrating and is more than an event. It is an on-going renewal of the whole parish. It serves as a reminder that sacraments are lived before they are celebrated. They are the fabric of the Catholic Christian life.

Sacramental preparation plans should include:

- ❖ Interaction among various groups and among learners

- ❖ Time for critical reflection
- ❖ Opportunities for sharing stories especially “sacramental moment” stories
- ❖ Time for social interaction
- ❖ Presentation or review of the sacrament’s meaning

Catechesis for young children and adolescents, who are the candidates for the sacraments, should be in coherence with and complementary to adult catechesis. Young children and adolescents are called to be active members of the church community with their parents and families. They are to be evangelized and catechized in a manner that is age appropriate and according to their capacity to learn. The goal is the same for the young person as it is for the adult: full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgical life of the church. The candidates’ preparation process should dispose them to receive the sacraments in such a way that the experience is transforming. Evangelizing youth and young people is so important because they are the Church.

Mystagogy is a time after the celebration for reflecting back on the rite and on the celebration of the sacrament. It is a period of sacramental instruction that embraces a deepened understanding of the mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and performing works of Charity.

Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is “mystagogy.”) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries.” (CCC #1075)

The National Directory for Catechesis states:

*Mystagogical or post-baptismal catechesis* is the form of the ministry of the word in which the implications for living a sacramental life are drawn out. The function of mystagogical catechesis is to lead the baptized deeper into the Christian life, celebration of the sacraments, prayer life of the Church, and her missionary activity. (p. 50)

The awareness of God’s salvific activity in our lives leads to a mature faith response. By listening to and reflecting on the stories of salvation we are able to give a Christian interpretation and understanding to our lives. We not only participate fully in the liturgical life of the community, we seek a prayer life for ourselves. The purpose of catechesis for sacraments is to provide the candidates, families and the church community with a profound and energizing liturgical experience. Liturgical catechesis for sacraments is not concerned with the first or only celebration of the sacraments but with the lifelong formation of all involved: the candidate, the family, and the parish community.



Today's catechetical materials and teachers' guides provide good directions and suggestions for the immediate preparation of those receiving a specific sacrament. However, no sacrament is received in isolation. While instruction is important, it is only part of the preparation. The goal for those preparing is for them to become conscious of the sacramental quality of their Catholic Christian life so that their faith is living, conscious and active. Thus there is a need for community and a sense that all are on this spiritual journey together. Each parish should determine how the time of sacramental preparation can be used as an evangelizing experience beyond the classroom.

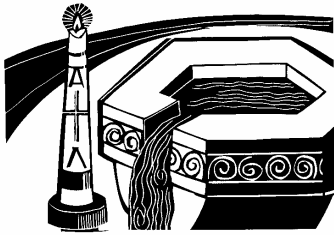
The sacraments are "of the Church" in the double sense that they are "by her" and "for her." They are "by the Church," for she is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. They are "for the Church" in the sense that "the sacraments make the Church," (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 22, 17: PL 41, 779; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh III*, 64, 2 *ad* 3.) since they manifest and communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons. (CCC #1118)



## V. SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read:

Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ. (#1275)



Baptism is referred to as the first of the seven sacraments which gives access to the other sacraments. "It unites us with Christ who died for our sins and rose for our justification that 'we too might walk in newness of life.'" (*Rom* 6:4; cf. 4:25.) (CCC #977) "Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission." (CCC #1213)

Baptism is the action of God, that is, grace as God's first free eminent gift. Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. (Cf. *Mk* 16:16.) ... *God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacrament.* (#1257)

In an overview of the *General Directory for Catechesis*, (*Origins* April 2, 1998, Vol. 27, #41) Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, presents the connection of catechesis and the sacraments of initiation, especially Baptism. He calls Baptism "the sacrament of faith". The *GDC* itself states that,

the baptismal catechumenate constantly reminds the whole church of the fundamental importance of the function of initiation and basic factors which constitute it: catechesis and the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The pastoral care of Christian initiation is vital for every particular Church. (#91)

It further affirms that "the baptismal catechumenate is the responsibility of the entire Christian community." (*GDC* #91) Indeed, "this Christian initiation...should not be left entirely to the priests and catechists, but should be the care of the entire community of the faithful." (*Decree on Church's Missionary Activity* #14)

Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism by a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which seal or confirm the Baptized in union with Christ. It equips them for active participation in the worship and apostolic life of the Church. In fact, as true witnesses of

Christ they are “more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.” (CCC #1285, LG 11; cf. *OC*, Introduction 2.)

The Eucharist is the sum and substance of our faith: “Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.” (CCC #1327; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 5: PF 7/1, 1028.) The Eucharist is the principal Christian liturgical celebration by which the Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated and made present. “The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation.” (CCC #1322) “The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* #11) It is at the heart of the Church’s life. “By the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.” (CCC #1326; Cf. *1Cor.* 15:28.) By receiving Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, we celebrate our union with Jesus and other baptized members of the Church. Eucharist is the only Sacrament of Initiation that is received over and over again. St. Thomas Aquinas captures a precise meaning of Eucharist in his prayer, *O Sacrum Convivium*. (*O Holy Banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion is renewed, our souls are filled with grace and the pledge of future glory is given us.*) At the same time Aquinas says that the Eucharist is a mystery whose meaning no theological explanation can hope to exhaust.

The three sacraments together lay the foundation of every Christian life. “The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.” (CCC #1212) To be initiated means to be admitted as a member and to bring into practice a way of life that “through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life.” (CCC #1212)

## VI. CHRISTIAN SERVICE

In the past, Christian Service was so closely related to preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation that we neglected the principle that service to others is a lifelong component of our Catholic faith. Catholic Christian service flows from the Eucharist. We are called to go out and be the body and blood of Christ to others.

Since all the Sacraments of Initiation focus on incorporation into the parish community, the young person's experience of service should be one that is provided by and within the parish community. Developmentally, young people need and desire opportunities to be with their friends and peers. Any kind of experience that provides a chance for young people to be together and that incorporates them into the ongoing service done by the community is ideal. Coordinators should be open to the suggestions of young people concerning service and allow them opportunities to help with the planning. Information, support and guidance must be provided to the young people to insure a good and safe experience. Be sure to adhere to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Decree on Child Protection during all service opportunities. Seek appropriate permission from parents or guardians and use the permission form suggested by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Check with the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and Media Center for suggestions and resources on service projects.

In general, service opportunities can take place either by incorporating the young people into the various kinds of service that the parish already provides or by developing projects for them to participate in as a group. In the first instance, young people can be incorporated into the parish's ongoing services and ministries such as service to the poor (food pantry, clothing drive, etc.), the community (nursing home or animal shelter volunteers, home repairs, etc.) or the religious education program (aides, baby-sitters, etc.). This approach is truly ideal in that the students are being affirmed in their own gifts as they are being incorporated into the ongoing life of the community.

Group service projects that are created specifically for young people also have value in creating a sense of community within the group and raising awareness about the needs of the community and the possibility for service. They might be involved in fund-raising efforts for special causes, providing support or "staff" for special parish events (festivals, special feast day meals, etc.) or a fix-up/clean-up project. Focusing on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching is fitting when taking part in such activities.

Either of these approaches involves young people in the life of the Church, and provides an enriching experience of service to the community. An exercise to reflect on the service experience and its challenge and meaning for their lives would also be beneficial to them.



## VII. A. HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM

The theology of Baptism is covered in detail in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Based on # 977, 1213ff, 1275, 1279 and by paraphrasing the Glossary # 867 it can be summarized for our purposes here. Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life. It is the first of the seven sacraments and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist constitute the “Sacraments of Initiation” by which a believer receives the remission of original and personal sin, begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit and is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ. By Baptism, we are made sharers in her mission of justice and love and made sharers in the priesthood of Christ.

“Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of the character Baptism cannot be repeated (cf. DS 1609 and DS 1624).” (CCC #1280) Baptism does not presuppose any human merit for it is a grace and a gift from God.

The ritual pattern for Baptism developed over the course of the first two centuries. At that time, it was a more common practice to prepare adults (rather than children) for the sacrament. Children were prepared for the sacrament with their parents, when entire families embraced Christianity.

In the third century, Tertullian called for Easter to be the ideal time for Baptism with the bishop serving as the one who baptized. The preparation period for the sacrament resembled what we now call the period of purification and enlightenment (Lent) and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil (RCIA process). During this period in Church history, the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism included Confirmation and reception of the Eucharist. Those baptized were mostly adults, with some children and infants being baptized along with their parents.

The catechumenate process took shape during this time. “In the baptismal catechumenate, formation was articulated in four stages:

- *the pre-catechumenate*, (RCIA 9-13) characterized as the locus of first evangelization leading to conversion and where the kerygma of the primary proclamation is explained;
- *the catechumenate*, (RCIA 14-20; 68-72; 98-105.) properly speaking, the context of integral catechesis beginning with ‘the handing on of the Gospels’; (RCIA 93; cf. MPD 8c.)
- a time of *purification and illumination* (RCIA 21-26; 133-142; 152-159.) which affords a more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation and in which the ‘the handing on of the Creed’ (RCIA 25 and 183-187) and ‘the handing on of the Lord’s Prayer’ take place; (RCIA 25 and 188-192.)

- a time of *mystagogy*, (RCIA 37-40; 35-239.) characterized by the experience of the sacraments and entry into the community. (*GDC #88*)

In the fifth century, due to Augustine's teaching on original sin and to a large number of infant deaths, parents began to bring their children to be baptized. With the dramatic increase in the number of children being baptized, the number of adults being fully initiated into the life of the Church dwindled.

Further changes occurred in the sixth century when priests were given the authority to baptize but the bishop retained the right to confirm. This was due to the growth of the Church and the inability of the bishop to be everywhere on Easter and Pentecost. This led to a separation of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Since the Sacrament of the Eucharist was to be celebrated as the culmination of the sacraments of initiation, reception of First Communion was deferred until after Confirmation. These changes, in addition to the ever increasing number of infant baptisms being performed, further weakened the unity of the sacraments of initiation. Within a century, the whole understanding of Baptism as a celebration of entrance into a community following a period of preparation, formation and prayer, gave way to the understanding of Baptism as a way of removing original sin.

This understanding of the sacrament prevailed for more than thirteen hundred years, until Pope Paul VI, after the Second Vatican Council, called for a re-examination of the original meaning of Baptism and the celebration of the sacrament. The Council called for the restoration of the catechumenate for adults and a revision of the rites for baptism of adults and infants. It called for a Rite for Reception into full Communion with the Roman Catholic Church to be drawn up. The rites have been drawn up and officially ratified.

## VII. B. PREPARATION FOR INFANT BAPTISM

When an infant is baptized, it is an occasion for all parish members to recognize the giftedness and call of their own Baptism. This time provides an opportunity to catechize parents and parishioners about their responsibility as a living, worshipping community into which the child is being initiated. The People of God, the Church made present in the local community, has an important role to play in the baptism of children. The Church has the opportunity “to encourage the parents and godparents of infants to reexamine the meaning of the Christian message in their own lives.” (*National Directory for Catechesis* p. 120) Parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Baptism that “is the foundation of the Christian life because it is the journey into Christ’s death and Resurrection, which is the foundation of our hope.” (*NDC* p.121) Catechesis should “include a thorough explanation of the Rite of Baptism together with the fundamental signs and symbols that it employs: immersion in or the pouring of water, the words of the Trinitarian formula, and the anointing with oil.” (*NDC* p. 122) For comprehensive information on catechesis for the Sacrament of Baptism please refer to the *National Directory for Catechesis* pp. 120-122.

Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community. During the rite, in addition to the ways of congregational participation mentioned in the general introduction, the community exercises its duty when it expresses its assent together with the celebrant after the profession of faith by the parents and godparents. In this way it is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family, but it is the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ. (*Rite of Baptism for Children*, Introduction, #4)



Parents have primary responsibility for the faith life of their children. We read in the Preface of the Second Vatican Council’s *Declaration on Christian Education*:

As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society. It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the Sacrament of Matrimony, that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the Sacrament of Baptism. (#3)

It is essential that parents and sponsors be supported in their efforts by being adequately informed about their responsibilities. Whatever form the education takes, (instruction, video, printed material, etc.) it should be theologically sound and adapted to the intellectual and cultural needs of the parents or those bringing a child for Baptism and to living the faith. Such materials may be obtained through the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Godparents are to be chosen carefully. They are to be firm believers ready, willing and able to assist the newly baptized on the journey of Christian faith. They are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it.

In keeping with Canon 873:

- ❖ Only one godparent or sponsor is needed.
- ❖ The sponsor can be a man or woman.
- ❖ If two sponsors are desired one must be a man (godfather) and the other a woman (godmother).

According to Canon 874, the sponsor:

- ❖ must have completed the sixteenth year. Exceptions can be made for a just cause determined by the pastor.
- ❖ is a Catholic who is confirmed, has received Eucharist and is living a life in harmony with the faith. The person may not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
- ❖ may not be the mother or father of the one to be baptized.

A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted as a witness to Baptism together with a Catholic who would be the sponsor.

Those providing the preparation for the sacrament, once they have decided on the approach, should avail themselves of print and video materials available at the Archdiocesan Media Center. Log on to the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis web page, [www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec), to find support for your ministry of preparation for Baptism. Your parish consultant at the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is also available to assist you.

### **Components of Meetings When Preparing for Baptism**

Baptism is a significant moment for family, friends and the entire parish therefore proper preparation is essential. It is a time for parents and godparents to reflect on their own Baptism and its meaning in their lives. Ideally both parents and godparents should attend the sessions. This is the time to be sure that all concerned understand the commitment to the child. It is a time for questions and discussion of special circumstances.

The number of sessions varies from parish to parish and sometimes from family to family. However ample time must be devoted to helping those involved understand the importance of the child's new identity, life in Christ.

**Things to consider:**

- ❖ how can the wider parish be involved?
- ❖ what will be the approach to catechesis for the sacrament?
- ❖ how involved will the godparents be in the preparation?
- ❖ how many sessions will be required?

**The goals of the session(s) are to:**

- ❖ present a clear understanding of the theology of infant Baptism
- ❖ identify parental and family responsibility for the faith life of their child
- ❖ clarify the role and responsibility of the godparents at Baptism and beyond
- ❖ explain the Rite and how each part of the Rite relates to the lives of parents and godparents and the life of the child
- ❖ introduce the symbols and their significance
- ❖ identify persons who will fill liturgical roles in the celebration

It is a good idea to arrange for the Baptismal preparation prior to the birth of the child since family time usually becomes more hectic once the baby arrives.

## VII. C. CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

A church must have in a prominent place a font or pool reserved for the celebration of Baptism. (*BLS #66*) Seeing this font the faithful are reminded of the meaning of Baptism and its grace which is clearly seen in the Rite. Attentive participation by the faithful in the Rite renews their own initiation into the riches that this sacrament signifies. The *Rite of Baptism for Children* states: “So that Baptism may clearly appear as the sacrament of the Church’s faith and of incorporation into the people of God, it should normally be celebrated in the parish church.” (#10)

The actual celebration of Baptism can take place on any day. However, it is recommended that it ordinarily be celebrated on Sunday. In the Introduction to the Rite the reason given for celebrating on Sunday is to bring out the paschal character of Baptism for it is on Sunday that the Church commemorates the Lord’s resurrection. (*RBC #9*) Celebrating Baptism during the Mass is recommended so that the assembled community may be present and the relationship between Baptism and Eucharist may be highlighted. However, this is not to be done so often that it clouds the meaning of Sunday, which is the celebration of Easter. Parishes usually set aside a Sunday at specified intervals when multiple baptisms can occur. Recently born babies should be baptized at a common liturgy on the same day. (*RCIA #27*) Those receiving Baptism are incorporated into Christ and have a right to be called Christians and to be seen as brothers and sisters in Christ. Baptism is the sacramental bond of the unity of Christians.

We will now consider what the rite includes and the symbolism of the elements. The following outlines are offered for the convenience of those who prepare parents for the celebration of the baptism of infants. In *The Rite of Baptism for Children* special circumstances are covered: Baptism of one child, several children, large number of children, etc. Each has its own section in the Rite.

### CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM WITHIN THE MASS

#### Reception of the Child/Children during Mass

A suitable hymn or psalm may be sung.

The celebrant goes to meet and to greet the parents, godparents/sponsors, and the child to be baptized. This normally takes place at or near the entrance of the church. The penitential rite given in the Sacramentary is omitted. The celebrant questions the parents of the children.

- ❖ What name do you give your child?
- ❖ What do you ask of God’s Church for your child?
- ❖ Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

The celebrant questions the godparents/sponsors.

- ❖ Are you ready to help these parents in their duty as Christian mothers and fathers?

The celebrant, parents, and godparents/sponsors sign the child with the sign of the cross, signifying the grace of redemption as the child is being claimed for Christ. All process to the place where the Liturgy of the Word will be celebrated, and are seated in the assembly for the proclamation of the Word of God. The greeting has taken place at the entrance of the church, as suggested in *The Rite of Baptism for Children*; a hymn may be sung as the entrance procession takes place. It would be appropriate for the incense bearer, cross bearer, candle bearers, lector, and all gathered at the entrance to be a part of the entrance procession.

The Penitential Rite of Mass is omitted since the renunciation of sin is an integral part of the Baptismal ritual. If the baptism(s) take place on Sunday the readings are to be those designated for that Sunday. For special reasons the texts for infant baptism found in the Lectionary may be substituted.

### **Liturgy of The Word**

- ❖ First Reading
- ❖ Responsorial Psalm
- ❖ Second Reading
- ❖ Gospel Acclamation
- ❖ Gospel
- ❖ The homily is based on the sacred texts (*RBC #29b*) which include the rite itself. The homily serves to open up the meaning of the rite
- ❖ The Creed is omitted because the rite includes the profession of faith as well as the renunciation of sin
- ❖ Intercessions/Prayer of the Faithful should be taken from the *Rite of Baptism*, with petitions added for the universal Church and the needs of the world
- ❖ Litany of the Saints may include the names of the patron saints of the children
- ❖ The names of the children are included in the invocation “Give new life to these chosen ones (names) by the grace of baptism”
- ❖ Prayer of Exorcism
- ❖ Anointing of the child on the breast (oil of catechumens)

### **Celebration of the Sacrament**

- ❖ Blessing and invocation of God over the Baptismal Water: “Father with your Son send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font...” so that the one baptized may be born of water and spirit
- ❖ Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
- ❖ Baptism – This essential part of the rite, the three-fold pouring of the water or by triple immersion, brings about the death to sin and entry into the life of the Trinity. As the pouring or immersion takes place the child is called by name and the words “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” are spoken. The immersion/pouring must be done by the minister speaking the



formula. Immersion is the suitable symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. (*RCIA* General Introduction #22)

- ❖ It is appropriate that an acclamation be sung after each child is baptized. (*RBC* #97)

### **Explanatory Rites**

- ❖ The anointing with chrism is an anointing, conforming the child to Christ, so that he/she may live as a member of his body, sharing in his priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry
- ❖ The child is clothed in a white garment, symbolizing putting on Christ and an outward sign of Christian dignity
- ❖ The candle, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the newly baptized. In Christ, the baptized are to be the light of the world, to walk always as children of light
- ❖ Ephphetha or Prayer Over the Ears and Mouth
- ❖ Procession back to places in the assembly

### **LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

Following the conclusion of the celebration of the sacrament, Mass continues with the presentation and preparation of the gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Communion Rite. It is appropriate for members of the family to be in the procession with gifts. At the invitation to the Lord's Prayer, it is appropriate that some reference be made to the newly baptized or to baptism itself. (*RBC* #103)

### **Concluding Rite**

The presider may use one of the formulae provided in *The Rite of Baptism for Children* (#70, 105, 130, 247-249) for the blessing at the end of Mass.

### **THE CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM OUTSIDE OF MASS**

A more detailed explanation of the parts of the rite and their symbols is given in the preceding section, "The Celebration of Infant Baptism within Mass."

### **Reception of Child/Children**

- ❖ An appropriate hymn or psalm suitable for the occasion may be sung. Music adds solemnity and draws the community together. The music, if not accompanied by an instrument, should be appropriate music that the assembly can easily join in singing
- ❖ The celebrant goes to meet and to greet the parents, godparents/sponsors, and child(ren) to be baptized. This normally takes place at or near the entrance of the church
- ❖ The celebrant questions the parents of the child(ren)



- ❖ The celebrant questions the godparents/sponsors
- ❖ The celebrant, parents, godparents/sponsors sign the child(ren) with the sign of the cross
- ❖ The celebrant invites all present to be seated for the Liturgy of the Word. If this includes a procession from the entrance to seating within the worship space, a psalm or appropriate song may be sung

### **Liturgy of the Word**

It is not necessary to proclaim three readings. If however, other readings are used in addition to the proclamation of a Gospel reading, a responsorial psalm should be sung between the proclamations of the readings. (see *RBC* #186-197)

- ❖ Gospel Acclamation should be sung
- ❖ Proclamation of the Gospel (see *RBC* #198–215 for suggestions for verses before the Gospel and the Gospel readings)
- ❖ Homily
- ❖ Intercessions/Prayer of the Faithful
- ❖ Litany of the Saints
- ❖ Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing Before Baptism
- ❖ Procession to the Font or Invitation to Gather Near the Font

### **Celebration of the Sacrament**

- ❖ Blessing and praying that the Father, with the Son will send the Holy Spirit upon the Baptismal water
- ❖ Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
- ❖ Baptism

### **Explanatory Rite**

- ❖ Anointing With Chrism
- ❖ Clothing With White Garment
- ❖ Lighted Candle
- ❖ Ephphetha or Prayer Over the Ears and Mouth

### **Conclusion of the Rite**

- ❖ Procession to the altar (A suitable song or acclamation may be sung here.)
- ❖ Lord's Prayer
- ❖ Blessing of the mother(s), father(s), and all gathered
- ❖ Closing hymn or psalm of praise and thanksgiving

## VIII. A. HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF CONFIRMATION

The history of Confirmation has been complex. In the first centuries of the Church's life, Confirmation was administered in connection with Baptism. Now in the case of infant Baptism, it is a separate sacramental rite that completes initiation.

Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ. (CCC #1275)

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us to bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds. (CCC #1316)

In Confirmation we also recall the disciples' experience at Pentecost. On that occasion the disciples received a new empowerment from the Spirit. They publicly proclaimed their faith that Jesus had risen from the dead and that He is Lord and Messiah. They went forth into the whole world to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

The sacrament of Confirmation was one way the early Church celebrated the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the first century we find the practice of the laying on of hands and praying for the coming of the Spirit. (cf. *Acts* 8:14-17 and 19:1-7) As a pattern of Christian initiation developed in the second and third centuries, catechumens (most of whom were adults) were accepted into the Church during the Easter Vigil. The candidates were baptized, then presented to the bishop. He extended his hands over each of them in imitation of the descriptions in the Christian Scriptures. As leader of the local church, the bishop welcomed these catechumens and anointed them with Holy Chrism to seal their Baptism. There was a gesture of welcome, an embrace, a hug or a hand on the shoulder or a kiss for the newly baptized. Then the community celebrated the Eucharist and for the first time the new Christians received the body and blood of Christ. The new Christians were thus sent forth to become immersed in the Eucharistic community and in all that it implied: hearing the word, sharing the meal and witnessing by word and work their new life in Christ. Thus we have the three Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, forming one rite and filled with the Spirit.

When Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist were celebrated as one rite of initiation, the candidate chose a new name to indicate that this person was no longer the same person he/she was as a pagan, but had assumed a Christian lifestyle. Today, in order to show the unity between Baptism and Confirmation, the baptismal name ought to be used at Confirmation. However, if another name is chosen, it should be the name of a saint or a name not foreign to Christian mentality. (Canon 855 and CCC #2156)

By the fifth century infant Baptism was a common practice. After the baptism of infants became the norm in the Western Church, priests usually performed baptisms, but the bishops reserved the act of imposing hands over the baptized. The imposition of hands was often done years later, thus separating Confirmation and Baptism. However, the Eastern Catholic Church has retained the custom of baptizing, confirming and giving Eucharist to infants who are received into the Church in a single ritual.



The length of time separating the two rites that had been originally joined together led to new questions and new theories. In the fifth century Bishop Faustus of Riez, France, tried to stress the importance of being confirmed by the bishop. In his homily on Pentecost in 460, he declared that episcopal Confirmation made the recipients more fully Christian and that Confirmation meant that the Spirit gave one the adult strength needed to battle sin and the evil one.

In the Middle Ages, scholars continued to speculate about the way Confirmation differed from Baptism. From the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, theologians were engaged in defining as explicitly as possible the meaning of the sacraments. At the Council of Florence (begun in 1439) Confirmation was described as the sacrament which gave the Spirit in a special way. The ordinary minister of Confirmation was and is the bishop, just as he was the ordinary minister of Baptism until the two sacraments were separated. The bishop kept the role as ordinary minister of Confirmation to emphasize unity with the Church beyond the parish. (Today in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati it is impossible for the Archbishop to confirm everyone. Therefore, he delegates this responsibility to others such as the auxiliary bishop, local deans and priests, thus preserving the concept that Church is more than parish.)

At the Council of Trent (1545-1563), partly as a reaction to the Protestant Reformation and the subsequent minimizing of the sacraments, Confirmation was reaffirmed as the second of the seven sacraments. This meant that the traditional sequence of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist was retained, but it was left up to the bishops to decide at which age Confirmation was to take place.

Following this time, anointing with oil became the primary symbol of Confirmation. Christ is king, priest and prophet and anointing is a sign of our initiation into these roles also. As followers of Christ we become united with him in these roles when we are anointed with Holy Chrism on the forehead. Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam blessed by the bishop during Holy Week.

In the twentieth century further developments have brought the Sacrament of Confirmation to where it is today. The original sequence of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist was broken when Pius X introduced the practice of children receiving Eucharist at the age of seven before the reception of Confirmation. Some dioceses today have implemented the "restored order," Confirmation before Eucharist at about age seven. In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, however, the age designated is twelve to sixteen and after the reception of First Eucharist.

The first document of Vatican II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, called for revision of the rites of Baptism and Confirmation to reflect the connection among the sacraments of initiation. The laying on of hands was restored in the revised Rite of Confirmation.

Although the revised rite does stress the intimate connection of Baptism and Confirmation, the conciliar perspective also retains the themes of strengthening and defending: "By the sacrament of Confirmation they are more perfectly bound to the Church and are endowed with the special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread the faith by word and deed." (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, #11)

In Mt. 28:19, Christ himself commanded his apostles to make disciples of all nations and baptize them. "Jesus Christ, after his Resurrection together with the Father sent the Holy Spirit in order that he might accomplish from within the work of salvation and that he might animate his disciples to continue the mission to the whole world." (*GDC* #34) "To fulfill this divine plan, Jesus Christ founded the Church, built on the Apostles. He gave them the Holy Spirit from the Father and sent them to preach the Gospel to the whole world." (*GDC* #43) Confirmation thus joins the gift of the Spirit to the mission of Jesus. "Confirmation accomplishes two goals for individuals: It confers the gift of the Holy Spirit, and it anoints Christians to become more like Christ." (Paul Turner, *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court*, p. 7)

The Holy Spirit cannot be embraced in isolation from the other divine persons. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of Jesus. The same Spirit is the moving force within the world and within its people in everyday experiences. Christians receive the Spirit at Baptism. *The Rite of Confirmation* makes it clear that an additional strengthening power of the Spirit is conferred at Confirmation. The Rite itself reads: "The promised strength of the Holy Spirit, which you are to receive, will make you more like Christ, and help you to be witnesses to his suffering, death and resurrection. It will strengthen you to be active members of the Church and to build up the body of Christ in faith and love." The Holy Spirit is the power with which God "anoints" us to enable us to remain faithful to Christ and to his work.

The Church has experienced changes in the sacrament of Confirmation as its understanding developed. These changes have taken into consideration the initiatory character of the sacrament, the order of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and the age for reception of Confirmation. Either order, Confirmation before or after Eucharist, is acceptable in the United States at the discretion of the local bishop. See Chapter XI, "Other Circumstances in the Journey of Conversion," for the order for children in RCIA.

## VIII. B. PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION

### Why Is A Preparation Period Necessary?

Confirmation is that sacrament which confirms the action of God in Baptism and strengthens individuals to become like Christ in the Eucharistic community. Canon Law describes the sacrament of Confirmation as the one by which the baptized person continues the path of Christian initiation.

The sacrament of confirmation impresses a character and by it the baptized, continuing on the path of Christian initiation, are enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the church; it strengthens them and obliges them more firmly to be witnesses to Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith. (Canon 879)

The community should, therefore, involve itself in assisting the candidates to become more fully incorporated into the life of the church. The community, in its effort to nurture and guide the candidates, should provide opportunities which will guide the candidates to share the Word actively within and beyond the community, participate in the worship of the community, share fellowship with the community and involve themselves in works of justice and charity with the community.

Canon 777 calls for suitable catechesis to be given for the celebration of the sacraments. The candidates should understand what they celebrate in the sacraments so that they may participate actively and intelligently. Canon 779 calls for this catechetical formation to employ all those aids, educational resources and means of communication appropriate to the age and circumstances of the candidates. "Every parish should evangelize and provide catechetical instruction for those preparing for reception of the sacraments." (*Religious Education Policies* 2107.01) "All preparation for the reception of sacraments should follow the archdiocesan guidelines." (*Religious Education Policies* 2107.02)

As the first and foremost educators of their children, parents are called to guide their adolescents' spiritual, as well as physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth. "Every sacrament preparation program should provide assistance to parents/guardians in assuming their responsibility to prepare their children for celebrating the sacraments." (*Religious Education Policies* 707.03) The parish community can assist parents in this role through meetings and written communication concerning all aspects of preparation for Confirmation. Parents should not hesitate to encourage and help their children to participate fully in the Christian Community's life of Word, worship, fellowship and service. Many Confirmation texts offer suggestions for involving the parish, parents and sponsors in the preparation of candidates for Confirmation.

In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Confirmation is conferred between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Preparation is to take place in the parish or in a cluster of parishes, followed by

celebration of Confirmation at one of the parishes or at the Cathedral. (*Religious Education Policies* 2107.06)

## **Components of Preparation for Confirmation**

Since Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation into the Church, the focus of all catechetical efforts must be aimed at incorporation into the Eucharistic community. This kind of focus will call for an approach that goes beyond instruction in the doctrines of the faith. Nevertheless, it would seem unwise to initiate an adolescent into a community about which he or she knows little. Some background and experience seem essential. However, it is assumed that most candidates for Confirmation have had some experience of the Church with their families and have participated in on-going religious education. Therefore religious instruction should be one of several components of a broader effort of formation of the Confirmation candidate.

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati does not require service hours as a prerequisite for receiving Confirmation. This is not to down play the value of service, which is explained in its proper perspective in Chapter VI, "Christian Service," of this document. However, candidates should be made aware that service throughout life is part of being a Christian.

A process of preparation should follow the same principles as any sound comprehensive youth ministry program. Foundational and operational principles for developing adolescent religious education as part of a comprehensive ministry to youth can be found in *Effective Models of Adolescent Faith Formation for Parishes*, which is available from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Office of Evangelization and Catechesis and the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith* (The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry) offers a framework for adolescent catechesis. The principles which should guide the creation of religious education programs for youth have also been articulated in *Renewing the Vision* (USCCB). Contact the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the most current documents.

### **1. Religious Instruction for Confirmation**

A certain amount of instruction is an important element in the preparation for Confirmation. Care must be taken that the educational component does not change the focus of the sacrament from being a sacrament of initiation to being something to be earned or the completion of one's faith formation. As preparation for any sacrament seeks to foster conversion of the heart to Jesus, religious education during the time of preparation for Confirmation must leave room for candidates to mature to a deeper faith and grow to more active participation into the life of the Church.

They may be invited to take a more active part in planning and celebrating liturgical experiences, especially the Eucharist. They should be given frequent and regular opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. (*National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 199)

Confirmation textbooks cover various segments of time from six to eight lessons for immediate preparation to a full-year process. It is assumed that the candidates have been and will continue to be involved in on-going catechesis. Immediate preparation for Confirmation is one part of the on-going growth in faith that should be part of the lives of the young candidates. Immediate preparation should strive to bring about active and conscious participation in the Rite of Confirmation.

According to the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the primary educational topics should include the meaning, rite and symbols of Confirmation and its connection to the other sacraments of initiation as well as the roles of the bishop, parents and sponsors. For the full list of topics, see pp. 122 - 123 of the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

Many parishes choose to do a review of the basic doctrines of our faith as part of the preparation for Confirmation. Even though this is not a requirement for Confirmation, there is a value in doing a review of the major tenets of our faith such as those found in the Creed. However, broadening the educational component beyond this risks making Confirmation a sacrament that must be earned through educational efforts.

## **2. Nurturing a Relationship with Christ**

Candidates should be encouraged to spend time opening themselves to growth in their relationship with the Lord.

Since adolescence is the age of hero worship, it is helpful to present the words and example of Jesus as well as the lives and deeds of the saints in ways that appeal to young people. Such catechesis should present Christ as the Son of God, friend, guide, and model who can be not only admired but also imitated....

Since they are better able to experience faith as a deeper relationship with God than are younger children, prayer and service to others in the name of Christ become more meaningful to them. (*NDC*, p.199)

It is the parish's responsibility to provide opportunities where this can happen. Catechetical and youth ministry sessions and retreats can provide such opportunities. A host of materials is available for parishes who wish to plan retreats themselves. Many Confirmation textbooks offer suggestions or plans for retreats. Most retreat centers provide adolescent retreats as well. See the Media Center or the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for other resources for planning retreats.



### 3. Prayer and the Liturgy of the Church

Public and private prayer is an essential part of life as a Catholic. Participation at Sunday Liturgy should be a high priority as it is the sum and substance of Christian life.

Confirmation candidates are expected to be already participating at Sunday Mass.

Adolescents should also have opportunities to try new experiences of prayer. Guided meditation, prayer using body movement, scriptural meditation, Morning and Evening Prayer, traditional devotions and other types of prayer can be introduced to and used with adolescents. Suggestions for resources for prayer are found in many Confirmation texts. The Media Center has many prayer resources in print and on video.

#### SPONSORS

As a rule there should be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed. These sponsors bring the candidates to receive the sacrament, present them to the minister for anointing, and will later help them to fulfill their baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit whom they have received. (*The Rite of Confirmation #5*)

The canons are not definitive about who should assume the role of Confirmation sponsor. Canon 893.2 states that it is desirable that the person who undertook the role of sponsor at Baptism should also be the sponsor at Confirmation. Canon 892 states that the role of the sponsor is "to see that the confirmed person acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with this sacrament." To show the connection between the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation one of the candidate's godparents would be an appropriate choice. However, should the baptismal godparent be unwilling or unable to undertake the responsibility of Confirmation sponsor, the candidate would choose a confirmed, practicing Catholic whom he or she admires and who bears witness to the Gospel in everyday life.

The qualifications for a Confirmation sponsor according to Canon 874 are:

- a. The sponsor must be at least sixteen years of age.
- b. The sponsor must be a Catholic who has received Confirmation and Eucharist and is practicing the faith.
- c. The sponsor must not be bound by any canonical penalty (e.g., May not be divorced and remarried without an annulment).
- d. The sponsor may not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.

It should be kept in mind that a sponsor should be willing to share his/her faith in God and accompany the candidate in searching for God in his/her own life. A sponsor should also be able to serve as a mentor, by regularly spending time with the candidate. Many Confirmation Preparation textbooks and resources offer suggestions for preparing sponsors to fulfill their role.



## After Confirmation

Since Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation or beginning and not the end of faith formation, it is crucial that those confirmed continue to be catechized and nurtured in the faith and in the significance of their own commitments.

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. As fully initiated Christians, they must be given the opportunity to serve the community in a variety of liturgical ministries. (*NDC*, p.200)

Having already celebrated the Sacraments of Initiation, they continue to develop in their understanding of the life of the Eucharistic community. Subsequently, through their fuller participation in that community through catechesis or comprehensive youth ministry, those already confirmed experience a deepening relationship with Christ, Prayer and Liturgy, and Christian Service. The completion of preparation for Confirmation does not complete the formation necessary for continued growth as a Christian. Lifelong growth in faith is needed to respond to God's call to live as an effective Christian witness in the world.



## VIII. C. CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

### A Parish Celebration

Various locations and times are available for consideration in terms of scheduling the celebration of Confirmation. Possibilities include a single parish celebration, a cluster of neighboring parishes combined for one celebration and a celebration by several parishes at the Cathedral. If local facilities will allow the possibility of choosing a scheduled Sunday Mass for the sacrament, it can be a way to foster appreciation of this sacrament as related to the other sacraments of initiation and its relationship to the local parish community.

Those responsible for the preparation of the Liturgy of Confirmation should keep in mind that this sacrament is one of the sacraments of initiation. This should be clearly reflected in the various choices made and in the overall tone of the celebration. Consider including the Sprinkling Rite as an opportunity to make a concrete connection between Baptism and Confirmation. Remember that the celebration of the sacraments is an ecclesial event. The focus is not on the candidates, but rather on the celebration of the whole Church community, gathered to celebrate the sacrament.



Each spring the Archbishop's Office sends each parish a "Confirmation Request Form." By returning the request form as soon as possible, a parish or cluster is more likely to have the Archbishop or Bishop preside and more likely to have the desired month or date scheduled. Upon receipt of the "Confirmation Request Form" from a parish, the Archbishop's Office will send "Instructions for the Sacrament of Confirmation" as well as a "Liturgy Planning Sheet." Following the instructions carefully and returning the completed planning sheet to the Archbishop's Office or to the designated presider at least three weeks prior to the celebration of the sacrament; will assure that the necessary arrangements are in place.

### The Celebration of the Mass and the Scripture Readings for Confirmation

Frequently the Ritual Mass for Confirmation is the appropriate text for the Mass. Several options from which to choose can be found in the *Sacramentary* under "Ritual Masses."

There are days on which the Ritual Mass is not used. These include the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season as well as Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and any feast day which holds the rank of Solemnity. On these days, when the Ritual Mass is not used, the texts for the Mass of the Day are used.

Scripture readings are normally chosen from the options in the "Ritual Masses for Confirmation" in the *Lectionary* (#764-768). On the above listed days when the Ritual Mass is not used, the scripture readings may be taken in whole or in part from the Mass of the Day or from the *Lectionary* for Confirmation. The readings should be proclaimed from the

*Lectionary.* It is never appropriate to proclaim the scripture readings from a sheet of paper, a missalette or any other book.

If the celebration of Confirmation is scheduled for one of the Sundays which take precedence over the Ritual Mass texts, allow the season to give its color, texture, and tone to the celebration. The liturgical color for Confirmation is usually red. On the Sundays of Advent and Lent, violet is used. On solemnities, the color of the day is used. The Archbishop and Bishop usually bring their own vestments. If the dean is presiding at your celebration, you may wish to check with him.

### **Candidates' Involvement in the Liturgy**

It must be remembered that those who are being confirmed have a unique role within the Confirmation celebration; they are receiving the sacrament. They participate fully in this and every other Eucharist by taking part in the singing, the spoken prayer, and by listening to the scriptures and the liturgical texts spoken in their name by the presider or other ministers.

At the Rite of Confirmation, candidates should not be involved in liturgical roles or ministries such as lector, cantor, server or extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. Those who normally fulfill these liturgical roles in the parish would be the best choice for the persons to serve in these capacities at the Confirmation liturgy. The celebration of a sacrament allows the parish community to minister to those who are candidates for the sacrament.

### **Processions**

Candidates for Confirmation are sometimes included in the entrance procession. It should be remembered that the purpose of the procession is to help unify the assembly and to draw those already in place into the action of gathering for the celebration. There is no liturgical requirement that the candidates have to be in the entrance procession. A parish or cluster could decide not to include the candidates for the sacrament in the entrance procession. If the candidates are included in the procession, they should have the necessary programs and/or hymnals that allow them to participate in the singing of the entrance hymn.



The candidates for Confirmation come forward in procession for the Imposition of Hands and Anointing. If the number to be confirmed is large, the Imposition of Hands is done over all the candidates at once by the bishop. Either of these processions flows well if the candidates approach the bishop in two lines.

The Procession with the Gifts could include some of the newly confirmed bringing the gifts of bread and wine to the altar. There should be as few vessels as possible. The bread and wine should not be divided into smaller vessels merely to increase the number of persons in the procession. It is possible to have a number of persons in the procession to present the gifts, but not all are required to have something in hand. It would be appropriate to include gifts of food for the

poor in the procession if desired. However, only the gifts of bread and wine, the collection and food for the poor are appropriate.

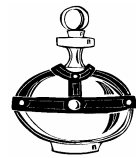
The procession at the end of the celebration, the recessional, does not fulfill any liturgical function or need. It is merely there to help the ministers in the sanctuary leave with a sense of order and dignity. It is not necessary to have everyone who was in the entrance procession included in the recessional. There is no rule that says whether the newly confirmed should or should not be in the recessional.

### **General Intercessions**

Just as the candidates would not be chosen as lectors, it is best to choose a person from the parish who normally fulfills this liturgical role of reading the intercessions. Samples of intercessions can be found in Paragraph #30 in *The Rite of Confirmation* and in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*.

### **The Sacred Chrism**

Some parishes have an Ambry or other special place where the Holy Oils are reserved in appropriate vessels. If so, the Chrism could be carried in the entrance procession and placed carefully in the sanctuary near the paschal candle. The area could be appropriately decorated.



### **Baptismal Candles**

The symbol of baptismal light is often used at Confirmation. The paschal candle could be given a prominent place in the church. To help reflect the connection between Baptism and Confirmation, candidates could hold lit candles of good quality during the renewal of the baptismal promises and/or the entrance procession. Candles should not be carried at the time of the anointing.

### **Preparing the Candidate for the Rite of Confirmation**

Helping candidates know what to expect during the Rite of Confirmation will enable them to participate more fully in the celebration of the sacrament. See Chapter VIII.B., "Preparation for Confirmation," for components of Confirmation preparation. A general rehearsal of the candidates, sponsors and servers will also help insure a prayerful celebration of the sacrament. Important things to include in the rehearsal:

- Entrance Procession (if the candidates are to be included)
- Presentation of the Candidates
- Renewal of Baptismal Promises
- Anointing Procedures
- Preparation of the Gifts Procession
- Recessional (if the candidates are to be included)

Just a word of caution, however. Don't **over practice** ritual!

## **RITE OF CONFIRMATION**

from

*The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume One, 1990*

### **Rite of Confirmation Within Mass (Paragraphs 20 - 33)**

#### **1. Introductory Rites**

Processional Hymn  
Greeting and Introduction  
Sprinkling or Penitential Rite  
Gloria (not during Advent or Lent)  
Opening Prayer

#### **2. Liturgy of the Word (20)**

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel

#### **3. Sacrament of Confirmation (21 - 30)**

Presentation of the Candidates

After the Gospel the pastor, deacon or catechist presents the candidates for Confirmation according to local custom. They may be called by name or presented as a group.

Homily or Instruction by the bishop

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Laying on of Hands

The bishop lays hands upon the candidates by extending his hands over them and praying the prescribed prayers.

Anointing with Chrism

The bishop dips his right thumb in the chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate and says: "N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The newly confirmed responds: "Amen."

The bishop usually shakes hands with the newly confirmed and says: "Peace be with you."

The newly confirmed responds: "And also with you."

General Intercessions

#### **4. The Liturgy of the Eucharist (31 - 33)**

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows as usual, with these exceptions:

The Newly Confirmed may join those who bring the gifts to the altar.

Eucharistic Prayer IV is not used, since it requires its own preface.

The final blessing is found in the "Rite of Confirmation."

**RITE OF CONFIRMATION**  
from  
*The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume One*

**Rite of Confirmation Outside Mass (Paragraphs 34 - 49)**

**1. Introductory Rites (34 - 35)**

Hymn  
Greeting  
Opening Prayer

**2. Liturgy of the Word (36 - 37)**

The celebration of the word of God follows. At least one of the readings suggested for the Mass of Confirmation (see nos. 61 - 65) is read.

If two or three readings are chosen, the traditional order is followed, that is, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Gospel. After the first and second reading there should be a psalm or song, or a period of silence may be observed.

**3. Sacrament of Confirmation (38 - 49)**

Presentation of the Candidates

After the Gospel the pastor, deacon or catechist presents the candidates for Confirmation according to local custom. They may be called by name or presented as a group.

Homily or Instruction by the bishop

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Laying on of Hands

The bishop lays hands upon the candidates by extending his hands over them and praying the prescribed prayers.

Anointing with Chrism

The bishop dips his right thumb in the chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate and says: "N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The newly confirmed responds: "Amen."

The bishop usually shakes hands with the newly confirmed and says: "Peace be with you."

The newly confirmed responds: "And also with you."

General Intercessions

Lord's Prayer

Blessing and Prayer over the People

## IX. A. HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The *Book of Exodus* (12:1-13:16) recalls the salvation story of God saving the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This event is ritualized in a yearly Passover meal. Bitter herbs symbolized the bitterness of their slavery; the lamb shank reminded the Jews of the blood of the lamb smeared on the doorpost of the homes of the Hebrews in order to protect their first born from death. By telling the story and sharing in the meal the Jewish people not only remembered the way God had saved them but also participated in that past event in such a way that God's saving deed became present to them in the here and now of their celebration. In the community's story and experience of the Passover meal they proclaim that God had saved God's people in the past, and continues to save people now.

The Gospels tell us of Jesus eating meals with the disciples and with sinners and outcasts of all sorts. These scenes of meals with Jesus are a sign of the reign of God, which is open to all people. The Last Supper meal and all of Jesus' life focused on the reign of God. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, written about 30 years after Jesus' death, contains the earliest written statement about the meaning of the community's Eucharistic meal.

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. (*1Cor.* 11:23-26)

There is no one complete account of the early Christian Eucharist. Each of the four gospels tells of its own community's traditions regarding the action and meaning of the meal Jesus celebrated with his disciples on the night before he was crucified. Knowing that Jesus and his followers were Jews, they related the Last Supper with the experiences and images from their own Jewish tradition. When Jesus spoke of his blood in connection with a new covenant he seems to have in mind Jeremiah's prophecy:

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more. (*Jer.* 31:31-34)

We can also find in the Book of Isaiah an end-time banquet in the context of triumph over death and the fulfillment of all God's promises:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts  
will provide for all peoples  
A feast of rich food and choice wines,  
juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.  
On this mountain he will destroy  
the veil that veils all peoples,  
The web that is woven over all nations;  
he will destroy death forever. (*Is 25:6-7*)

In the *Acts of the Apostles* we find reference to one of the earliest gathering of the Church: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (*Acts 2:42*). The Church grew rapidly and was



quickly joined by many Gentile believers. The Jewish aspect of Eucharist celebrations became intermingled with local traditions. In time a pattern emerged in churches throughout the Roman Empire: gifts of bread and wine were offered, a prayer of thanksgiving was said, bread was broken and the community participated in the sharing of the Eucharist. In time a bishop or priest led the gathering in prayer. The whole community thanked God the Father for gifts, particularly the gift of salvation through Jesus.

During the first three centuries Eucharistic celebration was simple in form. This changed when Christianity became an acceptable religious practice in the Roman Empire. With the Edict of Constantine (often called the Edict of Milan) in 313, religious tolerance was granted to all religions including Christianity. The Church was recognized as a legal entity allowing it to own property. Emperor Theodosius called the Council of Constantinople in 381 which reiterated the teaching of equality of Christ with God, recognized the full humanity of Jesus and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Christianity grew in numbers and Christian worship became more widely accepted because Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. Those who wanted to be in step with imperial policy adopted Christianity as their religion. A public acceptance of Christian worship began a time when liturgy became more elaborate. This marked the beginning of a process when the celebration of Eucharist became more solemn and gradually more of a clerical performance. The laity became increasingly more passive.

As we do today, the early Church recognized Jesus’ presence in the assembly, the word of God, the bread and wine, and the priest. As centuries passed, more attention was given to and importance placed on the presence of Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine. As the liturgy took on greater solemnity the awareness of the presence of Jesus narrowed. The areas of fellowship, devotion to teachings, and prayer took second place to the sacred objects of the consecrated bread and wine. During the Middle Ages emphasis was placed on a person’s sinfulness and unworthiness leading to increasingly rare reception of Eucharist. In 1215 the bishops of the Fourth Lateran Council passed a law that required believers to receive the



Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter Season. This was intended as a minimum standard for membership in the church but it became the norm for many.

During the Protestant Reformation a dichotomy existed between the Protestant Reformers who contended that the liturgy is a commemorative meal and the Catholic Church which stressed that the Mass is a sacrifice. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) provided a format for the liturgy referred to as the “Latin Mass” or the “Tridentine Mass.” Because of the antagonism between Catholics and some Reformers, the Tridentine liturgy with its stress on sacrifice and the Scholastic explanation of the mode of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist became central aspects of Catholicism.

The bishops of the Council of Trent, in order to affirm the Church’s belief that Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist, used the philosophical term “transubstantiation” to explain how Jesus becomes present in the Eucharist. The real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist refers to the “substance” of the bread and wine which is changed by the power of the Holy Spirit into the “substance” of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We do not see a change because substance is not visible. The “accidental,” the shape and color of bread and wine that which we can see, taste and touch, remains. At the moment of consecration what appears to be bread and wine is the body and blood of Christ. This change at the level of substance from bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is called transubstantiation. We see the bread and wine, the accidental without seeing its new essence or nature, the substance of the body and blood of Christ. The Eucharistic presence remains as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entirely in the species and whole and entirely in each of the parts. (CCC # 1376-1377)



Scholars began to do research into the origins and development of the Eucharistic liturgy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Infrequent reception of communion and the lack of participation by the laity in the Eucharistic liturgy had persisted. At this time the age for the reception of the Sacrament of Eucharist was 14 years and older. In 1910 Pius X, in an attempt to promote greater lay participation in the Mass through more frequent reception of the Eucharist, decreed that children who have reached the age of reason, considered to be about the age of seven, are permitted to receive the sacrament of Eucharist.

In 1963, the Second Vatican Council’s promulgation of *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was the culmination of nearly a century of research, writing, and practice regarding the development of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The conciliar bishops stated that the ideal is that Catholics would come to celebrate the Eucharist with “proper dispositions,” and with “thoughts that match their words.” (CSL #11) The bishops asked pastors to

...realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebration. It is their duty to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively and fruitfully. (CSL #11)

In order that the laity participates in the Eucharist “knowingly, actively and fruitfully,” the liturgy was thoroughly revised to highlight scriptural readings as well as reception of the consecrated bread and wine. The narrow focus on the moment of consecration (with the ringing of bells and elevation of host and chalice) has given way to an emphasis on communal participation in the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (#7) speaks of the fourfold presence of Christ coming together in our common action of Eucharist. Christ is present in the Word, in the Eucharistic elements, in the ordained ministers and in the assembly. This concept is reflective of the early church. Through the proclamation of the Word and in the Eucharistic food, we become Christ present in a world that still needs visible signs of his saving presence. The Eucharistic food, now consumed, has become part of us and we have become part of Christ; thus, we become more and more signs of Christ’s presence and agents of his ministry in the world.

In Eucharist we share in God’s plan of salvation. We are united with the person of Christ, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him” (*Jn* 6:56) and share in the divine life of Christ: “Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.” (*Jn* 6:57) In Eucharist we remember the sacrifice of Christ and are joined in the sacrifice with Christ. Sin and death are conquered and we are reconciled to God and receive the many benefits of union with God. We are active participants at Eucharist. As Church, the Body of Christ, we are participants in the sacrificial offering. In the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ becomes the sacrifice of the members of his Body who united to Christ form one sacrificial offering. (CCC #1368)

In this study we see that the Catholic Church has moved from an early Church community that gathered to pray and break bread, to a Church focusing on a theology of the Blessed Sacrament which stressed the consecration of bread and wine, to a Church that recognizes that the Eucharist has many dimensions. All these are components of the community’s celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it... (#1328).

Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God... (#1328).

The Lord’s Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples... (#1329).

The *Breaking of Bread*, because Jesus used this rite ... when... he blessed and distributed the bread, (Cf. *Mt* 14:19; 15:36; *Mk* 8:6, 19.) above all at the Last Supper... (#1329).

The *Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)*, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church... (Cf. 1Cor 11:17-34.) (#1329).

The *memorial* of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection... (#1330).

The *Holy Sacrifice*, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and...since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. (#1330).

The *Holy and Divine Liturgy*, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament... (#1330).

*Holy Communion*, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body... (Cf. 1Cor 10:16-17.) (#1331).

*Holy Mass (Missa)*, because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (*missio*) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives. (#1332).

Eucharist is simultaneously an act of worship, a participation in Jesus' eternal sacrifice, a celebration of the salvation given us through Jesus Christ, a thanksgiving to God the Father in union with the risen Jesus and more. Living in the presence of mystery we are able to recognize that the sacramental reality of the Eucharist is dynamic, unfolding and resistant to efforts that restrict its meaning to any one theological system. When we take part in the Eucharist our "Amen" is the affirmation that we make to the words "Body of Christ" and "Blood of Christ." This speaks of our personal and communal commitment to both Jesus and the believing community. With our "amen" we not only confess our desire to enter into communion with the Risen Christ, but also declare our intention to become what we eat—the body of Christ in a broken world.

## IX. B. PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

The Celebration of Eucharist is the center of Christian life:

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper. (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* #10)

This is a beautiful statement from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. What an awesome endeavor! How do we prepare to fully take part at liturgy? We might ask, "What are we doing at liturgy, what are we preparing for, and what are we celebrating?"

When we celebrate a birthday what are we celebrating? We remember the past, the day of birth. We count the years. We celebrate the changes that have happened in life, the growing older and the ability to be more who we are by what we know and understand. We celebrate who we are today and what we have accomplished in life. We celebrate the future, we will grow and change and hopefully be around for many years to come.

In Eucharist we celebrate a past, Jesus' Last Supper, the many meals he celebrated with his friends, and Jesus' death and Resurrection. We listen to the Scripture readings and prayers that root us in our Catholic heritage of revelation and tradition. We read of the Good Samaritan and understand service to others, the Prodigal Son and realize the call to forgive. We envision the Exodus and see our own journey of faith or the creation story and our responsibility for the care and welfare of our earth. We celebrate the present, the ongoing saving activity of Jesus Christ, the expression of thanksgiving for salvation, and the Body of Christ, the Church that is a reality in our parish. The future is also celebrated; God continues to work in the world. We find God's saving work in our own lives as well as in our parish community. We work for the fullness of the Kingdom of God and we look to the second coming.

Keeping this in mind each and every Sunday can seem daunting. But in order that the sacred liturgy may produce its full effect it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their thoughts match their words, and that they cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain.(*SC #11*)

Pastors of souls must realize it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part (knowingly, actively, and fruitfully, fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it.) (*SC #11*)

The full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true

Christian spirit. Therefore, through the needed program of instructing pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it in all their pastoral work. (SC #14)

We go to Mass, excited about being there, so eager that we cannot wait to be in church. With the opening hymn our voices are raised to God with such exuberance that the church doors will not stay shut. Probably, we have not often had this experience but from what we read it seems like this is what is meant to be. How do we and our family members realize such an experience?



As parents live Christianity, their children will develop as Christians. Children are imitators of their parents, who teach by what they do and how they live. That is why it is good to ask what adults want for themselves. What do they bring to the community? Sacraments are community celebrations of the grace of divine life given to us with each sacrament. In sacrament celebrations the community recognizes God's presence in their lives and their response to that presence. Sacramental preparation is fostering that awareness in the community and in the children. Children see their parents and other adults living in awareness of Christ's presence with an attitude that Eucharist is the center of their lives.

Children and all participants need to talk about what they see and hear at Mass, about the readings, the homily, the symbols and the ritual gestures. We need to explore the richness of our rituals and recognize the meaning that words and gestures contain. We can recognize how these words find their way into every day: peace, forgiveness, sorrow, care, and love as well as a handshake, a greeting, and a hug.

Notice how often the term community is used when talking about the Mass and the church or parish. Eucharist is our community celebration of thanksgiving. Preparation necessitates an experience of community and thanksgiving. We experience community in our homes, in the give and take of family life, the sharing, the listening, and the being present to one another. Appreciating the variety of gifts, talents, and abilities, as we share in the responsibilities and tasks of family life, leads to an understanding of community and the Christian community as the Body of Christ. As children appreciate the diversity of gifts that makes it possible for persons in family and community to support and care for each other, they grow in understanding how God's love is present and see Christ present in the community.

We come to Mass to pray together as a community.

To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes. And at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed. (SC #30)

Prayer is being in the presence of God. We have a sense of the holy. We grow in appreciation of the prayer of the community, the power of the community at prayer. We

reflect the prayer of the community in our homes and in our own prayer life. We can use the prayers and gestures of Mass to further our own prayer life and that of our children. We develop a greater understanding of the prayers of the Mass and a comforting familiarity of ritual.

Eucharist is a Sacrament of Initiation into full communion in the Catholic Church (see Chapter V. Sacraments of Initiation). Like Baptism and Confirmation we are initiated into the worshipping community, a community called to be the presence of Christ, to proclaim and hear the Good News, to welcome and nurture the faith developing in the children and in its members. The Community has the responsibility to instill in its members a sense of worship.

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all. (SC #48)

## THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

The family is the medium of society. The family transmits values and attitudes to its children. Parents are to "be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education...it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute." (GE #3) Therefore, it is through and with the family that we promote an understanding of and preparation for the sacraments. The parish community in partnership with the parents prepares for sacraments. The sacrament process begins with Baptism and an understanding of sacramental life and the commitment to community. At Baptism parents are accepting the responsibility to prepare their children to participate in the Eucharistic celebration. Thus begins a lifelong journey of faith. The family is as much a candidate for the sacrament as the child receiving the sacrament for the first time (Patrick J. Brennan, *The Evangelizing Parish*, p. 33). Children enter into the reality of Church through their families, through the commitment, example and guidance of their parents or guardians and the witness of their local parish church. The *Directory for Masses with Children* states:



The Christian Family has the greatest role in teaching Christian and human values. Thus Christian education provided by parents and other educators should be strongly encouraged in relation to liturgical formation of children.

By reason of responsibility freely accepted at the Baptism of their children, parents are bound to teach them gradually to pray. (#10)

The role of the family is further magnified: “Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation.” (Canon 774 §2)

Every Catholic family is a Catholic household regardless of the number of persons. Expressions of Catholicism are seen by the way life is lived: a sense of justice, of service, care and love for one another and others beyond the household. Catholic heritage is passed on from generation to generation and is carried by parents and guardians to their children and households.

A very important way of sharing and expressing belief is through prayer. Prayer in households is as important as food on the table and should be seen as necessary. Prayer can mark the normal events of the day, praying at mealtime, as well as on rising in the morning and resting for the night. It is a duty and a privilege for our homes to be a place of prayer. It also will introduce children into a lifetime habit of prayer. Prayer is the recognition of God and our dependence on God in our lives.



It is through such family experiences that children come to understand what we celebrate at Eucharist. Concepts like unity and belonging are experienced in families and homes. At home with their families, children experience and learn to understand and value sharing, listening, eating, conversing, giving, thanking and celebrating. These same experiences are applied to Liturgy. Using these concepts with an explanation and appropriate understanding of Eucharist we are able to help children participate meaningfully in the action of the Mass and to receive Christ’s body and blood in Communion in an informed and reverent manner.

The involvement of the parents and the family and the parish community in preparation for Eucharist is essential.

- ❖ First of all, sacraments are community celebrations. It is through community that we are called to salvation. In and through sacraments we celebrate God’s presence in our lives and our response to this presence. We develop and recognize more fully God’s presence in our lives during a time of preparation. We are all called to continually grow in faith and this time of preparation is a value to all members of the community and of the utmost importance to the children, other candidates and to their families.
- ❖ Secondly, all adults have a need for continuing faith formation. Sometimes families who have been alienated or marginalized in their faith life bring their children for sacrament preparation and celebration. This time of preparation can

be a time of healing, reconciliation and recognition of the role of faith in the life of the family members. First Eucharist should never be an isolated celebration. Just as Baptism involves a commitment, a future, so does Eucharist. For all those involved Eucharist preparation is a faith journey toward a fuller and deeper commitment to Jesus Christ and the sacramental life of the Church. It can be a continuation and enrichment of the faith life of participants or a time to return to a life-long faith journey.

### **Minimum Requirements**

The emphasis of this preparation is neither age nor grade dictated. Just as families bring forth their child or children for initiation in Baptism, they bring them to the Eucharist table as a sign of their faith. In the decree, *Quam Singulari*, Pius X stated the requirements for the first reception of Eucharist:

- ❖ the ability to distinguish ordinary bread from Eucharist,
- ❖ the knowledge of the mysteries of faith according to his / her ability,
- ❖ the ability to express some desire to receive Jesus.

Canon Law mandates that the decision about a child's readiness to celebrate the sacrament of Eucharist for the first time is a decision which rests primarily with the parents in consultation with the priest who will administer the sacrament. (Canon 914) The goal is meaningful preparation that leads to lifelong celebration of the sacrament.

### **The Order for Celebrating Sacraments**

In the western Catholic Church, the Latin Rite, we are accustomed to celebrating Baptism in infancy, First Communion around the age of discretion (about the age of seven), and Confirmation in early adolescence. In the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church the initiation sacraments are received at the same time. An infant brought to Baptism would also celebrate Confirmation and Eucharist. In recent years the discussion to restore the order of the Initiation Sacraments has taken place. Consequently, many dioceses in the United States are celebrating Confirmation prior to or at the time of the celebration of first Eucharist. This process is further discussed in Chapter VIII, the Confirmation section, of this document.

An area for concern is the preparation for the sacrament of Penance and the reception of first Eucharist. Canon 914 states "It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents as well as of the pastor to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession..." Canons 916, 988, and 989 require that only those persons conscious of serious sin must confess before receiving Communion. This applies to children preparing to celebrate First Communion. Formation for Penance appropriate to the understanding of the child celebrating First Communion must take place prior to and be distinct from preparation for Eucharist. Children are expected to receive Penance before First Communion. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* referring to Canon 914 states: "The First Communion of children must always be preceded by sacramental confession and



absolution” (#87). It is the responsibility of parents as well as pastors to see that children are properly prepared for the sacraments. Parents bring their young children to the Initiation Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and to the Sacrament of Penance. Children have a right to receive Communion because of their Baptism. If for whatever reason, for example a mental handicap, a child or children do not approach the sacrament of penance they should not be deprived of the right to make First Holy Communion. See Chapter X, the Penance section of this document for additional information.

## **Other Issues**

There are certainly many pastoral issues when working with families and children in preparation for Eucharist. Adult members of the family may be returning to the faith or are preparing for initiation at the same time as their children. These special issues and circumstances dealing with children are covered in Section XI “Other Circumstances in the Journey of Conversion” in this document.

## **THE ROLE OF THE PARISH**

Since the early 1960’s our understanding of Sacraments has shifted from something we receive to something we celebrate and live—the dynamic activity of God in our lives and our participation in that activity. In this shift the Body of Christ, the Church, has developed in awareness and understanding of its role as a community. In preparation for Eucharist the Church has an important role. The Church welcomes its candidates and guides and instructs them in the Catholic way of life.

The Body of Christ, the Church, through preparing and celebrating sacraments, brings the candidates and their families more deeply into the worshipping community. This time of preparation is not only an updating and / or study of theology of Eucharist for parents and adults in the community but is a means for all the faithful to delve more deeply into the sacramental life of the church. Fully participating in liturgy, celebrating the paschal mystery as a community of believers is the center of Christian life.



It is the responsibility of the pastor with the pastoral staff to educate the parish in its role of preparing and celebrating Eucharist. The parish and the parish staff should exemplify the concepts of Eucharist: unity, belonging, sharing, listening, eating, giving, and thanking. The parish and the parish staff should emphasize the connectedness of faith life and sacrament celebration. Eucharist is an ongoing celebration, and central to every aspect of parish life. The pastoral objective for Eucharist is primarily worship, as well as ongoing catechesis, formation, community building and liturgical awareness. The parish staff gives direction, witness and guidance to the parish.

Through the work of the parish staff under the direction of the DRE/CRE the parish should have in place a suitable model for the preparation process that meets the needs of the parish and the candidates. This model should endeavor to bring about an awareness of Eucharist as

central to Christian life. “Catechesis for the Eucharist recognizes it as the heart of Christian life....” (NDC p.124) The goal of catechesis for Eucharist is to help the “children participate actively and consciously in the Mass.” (p. 127) Catechetical concepts that should be included in the preparation can be found in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, pp. 127-128.



The parish should have policies regarding First Communion based on the Archdiocese of Cincinnati *Religious Education Policies*. The parish staff should also have in place procedures to deal with pastoral situations. This should include addressing such issues as the lack of readiness on the part of a child, non-practicing Catholic families and households, a parent of another denomination, divorced and separated parent situations, parent / guardian resistant to a formation process.

In recent years the area of Adult Faith Formation has appeared as a major concern in the Church. Catechesis of adults is seen as the chief form of catechesis; other forms are oriented to it. The document, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* states:

Adult faith formation should serve as the point of reference for catechesis for other age groups. It ought to be “the organizing principle, which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular Church.” (GDC, nos. 59, 171, 275.) Maturity of faith is the intent of all catechesis from the earliest years. Thus, all catechesis is geared to a lifelong deepening of faith in Christ. How necessary, then, that the catechetical ministry with adults set an example of the highest quality and vitality. (#41)

The *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community* (#35) states that all catechesis should strive to build adult Christian communities that are strong in faith, clearly proclaim the Gospel, celebrate vibrant and reverent liturgy, and give courageous witness in charity. Eucharist preparation should keep the primacy of Adult Faith Formation in mind when selecting and preparing a process for use in the parish. For information on the content of catechesis for the Eucharist for parishes see the *National Directory for Catechesis*, pp.124-126.

## **PASTORAL TEAM FOR PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST**

It is important that the parish have a group or team that can help with First Eucharist preparation and celebration. The DRE/CRE can not be expected to work alone. Eucharist preparation and celebration is a parish event and all aspects should involve the parish so as to give life to the parish.

The pastoral team for preparation and celebration of Eucharist can give realistic direction and continuity to a parish preparation process. In selecting persons for this group, the parish staff led by the Pastor and the DRE/CRE should spend time in prayer and discussion. The parish

staff should recognize the needs of the parish and the rationale for a parish preparation process based on sound Eucharistic theology. The persons drawn from the parish should share this vision. They should also be persons for whom Eucharist is central in their own lives, who continually renew their faith, and who are willing to share their faith and time with others. They should be persons with an awareness of the RCIA process and an understanding of sacraments, and persons who work well with others. They should be knowledgeable about parenting and family life and its varied situations. It is also beneficial if members of this team have personally experienced the process for preparation for the sacrament.

By touching the lives of parishioners through a preparation process for Eucharist, those doing the preparation are able to influence parishioners to explore the richness of their own faith. It is more than just preparation for one experience of receiving Communion. The need to continue to be in touch with all parishioners, parents and families as they journey in faith is important. This is a way to create and sustain a parish community that is united and committed.

## **COMPONENTS FOR PREPARATION FOR FIRST COMMUNION**

The intent of a preparation process for Eucharist is to ensure that children are catechetically and spiritually ready for celebration. According to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati *Religious Education Policies*, sacrament preparation should provide assistance to parents who have the responsibility to prepare their children for celebrating (#2107.03). Sacrament preparation is an evangelizing occasion for the parish. The preparation process for First Communion should be suited to the age and psychological capacity of the candidate. Preparation is more than a bank of knowledge. It includes formative experiences in faith that promote an active participation in the Eucharist even before the children receive their First Holy Communion.

A Catholic way of life is inconceivable without participation in Sunday Eucharist. The liturgy itself has formative value. The *Directory for Masses with Children* tells us that necessary importance should be given to catechesis on the Mass. This catechesis should be directed to the child's active, conscious, and authentic participation. "Suited to children's age and capabilities, it should, by means of the main rites and prayers of the Mass, aim at conveying its meaning, including what relates to taking part in the Church's life." This is especially true of the text of the Eucharistic prayer and of the acclamations by which the children take part in this prayer.

The catechesis preparing children for first communion calls for special mention. In it they should learn not only the truths of faith regarding the eucharist but also how from first communion on...they can as full members of Christ's Body take part actively with the people of God in the eucharist, sharing in the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters.  
(#12)

Preparation for children should also include experiences that are both human and liturgical in value. These should include community activity, exchange of greetings, capacity to listen to others, ask for and grant pardon or forgiveness as well as expressing gratitude, experiencing

symbolic actions, a meal of friendship and festive celebration. (*DMC #9*) Various kinds of celebrations and experiences play a role in liturgical formation. These elements of catechesis should not be dominant but should lead to full and conscious participation at liturgy. The word of God has a strong and constant place in the spiritual development of children. Celebrations of the word of God should be frequent. (*DMC #13, #14*) Seasonal celebrations, Advent, Lent, Christmas and Easter as well as celebration of Liturgy of the Hours are appropriate. Preparation for First Communion may incorporate a Jesus Day Retreat. This experience can include bread baking, liturgical singing, and touring the church noting signs and symbols and giving brief explanations. This can also be a time for children to act out short plays based on a parable or readings from scripture and a time to make a banner using symbols that are appropriate. This can be done in a one day event or at several meetings.

There are many textbook, catechist and parent materials available for the immediate preparation for First Communion. These materials contain six to eight sessions each emphasizing a study of the Mass as well as providing for prayer services and parent meetings. Many of these resources for preparation may be used with the parent and child in home situations. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis Media Center has many resources available. Log on to the web site for ideas, [www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec/media](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec/media). Your Parish Consultant from the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is also available to assist you.

## **IX. C. CELEBRATING FIRST COMMUNION**

Sundays during the Easter Season are regarded as the most fitting time to celebrate First Communion. When this is not possible Sundays of Ordinary Time are also appropriate. Since sacraments are parish celebrations the Mass for First Communion should be in the parish of the candidate and family during a regularly scheduled Mass.

When preparing the liturgy for First Communion keep in mind that this is a celebration of a Sacrament of Initiation. The entire tone of the celebration should reflect this initiatory process. The celebrations of sacraments are whole parish events. The focus is the celebration of the whole Church gathered to celebrate the sacrament, rather than just the candidates.

Those who are receiving communion for the first time have a unique role. They participate fully in this and every other Eucharist by taking part in the singing, the spoken prayer, by listening to the scriptures and the liturgical texts spoken in their name by the presider and now receiving communion. Candidates should not be involved in liturgical roles or ministries such as lector, reader of intercessions, cantor, server or special Eucharistic minister. Those who normally fulfill these liturgical roles in the parish would be the best choice for the persons to serve in these capacities at the liturgy. The celebration of a sacrament allows the parish community to minister to those who are candidates for the sacrament.

Candidates for First Communion and their families are sometimes included in the Entrance Procession. The purpose of the procession is to help unify the assembly and to draw those already in place into the action of gathering for the celebration. There is no liturgical requirement that the candidates or families be in the Entrance Procession. If the candidates and their families are included in the procession, they should have the necessary programs or hymnals that allow them to participate in the singing of the entrance hymn.

The Procession with the Gifts can include some of the candidates bringing the bread and wine to the altar. Keep in mind that there should be an attempt to have only one plate of bread and one cup of wine brought to the altar. The bread and wine should not be divided into smaller vessels merely to increase the number of persons in the procession. It is possible to have a number of persons in the procession to present the gifts, but not all are required to have something in hand. It would be appropriate to include gifts of food for the poor in the procession if desired. However, only the gifts of bread and wine, the collection and food for the poor are appropriate.

The recessional or procession at the end of the celebration does not fulfill any liturgical function or need. Its purpose is to help the ministers in the sanctuary leave with a sense of order and dignity. It is not necessary to have everyone who was in the Entrance Procession included in the recessional. Whether those who have received First Communion and their families should or should not be in the recessional is optional.

Helping the candidates know what to expect when receiving Eucharist, both the bread and the wine, will enable them to be more relaxed and participate more fully in the sacrament

celebration. Tasting the bread and wine and rehearsing how to receive the consecrated bread and how to drink from the cup are helpful to ensure a prayerful celebration. Practice is important, but **do not over practice**.

First Communion is celebrated at the Sunday Liturgy. There is no special ritual beyond this. The Church understands that First Communion is the first of many receptions of the body and blood of the Lord, and is what these candidates will now celebrate for the rest of their lives. The liturgical season lends its color, texture and tone to the celebration. For additional information refer to Section III on Parish Celebrations, Liturgical Text to be Used, Ministries and Roles, Music and Catholic Worship, Art and Environment, and Photography.

## X. A. HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF PENANCE

The need for repentance and the practice of doing penance is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Christian Scriptures. Prophets challenged the Hebrew people to turn away from their sinful lives and do acts of penance. John the Baptizer preached an urgent message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (*Mt* 3:2) Basic themes in the Gospel focus on God’s love for repentant sinners. The Story of the Prodigal Son is a prime example. (cf *Lk* 15:11-32) Reconciliation is central to the life and mission of Jesus.

God’s mercy is evident in many stories told by Jesus.

"Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity--greedy, dishonest, adulterous--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (*Lk* 18:10-14)

Peter, also with urgency, challenged people to reform their lives. “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Messiah already appointed for you, Jesus .... ” (*Acts* 3:19-20) Paul made the need for repentance central to his ministry.

The Christians of the first decades after the resurrection of Jesus took seriously his message: “For behold, the kingdom of God is among you.” (*Lk* 17:21) They enjoyed a relative peace as they shared a common goal and posed little threat to the Roman government or Jewish religion. Small and minor disputes and transgressions were dealt with in the breaking of the bread.

The early Christians believed that because a person had died and risen with Christ in Baptism, there could be no stepping back. But some did commit grave sin. Such a case is found in Paul’s *1Corinthians* 5:1-13. Paul told the community to expel the sinner from the community until the person showed signs of repentance, that is, signs of regret and feelings of sorrow.

It was persecution that seems to have led to the development of a formal reconciliation ritual. By the second century, apostasy was seen as the great sin and it was the threat of persecution that led many Christians to renounce Christ. After the persecution was over, some of these Christians wanted to be re-admitted into the community. Some leaders stated that there could be no re-admittance. Baptism, the rite for bringing people into the community, could not be repeated. The idea of forgiveness only once after Baptism became the norm.

Public sinners who committed apostasy, murder, adultery or any sin that caused scandal and serious injury to the Church, would come to the bishop and declare their sin. Between 300 and 500 A.D. the person who had sinned gravely was enrolled in “the order of penitents.” This separated a person from the rest of the community. Those in the order of penitents were not permitted to receive the Eucharist, and in some cases were given a guardian or sponsor to counsel them and testify to the community that they had truly reformed. After a time of doing penance that often lasted years, the repentant sinner was reconciled with the community through a ritual that included the imposition of hands by the bishop and sometimes by the community.

Those seeking re-admittance to the community sometimes had to wear garments of goat hair to symbolize their estrangement from the flock of sheep led by Christ, the Good Shepherd, or they had to carry chains that symbolized their captivity to sin. Although these penances were harsh, they also served to mark the penitents for special concern and prayer.



But the severe penances and the order of penitents lasted only as long as the persecutions did. When the age of the martyrs ended in 313 with the Edict of Constantine, people no longer became Christians at great personal risk and ties with the believing community were not as strong as before. From the late 4<sup>th</sup> century on, those who joined the Church were not necessarily motivated by the high ideals manifested in the first three centuries. As a result, those who sinned were often not willing to enroll in the order of penitents in order to rejoin the community. Some waited until they were about to die to ask for forgiveness and Eucharist. The Canonical Penance system or the order of penitents was becoming less effective. Out of the decline arose a new form of penitence.

European monks went to Ireland as missionaries and built monasteries that became centers of Christian life. The monks from the monasteries would go into the countryside to baptize, preach the forgiveness of sins and celebrate the Eucharist. The converted clan folk of Ireland did not wholeheartedly accept the moral norms of Christianity. Some sinned and then hoped to receive the Church’s ritual of forgiveness on their deathbeds. The monks met this situation by adapting their monastic practice of discernment, asking forgiveness and praising the merciful God, to the needs of the people. Monks would hear a person’s confession; give a penance to be performed for a limited period of time, then pray for the penitent’s forgiveness. This was a new development, for now there was no longer an official excommunication followed by a reconciliation with the community from which the sinner had been cut off.

The new form of penance introduced by the monks in Ireland had three key features: 1) the form of penance covered all sins; 2) it could be repeated as many times as needed by the penitent; 3) a private act of satisfaction was substituted for the communal act of public reconciliation.



The new form of penance was brought back to the continent where ordinary peasants could now find deliverance from the divine punishment due to sins committed in adulthood. Some bishops thought this new practice to be too easy on penitents but about the year 650 other bishops were approving this form of confession of sins to priests as a healthy “medicine for the soul.” During the 700s, bishops and local church councils began to require confession of grave sins to a priest.

In the 800s another innovation was introduced; penitents were admitted to the Eucharist after they had completed only a portion of their required penance. For example, in an emergency situation, when the penitent was dying, the priest prayed for God’s forgiveness and reconciled the person to the Church immediately after hearing the penitent’s confession.

By the 900s, this emergency reconciliation became standard practice. One who confessed sins would be reconciled to the Church but the person would still have to do penance. But the question was raised: If a person died before completing the prescribed penance, would that person be admitted to heaven? To resolve this issue, another change was introduced. Up until this time the priest-confessors prayed that God would forgive the person’s sins. Now priests began to pray for the forgiveness of the person’s sins and for absolution to be granted should the person die before completing the penance.

By the 1200s, the words pronounced by the priest, after hearing a person’s confession of sins, had changed from the format of a prayer asking for God’s forgiveness to a declaration of absolution. Thus the satisfaction for sins (doing the required penance) no longer had a severe and public character and the theology stressed more and more the efficacy of priestly absolution. The elements which stressed personal conversion and reconciliation with the community became less prominent as did the role of the bishop in reconciling the sinner with the community. The role of the bishop in reconciling the sinner with the community remained only in case of “reserved sin,” that is, sins that only the bishop could forgive, e.g., apostasy.

A new understanding of the Scriptures that dealt with the forgiveness of sins continued the development. It came to be understood that Christ had intended priests to forgive sins as indicated in: “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (*Jn 20:22-23*) Those words were spoken by Jesus to the disciples when he appeared to them after his Resurrection. Up until the sixteenth century, lay persons sometimes heard confessions and assured the persons that God would forgive their sins. This was not seen as valueless but as a non-sacramental act. However, when it was determined that priests had divine authority to absolve, confessing one’s sins to a lay person was no longer seen as beneficial.

Thomas Aquinas taught that the sacrament of Penance was made up of both the actions of the penitent and the actions of the priest. Thomas also taught the communal dimension of sin and repentance. He understood that the desire of the sinner to express sorrow to God for one’s sins also implied the desire to be re-united with God’s people. Thus reconciliation with the Church was the sign that expressed and effected the sinner’s reconciliation with God.

Other medieval concerns led to a loss of clarity regarding sin and forgiveness. In the theological discussions of the times, sin was more and more perceived in legal terms. Thus, sin was primarily seen as the breaking of God's commandments rather than a person's interior turning away from God. God's justice seemed to require punishment for every sin. The assignment of a particular penance in the sacrament of forgiveness was seen as a way of helping to shorten the sinner's time in purgatory, where the "temporal punishment due to sin" was expiated after death.

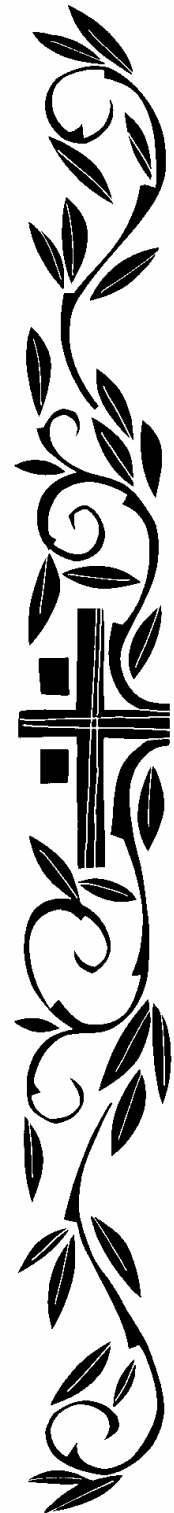
In response to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared that Jesus had instituted "the integral confession of sins, and that divine law makes the sacrament of Penance necessary for all those who sin after their baptism." An integral confession was one in which all mortal sins were confessed in terms of number and kind, as well as circumstances which might modify the character of the sin.

In seminary formation after the Council of Trent, priests received more thorough training. This led them to function as judges in the administration of the sacrament of Penance, making judgments about the nature of sins confessed and then deciding on the penances to be performed by the penitents. One reason the Council of Trent retained this legalistic view of sin and forgiveness is the fact that the bishops at Trent had assumed that repeated private confession had been practiced this way since the time of the apostles.

In the next three centuries there was little development. In 1910 Pope Pius X decreed that children of seven years (the age of discretion) could receive the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. This step was taken for many reasons, including the desire to have Catholics receive the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist more frequently than once a year.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) called for revision of both the rite and formula of each of the sacraments. The bishops benefited from many developments in moral theology, including Fr. Bernard Haring's three-volume *The Law of Christ* as an ethical-religious ideal. Fr. Haring called for a biblically based, liturgically celebrated, pastorally sensitive, dynamic morality stressing conversion and responsibility. A liturgical commission was given the task of revising the Rite of Penance to reflect past traditions and a biblical yet contemporary understanding of sin and forgiveness. The new *Rite of Penance*, promulgated in 1976, expounds on the communal nature of reconciliation but keeps the individual confession and absolution as the first of the rites. It encourages use of Scripture along with prescribed prayers and allows for flexibility in each of its forms.

The Sacrament of Penance, as it is officially called, places renewed emphasis on reconciliation and the communal nature of sin. Reconciliation indicates the ongoing process of conversion from a state of alienation from God and Church to a stance of unity and love



with both God and the community through the sacrament of Penance. The sacrament is a celebration of God's grace-filled mercy.

The *Rite of Penance* has three approved forms. The "Rite of Reconciliation of Individual Penitents" is the traditional private confession which preserves the Tridentine experience with some changes. Scripture reading is encouraged for example. It involves an individual penitent celebrating the sacrament but not in a community setting or celebration. The "Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession" brings together the traditions of public prayer and private confession into one community ritual of scripture, reflection, prayer, homily, individual confession and absolution. It clearly offers an opportunity for understanding sin as affecting each other. It is the rite used by many parishes when celebrating first reconciliation. The third rite, "Rite of Absolution and Reconciliation for Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution," is to be used only in emergency situations. Persons make a general statement of their sinfulness and receive absolution without verbally confessing individual sins.

*The Code of Canon Law* 989 states: "After having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least one a year." Canon 988§2 reads: "it is recommended to the Christian faithful that they also confess venial sins." The commentary on these Canons reminds us that forgiveness of venial sins may be sought and obtained in many ways other than in the Sacrament of Penance.

The *CCC* makes several references to these means:

Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins.... (#1416)

...efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity. (#1434)

The Sacrament of Penance developed slowly in the early centuries of the Church. It continues to evolve to meet the need of persons reconciling with God and the community. Church law requires that young Catholics receive this sacrament prior to First Communion. In the case of serious sin all are obliged to confess before reception of Communion. It is always recommended the venial sins be confessed. (Canon 988)

## X. B. PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Penance, like all the Sacraments, is a special event for the whole parish community as well as the individual. Preparation takes place on many levels. Certainly, the home is the first and most basic community in which the child first experiences reconciliation, personally and vicariously, as it is lived out by the adults and other family members.

As the formal catechesis of children begins, the children can relate their experience of forgiveness and “making up” to a loving God who holds out unconditional love and forgiveness to each of us. For children to connect lived experience and sacramental



celebration of the reality of forgiveness, parents need to be aware of how to help them see the connection. Therefore, parent meetings are essential and current resources offer excellent suggestions as to content and procedures for such meetings. Involving parents is a way of reminding them that reconciling and healing is something that should be a part of everyday living and is essential to human relationships and family peace.

It is in the parish that all members should experience welcoming and reconciliation. The transforming love of God is always enfolded in people and sacramental encounters take place in that community that embraces the whole assembly. This is clearly stated in *The Rite of Penance*.

The whole Church, as a priestly people, acts in different ways. Not only does the Church call sinners to repentance by preaching the Word of God, but it also helps penitents with maternal care and solicitude to admit their sins and so obtain the mercy of God who alone can forgive sins. Furthermore, the Church becomes the instrument of the conversion and absolution of the penitent through the ministry entrusted by Christ to the apostles and their successors.  
(#8)

In the process of confessing and reconciling the whole church community is strengthened.

The Rite of Penance contains these basic elements: confession, sorrow for sin, penance, and absolution. The celebration emphasizes the public nature of the rite moving from “God and me” to a special moment in the Church’s public worship. In the sacrament, the Word of God is proclaimed and prayer is shared. These are key elements and shift the emphasis from ‘confessing’ as the highlight of the sacrament, which in the past was often a fearful experience, to conversion. The desired outcome of the preparation is an understanding of conversion as a change of heart, a central element of Christ’s preaching.

Essential to the preparation process is helping all involved to recognize the public nature of the sacrament for it is important to see that sin always has a public and social dimension. This

is evident in issues of peace and justice. Forgiveness takes one far beyond just “God and me”. It makes one aware of the responsibility to heed the call to reconciliation so as to grow as loving persons, aware of God’s persistent love for us.

The children themselves are probably the ones most ready and open to the preparation process. For the most part they are excited and eager to learn. Respect them as children and find ways, mostly concrete ways, of tapping their experiences, their sense of wonder and delight. Help them to recall their experiences of loving, sharing, and praying and times when they have failed to do so. Help them to see how this relates to this wondrous sacrament and to appreciate being a child of a loving God who works wonders in their lives and forgives unconditionally. Rely on texts and resources to aid you in your efforts to make this sacrament a powerful experience in peoples’ lives.

Preparation for Penance must take place prior to preparation and reception of First Communion. Care must be taken to keep the preparations distinct for each of these sacraments. Readiness to receive the sacrament of Penance should be determined by the child, pastor and parents. Parishes should follow the preparation with first celebration of the sacrament at a parish Penance service prior to First Communion. This practice helps children as well as other parishioners understand that there is a communal dimension to sin and reconciliation.

For videos and print resources to assist in preparation, along with textbook information, log on to [www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec) or call the Media Center at the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

## **COMPONENTS OF PREPARATION FOR PENANCE**

There are components to be included in the actual preparation for the Sacrament of Penance. It is important to involve the parents/guardians at the start. Preparation must respect the natural disposition, age, learning ability and any special circumstances of the child. “Readiness for reception of this sacrament includes knowledge of the person of Jesus and the Gospel message of forgiveness, knowledge of sin and its effect, and understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness, and conversion.” (*NDC* p.135) Working with young children preparing for the Sacrament of Penance is an important undertaking. Orienting the child toward God and encouraging an understanding of God’s mercy and love is important. The *National Directory for Catechesis* provides components for preparing for the first reception of this sacrament on pages 135-136.

Textbooks offer the catechetical components to be covered. It is important that the child comes to realize that:

- ❖ the heart of the sacrament is conversion
- ❖ the sacrament celebrates the forgiving action of God in one’s life
- ❖ the sacrament is closely related to one’s life
- ❖ morality includes good and evil
- ❖ there is a need to be sorry when one has done wrong and to be willing to confess sin

- ❖ the sacrament is a gift by which one turns to Christ for forgiveness and it is given
- ❖ the relationship of the child to the Church is an important element in the process
- ❖ the sacrament is a gift for a lifetime and guarantees that one need never feel abandoned by God who is always ready to forgive
- ❖ one needs to be open and willing to receive God's forgiveness
- ❖ there are certain signs and symbols that are integral to the sacrament.

Parents witness to their children when they consistently and lovingly accompany their children in their prayer life, by taking an active role in the catechesis, by reinforcing learning at home and by modeling forgiveness and reconciliation. This process of forgiveness experienced in everyday life is ritualized, celebrated and made real through the Sacrament of Penance. The parish catechesis for the Sacrament of Penance should “emphasizes God’s plan for the salvation of all, his desire for every person to be reconciled with him and live in communion with him...” (*NDC* p. 132). The *National Directory for Catechesis* provides a complete list of catechetical components for the preparation for Reconciliation on pages 132-134. It is important for parents/guardians to have an understanding of and appreciation for the Sacrament of Penance. Only then will the newly formed penitent grow in his/her fidelity to the sacrament. Thus, sacrament preparation meetings are essential and provide an opportunity for good solid adult faith formation.

## X. C. CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

The Sacrament of Penance is communal in its cause and effect. In the sacrament the sinner, through the grace of a merciful God, embraces the way of penance. The sinner returns to the Father who “first loved us” (1Jn 4:19), to Christ who gave himself for us and to the Spirit who continues to guide us. The priest, by sharing God’s word, calls the penitent to conversion, in the name of Christ by the power of the Spirit. He declares and grants the forgiveness of sins.

What happens in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is almost more than one could imagine. If we could meet Jesus today, we would expect to be received with love and compassion, because he is perfect and knows what it is to forgive. Instead, we confess to an ordinary human being who represents Jesus Christ sacramentally. We can expect the priest to receive us with love and care and compassion as well – not because he is sinless, but because he knows what it is to need forgiveness. God transforms even our human frailty into the medium of life-giving grace.

The community, the Church as a priestly people, acts in different ways in the work of reconciliation entrusted to it by the Lord. Just as the wider community is affected by the sins of its members, so to the church community calls each other to repentance.

The Sacrament of Penance takes three forms. An explanation of each rite is provided here. Whichever Rite is used, the celebration follows the same formula.

### a. **The Rite of Penance for Individual Penitents**

The first form is the reconciliation of an individual, with a new emphasis on the demand for personal dispositions and on the relationship to the word of God. This form of reconciliation is the more traditional one, but is enriched by a greater awareness of God’s forgiving love.

### b. **The Rite of Penance for Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution**

The second way of penance is that of a communal prayer followed by individual confession and absolution. It combines the two values of being a community act and a personal act. It is a preferable form of penance for our people when it is possible but it usually presupposes the presence of a number of ministers of the sacrament.

**c. The Rite of Penance for Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution**

The third way is a collective form of reconciliation with a single, general absolution. This form, however, is by way of exception and dire necessity, in cases sanctioned by the bishop, and with the continuing obligation of individual confession of grave sins, that is mortal sins, at a later time.





## **RITE OF PENANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL PENITENTS**

### **How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Penance**

- 1. Preparation** – Before going to confession, the penitent compares his or her life with the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the example of Christ and then prays to God for forgiveness. Children will need help until they get used to the examination of conscience.
- 2. Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance** - After the priest welcomes the penitent, both make the sign of the cross. The penitent may wish to indicate facts about his/her life, the time of the last confession, difficulties in leading the Christian life, and anything else that helps the priest. The priest might ask questions that will help focus.
- 3. The Word of God** - The priest or the penitent may read one of the suggested scriptural passages. There are several suggested readings from which the priest may choose.
- 4. Confession of Sins and the Act of Penance** - The penitent confesses sins. The priest offers suitable advice and imposes an act of penance or satisfaction, which may include prayer, self-denial, or works of mercy.
- 5. Prayer of the Penitent** - The penitent prays a prayer expressing sorrow for his/her sins and resolves not to sin again. It may be a memorized Act of Contrition or it could be a spontaneous prayer of sorrow. Having looked honestly at his/her sins and taken responsibility for them, the penitent opens him / herself to new life in God and in the community.
- 6. Absolution** - The priest extends his hands over the head and pronounces the formula of absolution, making the sign of the cross during the final words. The penitent responds, “Amen.”
- 7. Proclamation of Praise** - The priest praises the mercy of God and gives thanks in a short invocation taken from Scripture, “Give thanks to the LORD for he is good.” The penitent responds “His kindness endures forever.” (*Ps* 107:1)
- 8. Dismissal** – The priest dismisses the penitent with the command to go in peace. He/she continues to express conversion through a life renewed according to the Gospel.

## **THE RITE OF PENANCE FOR SEVERAL PENITENTS WITH INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

- 1. Introductory Rites** - When the faithful have assembled and the priest(s) is entering, an antiphon, psalm, or song may be sung.
- 2. The priest greets the congregation**
- 3. An opening prayer is offered**
- 4. Celebration of the Word** - Several readings might be read with silent time in between. This part may follow the structure of the Sunday or weekday Liturgy of the Word. If there is only one reading, it is preferable that it be from the Gospel.
- 5. A Homily** - Based on the reading(s), the homily should lead the participants to examine their consciences and renew their lives.
- 6. Examination of Conscience** - Some time may be spent in making an examination of conscience, privately or by communal reflection on brief statements read by a minister.
- 7. Individual Confession and Absolution** – Those wishing to receive sacramental absolution confess privately to a priest who in turn gives a penance and absolves the penitent. The priest extends either both hands or the right hand over the penitent.
- 8. Proclamation of Praise** - Special prayers or song of praise for God’s mercy follows.
- 9. Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving** - The sign of peace might be extended.
- 10. Blessing** - The priest blesses all present.
- 11. Dismissal**

## **XI. OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE JOURNEY OF CONVERSION**

### **A. RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION ADAPTED FOR UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN**

The initiation of unbaptized children who have reached the use of reason should follow the Rite of Christian Initiation adapted for children found in Part II, Chapter 1 of *Rite of Christian Initiation*.

This form of the rite of Christian initiation is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age. They seek Christian initiation either at the direction of their parents or guardians or, with parental permission, on their own initiative. Such children are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith and of recognizing an obligation in conscience. But they cannot yet be treated as adults because, at this stage of their lives, they are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings. (RCIA #252)

"What is prescribed in the canons on the baptism of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the use of reason." (Canon 852.1)

The Christian initiation of these children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need. The process of initiation thus must be adapted both to their spiritual progress, that is, to the children's growth in faith, and to the catechetical instruction they receive. Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years, if need be, before they receive the sacraments. Also as with adults, their initiation is marked by several steps, the liturgical rites of acceptance into the order of catechumens (#260 - 276), the optional rite of election (#277 - 290), penitential rites or scrutinies (#291 - 303), and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation (#304 - 329); corresponding to the periods of adult initiation are the periods of the children's catechetical formation that lead up to and follow the steps of their initiation. (RCIA #253)

The children's progress in their formation depends on the instruction, the help and example of their companions and on the influence of their parents. These factors should therefore be taken into account.

1. Since the children to be initiated often belong to a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist, their initiation progresses gradually and within the supportive setting of this group of companions.

2. It is to be hoped that the children will also receive as much help and example as possible from the parents, whose permission is required for the children to be initiated and to live the Christian life. The period of initiation will also provide a good opportunity for the family to have contact with priests and catechists. (RCIA #254)



3. It is important that children and their parents be interviewed once a child and/or parent has expressed interest in the Catholic Church. During this interview, the catechumenate coordinator or other appropriate person must discern with the family the kind of formation suitable for the child. This discernment will be based on several factors: age of the child; baptismal status; catechetical experiences of the child and the family (not only formal religious education, but also involvement in the life of the Church, Mass attendance etc.). Meeting individual needs is often a challenge, but it is the only way to foster true conversion in the hearts of each person, adult and child. (*The Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati*, RCIA Consultation Group, Fall, 2000)

Therefore, children who are catechumens could be involved in multi-generational catechesis with their parents. Sponsors, godparents and peers could also participate in the formation and support of the child. Developing ways to include the child's peer group in the initiation process could be helpful for all involved. A parish may need to develop a process to meet the needs of teens who do not necessarily fit into the adult or younger children groups. However, any adaptations must be consistent with the adult process and contain all the components of the rite.

When it is determined by the pastor, parent and coordinator that the children of catechetical age have received sufficient catechesis and are ready to be initiated, "They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens." (RCIA National Statutes #18) Also see National Statutes #14 & 19, and Canon 842.2. "At this third step of their Christian initiation, the children will receive the sacrament of baptism, the bishop or priest who baptizes them will also confer confirmation, and the children will for the first time participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist." (RCIA #305) The reception of Confirmation and First Communion at this time is not optional.

While the bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, the priest by law has the faculty to confirm adults and children of catechetical age at the time of their Baptism or reception into full communion. However, a priest who has the faculty to confirm in the above circumstances may confirm **only** within the actual Rite of Baptism or reception; he may not postpone the Confirmation to a later time. (Canons 883.2, 842.2 & 852.1) Although "In certain cases when there is serious reason, confirmation may be postponed until near the end of the period of post baptismal catechesis for example, Pentecost Sunday" (RCIA

#24) - the priest would have to receive delegation from the local bishop to confirm at this later date.

For more information, see the *National Directory for Catechesis* (pp. 118 - 128) and *The Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati*, written by the Archdiocesan RCIA Consultation Group, Fall, 2000, available from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Worship Office.

## **B. CHILDREN BAPTIZED IN ANOTHER CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

*The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is the foundation for children's initiation. Children of catechetical age who were baptized in another tradition are to be formed according to the principles set forth in Part II, Chapter 4 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. What the Church prescribes for adults is also what it prescribes for children of catechetical age baptized in another tradition. Both make a profession of faith, are confirmed and receive communion at the same celebration.

As with unbaptized children, the preparation of baptized children into full communion of the Catholic Church and the reception of Confirmation and Eucharist requires a personal conversion appropriate to their age. Support and assistance from their peers, parents, sponsors and others are needed. The nature and length of catechetical formation should be determined through an interview with the child and the parents.

A program of training, catechesis suited to their needs, contact with the community of the faithful, participation in certain liturgical rites are needed in order to strengthen them in the Christian life. For the most part the plan of catechesis corresponds to the one laid down for catechumens (see # 75.1). But in the process of catechesis the priest, deacon, or catechist should take into account that these adults (and children) have a special status because they are already baptized. (*RCIA* # 401 - 402)

Those who have been baptized but have received relatively little Christian upbringing may participate in the elements of catechumenal formation so far as necessary and appropriate, but should not take part in rites intended for the unbaptized catechumens. (*RCIA* National Statutes for the Catechumenate #31)

As with adults, the baptized child's initiation may be marked by several liturgical celebrations: The Rite of Welcoming the Candidates (#411 - 433), The Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and the Call to Continuing Conversion (#434-458), Penitential Rites (#459-472) and the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion of the Catholic Church (#473-504). See *RCIA*, Part II, Chapters 4-5 (#400-504) and *The Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati*, (*RCIA* Consultation Group, Fall, 2000) for more information.

When children who have been baptized in another tradition are ready to be received into the Church, their status in regard to initiation sacraments would be the same as an adult candidate preparing for full communion. *RCIA* states:

It is the office of the bishop to receive baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church. But a priest to whom the bishop entrusts the celebration of the rite has the faculty of confirming the candidates within the rite of reception, unless the person received has already been validly confirmed. (#481)

Therefore, when children who have already received Baptism in another denomination make a profession of faith, they too, are confirmed and approach the table of the Eucharist at the same celebration.

### **C. CHILDREN BAPTIZED CATHOLIC AND NOT CATECHIZED**

Preparation of children of catechetical age who were baptized as infants in the Roman Catholic Church but not catechized might follow Chapters 1 and 4 of Part II of the *Rite of Christian Initiation*. Even though they were baptized in the Catholic Church they need to journey toward conversion and full sacramental initiation. Often this can best be done in the company of other children and families in similar circumstances. The child might benefit from preparation with child catechumens. See *RCIA* Part II, Chapter 1 and #477 - 478. Such children would celebrate the rites for the baptized. A thorough interview will help decide whether the catechumenal process is right for the child and family. Some additional attention may also be given to the family if they are returning to the Church.

For the Catholic child who has been baptized, but not catechized, the celebration of Confirmation needs special attention. If the child has journeyed with other children who will be fully initiated, it would be desirable for the child to be confirmed by the parish priest to maintain the interrelationship and sequence of Confirmation and Eucharist. However, the parish priest does not have the faculty to confirm baptized Catholics (*RCIA* National Statute #28c) and must seek permission to confirm from the bishop in accord with Canon 884§1 (National Statute #29).

An older child who has remained active in the Church but missed Confirmation does not need a full initiation process. If an interview shows that the child has been formed in faith and participates in the life of the Church, sacramental catechesis may be the only formation necessary.



## D. MYSTAGOGY - LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION

Mystagogy (study of the mystery), lasting from Easter to Pentecost, should be a time of celebration, sacramental instruction and reflection in which neophytes (newly baptized or newly entered the Church) embrace a deepened understanding of the mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and doing works of charity. (See *RCIA* #244-251, 330 and the National Statutes #22-24.)

Following the format in the adult rite, post-baptismal catechesis offers children a time to share what they have come to understand about Jesus and their own initiation with peers and family. Reflecting on the sacramental experience occurs at the weekly Sunday assembly for the Eucharist. The addition of weekly time for reflection and sharing until Pentecost helps the neophyte unpack the meaning of the sacred Christian mysteries.

The National Statutes (#22-24) encourage neophytes to continue to meet monthly after Pentecost for sharing, support and instruction for at least a year after initiation. This should happen for newly baptized children of catechetical age in addition to religious education sessions with their peers. The support and nurturing of the community of faith can be very helpful at this time of transition to regular parish life and catechesis. Mystagogy is part of a child's on-going conversion to live the life of a true disciple.

All that was mentioned in the first paragraph, embracing a deepening understanding of the sacraments through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and doing works of charity, is basically a description of the parish's life. It is what the parish should be doing each year, all year long. It is a lifelong faith formation process to which all the initiated are called. The completion of the initiation process is not an end. It is only the beginning!



## **XII. A. PERSONS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND SACRAMENT PREPARATION**

Every Christian community needs to consider all its members, regardless of ability. Each person is a member of the Church and entitled to dignity and respect. Growth in faith and in faith awareness is as crucial among persons with disabilities as it is with all members of a church community. All persons with disabilities and their families are to be included in parish activities and sacrament preparation processes. “We are a single flock under the care of a single shepherd. There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities.” (*Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*, U.S. Bishops Statement no. 1)

All sacramental catechesis is the responsibility of the church community. The community should be made aware of any specialized catechesis that is needed and like all sacramental catechesis the community should be involved in preparation. Even though specialized catechesis may be needed, as much as possible each and every person is to be included in activities and procedures in the church community.

Conversion and evangelization call for personalized and adequate processes. There are many materials and resources to carry out the pedagogical activity for persons with disabilities. It is good to be familiar with *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, USCCB. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis Media Center has access to the most current materials and resources. You may also contact your Religious Education Consultant.

The question of capacity and understanding of sacraments in the preparation process for persons with mental retardation and /or developmental disabilities is frequently asked. According to Canon 913, the candidates should “have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.” Persons with mental retardation or developmental disabilities may not be able to conceptualize and articulate the difference between the Body of Christ and ordinary food, but they can sometimes appreciate the sacredness of the Eucharistic food in the context of the reverence shown the sacrament by the families and the Church community. Persons with mental retardation and / or developmental disabilities who are suitably prepared and disposed according to their capacity and who are supported by the faith of the family and the church community should never be denied the sacraments. “Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments” and “Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation, according to their capacity.” (*Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* #2, #3)

In the decree, *Quam Singulari*, Pius X stated the requirements for the first reception of Eucharist:

- ❖ the ability to distinguish ordinary bread and wine from Eucharist,

- ❖ the knowledge of the mysteries of faith according to his / her ability,
- ❖ the ability to express some desire to receive Jesus.

The parents in consultation with the pastor can determine the readiness of the candidate for the reception of the sacrament.

All human beings, including those among us with disabilities, have rights in faith communities. A life of dignity and respect includes the right to religious formation, friendship, and spiritual nurturing. “All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts. Their involvement enriches every aspect of Church life.” (*NDC*, p. 207) The rights of persons with disabilities are equal to the rights of all others. As a Church, we are accountable to God to protect the rights of all people and to provide spiritual and moral leadership in our community to protect these rights. We exercise leadership by teaching and by example as inclusive communities of faith that use the gifts of all members.

## **XII. B. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SACRAMENT PREPARATION**

Each parish community should be aware of its members who are from different cultures and whose primary language is not English. Every person is a member of the Church and is entitled to full and active participation in parish activities and liturgical celebrations. Growth in faith and faith-filled activities are crucial for persons from all cultural backgrounds. All persons are to be included in preparation processes for sacraments and these processes are to be sensitive to language and culture.

As in all cases of sacramental catechesis, the responsibility for preparation rests with the parents and the parish community. The parish community should be made aware of different cultures, languages and religious customs and as much as possible become familiar with these differences. When possible these customs should be included in the celebration of sacraments. It is also preferred that the language of the candidates be used as much as possible in the celebration of the sacraments. The community is to be involved in the preparation for sacraments and all sacrament celebrations are to be part of the total parish life. Efforts to celebrate different cultures and traditions are addressed in the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy Principles and Guidelines*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Conversion and evangelization efforts must be culturally sensitive and in the language of the candidate. There are materials and resources available to carry out the pedagogical activity for persons of different cultures. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis can help with access to current materials. Even if catechetical preparation for sacraments is specialized, as much as possible, every person is to be included in activities, procedures and celebrations in the church community.

Every individual is entitled to full and active participation in a faith community. Each member of our community is entitled to religious formation, friendship, and spiritual nurturing regardless of cultural background. The rights and dignity of different cultural groups are equal to the rights of all others. As a Church, we are accountable to God to protect the rights of all people and to provide spiritual and moral leadership in our community to protect these rights. We exercise leadership by our teaching and by our example of inclusive communities of faith that appreciates the gifts of all members

## **XII. C. HOME-BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SACRAMENT PREPARATION**

The Catholic Church has always recognized the duty of parents and those who take their place in the faith formation of their children. Canon 774§2 states, “Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation.” A partnership between parents and parish should be the norm for sacrament preparation. The parish priest is to ensure, in accordance with the norms laid down by the Archbishop, that adequate catechesis is given for the celebration of the sacraments.

Sacraments are parish celebrations. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are sacraments of initiation into the Church in the local parish community. The Sacrament of Penance celebrates reconciliation with the Church in the context of the parish community. Preparation for these sacraments necessarily encourages and facilitates parish involvement. Candidates for sacraments and their families are expected to participate in meetings and formational activities designed to assist them in preparing for the sacraments.

The pastor and the catechetical leader are to collaborate with the parents who present their children for the reception of the sacraments in order to ensure that the children are properly prepared (Canons 777, 914). A collaborative relationship between parents and parish community is important for sacrament preparation. The catechetical leader should meet with the parents and assist them in choosing suitable catechetical materials for home-based religious education from the Archdiocesan Preferred Religion Textbook / Program list (Canons 775, 776, 777). The parents should be acquainted with *Growing Together: Ministry to Children* Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs. The curriculum must follow the guidelines in these documents. The parents should also be invited to use the resources that may be available in the parish resource center and at the Archdiocesan Media Center.

Parents who choose to assume the role of catechist are to be encouraged to participate in programs offered or approved by the Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for catechist development and certification.

On the following page is the “Guidelines For Home-Based Religious Education” from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

## **GUIDELINES FOR HOME-BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI**

1. When parents decide to provide the formal religious education of their children at home, they are encouraged to meet with the pastor so that he and/or his delegate can assist them in developing a catechetical plan and in choosing catechetical materials suitable for home-based religious education. (Canons 776, 793)
2. *Growing Together: Ministry to Children, the Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs* and *Growing Together: Adolescent Religious Education, a Manual for Parish and School Programs* have been approved by the Archdiocesan Commission on Education and promulgated by Archbishop Pilarczyk as the official content to be followed for all early childhood, elementary and high school catechesis in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. All catechists for children or youth are expected to follow the content outlined in these documents.
3. Parents should be invited to use the parish resource libraries and the Archdiocesan Media Centers to supplement their educational efforts.
4. Parents and their children are welcome and encouraged to participate in parish liturgies and/or other events prepared specifically for children and their families.
5. The pastor and/or his delegate should invite the parents to participate in the catechist certification process of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as outlined in *The Ministry of the Catechist*. (Canons 779, 780)
6. Parents are encouraged to meet with the pastor and/or his delegate periodically to review the progress of their catechetical efforts.
7. When parents believe that their child is ready to receive a sacrament for the first time, the pastor of the parish to which the child belongs is to decide whether he or she is properly prepared. (Canons 777, 914) The parish to which a child belongs is either the parish in which he or she resides or is another parish in which he or she is registered. Section V of *Growing Together: Ministry to Children* should be used as the basis for determining readiness.

March 1998

### **XIII. KEEPING RECORDS OF SACRAMENTS**

Sacramental records for the parish are maintained by the pastor following the procedures in the *Handbook for Sacramental Records* published by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

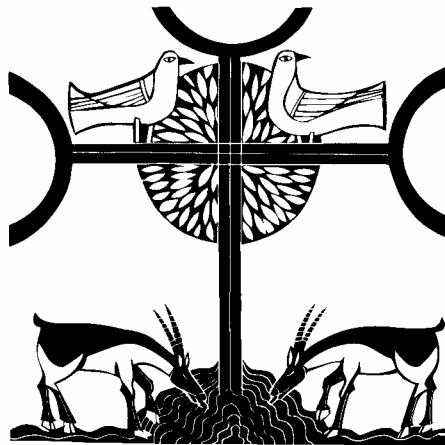
Page two of the Handbook reads: “Each parish is required to maintain records of baptisms, confirmations, reception into full communion, marriages and deaths.” Maintaining records of First Penance and First Communions is optional but is done in some parishes.

When recording information for Confirmation of a person not baptized in the church of Confirmation, the parish of Baptism must be notified of the date, place, sponsor and minister of Confirmation. This information should also include the date of the Baptism so as to expedite the recording procedure.

The Reception into Full Communion or Profession of Faith is to be recorded with the Baptismal records. Along with the usual information, the name of the church, the city, state and date of the candidate’s Baptism is also to be noted in the record book.

## XIV. CONCLUSION

*Sacraments for Young People* expresses both the challenge and gift of preparing for sacraments and for the celebration of sacraments. Fostering a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ is paramount to parish life and celebrations of sacraments engage persons to be followers of Jesus. The goal of this document is to help parishes of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati revitalize sacramental catechesis and sacrament celebrations by providing a foundation and guide for catechetical formation. Each parish and worshipping community is called to develop a process of catechesis that best evangelizes all its members and accompanies them on a lifelong journey. There are many resources available at the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis and the Media Center to assist with shaping a parish process and celebration unique to its members. Contact your consultant at the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for assistance.





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