

**Resource for the
Sacrament Preparation of Children & Youth
Office for Evangelization and Family Life**

Dear Parish Catechetical Leader,

We have prepared this resource booklet in the hopes that it will assist you in your duties within the parish. This is NOT a policy booklet, but rather a resource that we hope will assist you to answer questions and facilitate excellent sacramental preparation within the parish. Each parish will need to adapt this vision to the needs of their specific parish.

The Church is the custodian of the Sacraments which are a gift from God to His People. The Christian faithful have a right to receive the sacraments so long as they are prepared to receive them, are properly disposed to receive them and are in the proper state/age for reception (see CIC, [c. 843](#)). The program that a parish implements for sacramental preparation is an important way for pastors, and those with whom they collaborate, to ensure that candidates are properly prepared and properly disposed. However, we must be careful not to present our program as the “hoop” through which families must jump in order to receive a sacrament. If we do this we run the risk of diminishing family participation, minimalizing the importance of catechesis and community involvement, and creating resentment. Rather, our programs should be presented as a way to grow in faith and love and as an opportunity to properly prepare and to become properly disposed.

As we offer preparation for the Sacraments it is inevitable that not every parent, nor every child is going to find the program to their liking. We strive to proclaim the dynamic love of Christ to the world, and in response to parental indifference or complaints I encourage you to seek new ways to help engage the families and evangelize them.

Thank you for your efforts in the vineyard of the Lord. Please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone in the office for assistance in any way. God bless you and the work you are doing in His name.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Arensberg
Director, Office for Evangelization and Family Life
Archdiocese of Mobile, AL

Table of Contents

Section 1 – General Principles for the Preparation and Celebration of All Sacraments	4
1A – The “Top 5” Practices of Effective Parish Leaders, as related to Sacrament Preparation	
1B – General Principles	
Catechetical Principles	
The Preparation Program	
Role of Parents	
Involving Parents in the Program	
1C – General guidelines for preparing persons with special needs	
Preparation	
Celebration	
Resources	
Section 2 –Baptism	11
2A – Doctrinal Considerations for Baptism	
2B – Pastoral Considerations for Baptism	
2C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration	
For Infants and Children under the age of 7	
For Children and Youth aged 7 and older	
Documentation	
Section 3 – Reconciliation	15
3A – Doctrinal Considerations for Reconciliation	
3B – Pastoral Considerations for Reconciliation	
3C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration	
Preparation for the Sacrament	
Special Preparation Activities	
Documentation	
The Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation	
3D – Working with Children with Special Needs	
Preparation	
Reception	
Section 4 – Eucharist	21
4A – Doctrinal Considerations for Eucharist	

- 4B – Pastoral Considerations for Eucharist**
- 4C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration**
 - Preparation for the Sacrament
 - Special Preparation Activities
 - Documentation
 - The Celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist
- 4D – Working with Children with Special Needs**
 - Preparation
 - Reception

Section 5 – Confirmation 28

- 5A – Doctrinal Considerations for Confirmation**
- 5B – Pastoral Considerations for Confirmation**
- 5C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration**
 - Preparation for the Sacrament
 - Documentation
 - The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation
- 5D – Working with Children with Special Needs**
 - Preparation
 - Reception

Section 6 – RCIA – Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults 32

- 6A - “Who’s Who?” - - how to classify those seeking initiation**
- 6B - The Periods of RCIA**
- 6C - The Rites of RCIA**
- 6D - Pastoral Considerations for RCIA Adapted for Children**
- 6E - References**

Appendixes

- A - Quick Check-List for Parent Meetings 37**
- B - Valid and Non-Valid Baptisms 38**
- C - Sample Baptism Sponsor Form 39**
- D - Sample Confirmation Sponsor Form 40**
- E - A Glossary of Terms Related to Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age 41**
- F - Notations of this Document (including explanations of abbreviations and web addresses) 43**

Section 1 – General Principles for the Preparation and Celebration of All Sacraments

1A - The “Top 5” Practices of Effective Parish Leaders, as related to Sacrament Preparation

1. Effective Parish Leaders realize that they must first sit at the feet of the Master and be fed by Him before they can then go forth to serve their parish family. Before parish leaders can facilitate these “privileged encounters with Jesus Christ”, they need to ensure that they themselves are well fed.
2. Effective Parish Leaders precede each decision concerning their parish sacrament preparation program with the question, “How will this action support our parents in their role as the primary religious educators?”.
3. Effective Parish Leaders treat all parents with respect, no matter their background or personal circumstance.
4. Effective Parish Leaders recognize Sacramental Preparation as an excellent opportunity to evangelize families. Leaders understand that what happens during the period of sacrament preparation can impact future interactions for years to come.
5. Effective Parish Leaders bring together all of the families of those preparing for a sacrament for special sacrament preparation events, scheduling these events with sensitivity to all involved.

1B – General Principles

Catechetical Principles (see also NDC 35B)

- Sacraments are a celebration of the People of God, as such they should be celebrated by the entire community whenever possible (see [CCC 1140](#))
- Sacraments are fundamentally Trinitarian; a journey to the Father in the Son and through the Holy Spirit
- Sacraments truly confer the grace they symbolize (see [CCC 1127](#))
- Sacraments are the normal way that God communicates his grace
- God can communicate grace outside of the sacraments, but the sacraments are the normal means
- Sacraments receive their power from the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - o Prior to Christ there were celebrations that looked a great deal like sacraments, but they were only symbolic since they had not yet received their power
- For a sacrament to be valid there must be a proper form (words and actions), proper matter (the stuff used) and a proper minister with the intention to perform the sacrament (for more information, see [article](#) – *Form, Intent and Why they Matter*: Ascension Press and [article](#) – *Form and Matter in the Sacraments*: Ascension Press)

- Sacraments get their power from Christ and his body, the Church, not from the minister
- The holiness of the minister does not affect the efficacy of the sacrament

The Preparation Program

- The goal of our sacramental programs should be that of forming missionary disciples. Parish programs should be designed to reach both head and heart. Our programs should be evangelical and catechetical in nature, and complete in reference to the developmental stage of the child or youth.
- The pastor has primary overall responsibility for all parish and school catechetical programs. Pastors, in collaboration with those he has appointed, have the task of designing the sacramental programs. The pastor has the final decision making authority.
- The catechetical program must be in conformity with Catholic Church teachings.
- It is important that everyone who interacts with families preparing for the sacrament (i.e., pastor, PCL, catechist, parish secretary, others...) be kept in the communication loop. It is important that as many as possible attend planning meetings so that all are aware of the approach and details of the program. Between meetings, all should be kept regularly aware of the program details by way of written communication.
- As with all things, flexibility and pastoral sensitivity to differing family circumstances should be built into the preparation process.
- The pastor, with the assistance of the PCL and school principal, determine the resources to be used in the sacramental preparation program.
 - Published primary resources for religious education must appear on the [USCCB Conformity List](#). (Please contact the Office for Evangelization and Family Life if you have any questions concerning the Conformity List.)
 - Secondary resources may be used which do not appear on this list. Every care should be taken to be sure it is in conformity with the Catholic Church and that the material is of high quality.
 - It is a good practice to always check for a [Nihil Obstat or Imprimatur](#) given to a work considered for catechetical instruction. If neither can be found, the pastor or the Archdiocesan Office for Evangelization and Family Life can be asked to review the material. It is important that all resources be technologically up to date and be pedagogically sound. Our resources need to take in account the ways children learn today.
- The celebrations of sacraments are parish community events. The parish community can be involved the preparation through a number of ways. Many

parishes ask parishioners pray for those preparing for the reception of a sacrament in special ways such as “Prayer Partner” programs. (see [resource](#) on OEFL website)

Role of Parents

- The Church unequivocally recognizes the parents’ role as primary educators of their children in the faith. (CIC, [c. 774](#)) The Church has the responsibility to not only support parents in this role but to assist them, as needed, as well. As parish leaders, we need to design our programs to best support and assist parents. The programs which our parishes develop can be seen as a normative tool – a standard whereby we can see if our youth understand necessary material.
- Since faithfully attending Mass is an indicator of proper disposition, it is presumed that parents will bring children to Sunday Mass and Days of Holy Obligation (unless in case of illness or emergency).
- The Catholic Church is aware of the sad state of wounded families. Parish leaders should strive to work with all adults involved in the raising of the child to help create an environment conducive to coming to know Jesus.
 - o In the case of separated parents every attempt should be made for harmony with the family in respect of the sacraments.
 - o If a child’s parents are not practicing Catholics but wish to have their child celebrate the sacrament, the child should not be kept from experiencing the sacrament providing the child at the appropriate age, is practicing the faith, and has been properly catechized. (CIC, [c. 843](#)) Pastoral ministers should explore other avenues to strengthen the relationship of the entire family to the church community.

Involving Parents in the Program

- As stated in the previous section, the Church unequivocally recognizes the parents’ role as primary educators of their children in the faith. While those of us in parish ministry agree with this statement, sometimes our words don’t always agree with our actions. Do we truly support parents or do we demand that they do things “our” way? Do our parents see us as an ally working on their side or as an obstacle which they need to work around? It may be necessary to encourage changes in attitude for both our parish staff and our catechists as we begin preparations for the next sacrament formation class. We need to constantly remind ourselves that our primary role is that of parental support. As our actions come closer to our words, our parents will come to appreciate and enjoy their role as primary educators.
- When a parent chooses to bring their child to the parish for our assistance with religious education, it is important to involve the parent in the entire process. Parents need to understand what participation in the program brings to their child on both short term and long term bases. If the parents elect to not utilize the parish

- program, special care should be taken to support and resource the parents for their child's sacramental formation and to incorporate them into active parish life.
- Parish leaders need to build strong connections with the parents of children in their programs. It is important to establish positive relationships early. Should challenges arise in the religious education of children and youth, it is easier to meet those challenges if personal relationships have already been forged with individual families.
 - When we support parents by offering ideas for faith formation activities with their children, we need to make sure that parents understand the activity and have the necessary materials to complete the activity at home. When parents feel confident and comfortable, they are much more likely to use the resources which we suggest.
 - When we encourage parents to read Bible stories with or to their child, we need to ensure that the family has a suitable Bible in the home. We also need to recommend *specific* Bible stories, suggest times and places for the activity, and offer the name and contact information of a staff member or parishioner who may be able to help parents with this activity. Remember, some parents may not have a lot of experience with the Scriptures and may need to be taught very basic Scripture study skills. It would be a good practice to give a copy of Bible Stories that we are studying to families along with some discussion points.
 - When we encourage parents to pray specific prayers with their child, we need to ensure that parents have written copies of the suggested prayers for the child. We may also want to suggest times and places to pray and to share memorization tips with parents.
 - When we talk to parents about the importance of attending Mass on at least a weekly basis, we need to ensure that the parents have at least a basic understanding of the format of the Mass, its scriptural basis, and its history. We need to allow them the opportunity to come to understand for themselves the importance of celebrating Mass.
 - Parish leaders need to keep in mind that we do not work with adults in the same ways as we work with children and youth. Some points to keep in mind when working with groups of parents: (see also Appendix A – *Quick Check-List for Parent Meetings*)
 - Adults are motivated to learn when they see the relevance of the material. If we want adults to come to our meetings and/or classes, we need to show them how this event will benefit them personally.
 - Adults need to be able to integrate new ideas into what they already know if they are going to keep and use the new information.

- Information that conflicts sharply with what they already hold to be true, thus forcing a reevaluation of their old material, must be approached more slowly.
- When working with adults, we must be aware of their comfort and convenience.
 - It is a good practice that when you are planning a meeting that you have men and women as part of the planning team. Also make sure that persons from the various cultures within your parish are represented.
 - The learning environment must be physically comfortable. Tables and chairs work better for adults than desks. Allowing adults to gather around tables also helps encourage a “community” feel among those attending. Leaders should also be attentive to lighting and sound levels (both the volume of the presenter and of noisy backgrounds).
 - If A/V equipment is used, it is important to test the equipment immediately prior to their use. A back-up plan should always be ready in case of equipment or power failure.
 - It is important to schedule meetings and classes at times which are convenient for families. Check parish and community calendars (and in our area, sporting calendars too!) before scheduling events. If you are unaware of the regular events of the group for whom you are scheduling an event, check with some members of that group prior to finalizing the schedule.
 - It is important to give schedules to parents as early as possible so that family calendars can be set. Additionally, it is a good idea to periodically remind parents of upcoming important dates. It’s best to use a variety of reminder modes – such as parish bulletin, “[Catholify](#)” app, [Flocknote](#), letters/flyers mailed home, mass e-mail, mass texts, signs on church property, etc. (if you have questions regarding any of the means suggested here, please contact the Office for Evangelization and Family Life).
 - Either childcare should be offered or small children should be welcomed at meetings.
 - Options should be available for families who are unable to attend meetings at the parish. Parents may be employed with positions which require them to work on the weekends and evenings or perhaps important extended family events may be scheduled on a weekend during which you called the meeting. Parish leaders should make themselves available to meet with these parents at a

- convenient place and time or should make the material presented accessible through an at-home medium (print, video or audio).
- When advertising meetings, avoid using the word “mandatory”. Instead use words such as “important” or “beneficial”. There will be instances when parents will not be able to attend a meeting and other means of distributing the information will be used, so the word “mandatory” is not the correct word to use. Remember, the words we choose when advertising our program paint a picture of our attitude towards our families.
- In teaching situations:
 - Adults bring their own expectations to learning environments. It is critical that the facilitator take time at the beginning of the class to clarify and articulate the subject matter of the class before getting into content.
 - Adults bring a great deal of life experience into the gathering. Adults learn well – and much – from dialogue with peers. Allow adults the opportunity to talk over some of the material with others. It is important to be attentive to the differences among groups – depending on the topic, women may be more talkative than men, established groups may be more talkative than new groups, the majority culture group may be more talkative than the minority culture group.
 - At the end of each gathering of adults, take time to evaluate the event. It is important to offer opportunities for written evaluations. Adults need to be able to give their input and to let you know if the gathering was worth the time that they spent being there. In addition to the written evaluations, take time to speak personally to as many attendees as possible.
 - When working with parents who speak languages other than English, it is important, as well as possible, to provide translations of all written materials. Also, it is important that a translator be available during meetings for both the presentation and for questions
 - For assistance in working with those who speak Spanish, please contact the Director of Hispanic Ministry, Deacon Hector Donastorg, at 251-434-1550 or hdonastorg@mobarch.org.

1C – General guidelines for preparing persons with special needs

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” *Matthew 19:14*. Jesus welcomed all children and so we as the Church welcome everyone especially children/adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities to the sacramental life of the Church.

It is stated in the [Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#), “By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God, and have the same divine calling. Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community”.

Preparation

In a parish, the pastor/parish catechetical leader/catechist can ask the parents about the suggestions given in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) for their child implemented in the regular school setting. From the IEP, parish leaders can find out which strategies work best for the child, such as special seating, adaptive equipment, a personal aide, one-on-one tutoring, and other accommodations made for the learning process. The IEP can be an invaluable guide and support for the catechetical team and parents in the faith formation of the child.

Celebration

“It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together. To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community. Accessibility involves far more than physical alterations to parish buildings. Realistic provisions must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations such as the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Anointing of the sick.” ([Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities](#), #23).

Resources

The Church today is challenged to be mindful of advances in education on the subject of disabilities. Resources are available that may benefit your religious education program. Below are some resources which may be useful for your program.

Disability Ministries and Services , Archdiocese of Mobile

Mrs. Ruth Breland, Program Manager

251-434-1550

rbreland@mobarch.org

[National Catholic Partnership on Disability](#) – www.ncpd.org

[Handbook for Adaptive Catechesis: Serving Those with Special Needs](#) by Michelle Chronister, MA (available through Ligouri, Amazon and other book sellers)

Adaptive Learning Kits from Loyola Press. Three kits are available: [Reconciliation](#),

[Eucharist](#) and [Confirmation](#). Also available in Spanish.

Section 2 – Baptism

2A – Doctrinal Considerations for Baptism (See also NDC 36, A1)

A doctrinally sound catechesis on Baptism should:

- I. Teach that Baptism:
 - a. 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
 - b. Gives sanctifying grace, that is God's life
 - c. Gives them a new birth in which they become children of God, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit
 - d. Cleanses people from original sin and from all personal sins
 - e. Incorporates them into the life, practices, and mission of the Church
 - f. Imprints on their souls an indelible character that consecrates them for Christian worship and is necessary for salvation in the case of all those who have heard the Gospel and have been able to ask for this sacrament
- II. Teach that through Baptism we receive a share in the mission of Christ as priest, prophet and king.
 - a. King: called to servant leadership and to die to ourselves for others
 - b. Priest: to offer the sacrifice of our very lives
 - c. Prophet: to proclaim the Good News by word and deed
- III. Teach that Baptism "symbolizes the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as a new creature." ([CCC 1214](#))
- IV. Teach that Baptism is "the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit...and the door which gives access to the other sacraments." ([CCC 1213](#))
- V. Teach that through Baptism the faithful "share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission." ([CCC 1268](#), [blog post](#))
- VI. Teach that "the Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification" (thus "the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its root in baptism") ([CCC 1266](#))
 - a. "enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues"
 - b. "giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit"
 - c. "allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues"
- VII. Teach that "having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us. From now on he is called to be subject to others, to serve them in the communion of the Church, and to 'obey and to submit' to the Church's leaders, holding them in respect and affection" ([CCC 1269](#))

- VIII. 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
- IX. Teach that the ordinary minister for the Sacrament of Baptism is a priest or deacon, but that, in the case of necessity, any person who intends to do what the Church does can baptize by pouring water on the candidate's head and saying the Trinitarian formula
- X. Teach that Baptism is necessary for salvation (See [John 3](#))
 - a. Describe how one may receive the grace of Baptism without being baptized (see [Luke 23:39-43](#))
 - b. Fully explain: (for more information, see [blog post](#))
 - i. Baptism of Blood
 - ii. Baptism of Desire
- XI. Teach that it is very appropriate to baptize infants
 - a. See [Genesis 17](#) and [Colossians 2](#) for precedent of circumcision (see [blog post](#))
 - b. See [Acts 2](#), [Acts 15](#), and [Acts 16](#) for New Testament examples (see [blog post](#))

2B – Pastoral Considerations for Baptism

The celebration of Baptism should always be a joyous time for a parish. When new or expecting parents contact a parish to inquire about Baptism, parish leaders need to convey that joy to the parents. No matter the circumstance, welcome the parents with the joy of Christ's love. All those preparing for Baptism, including parents and godparents, need the prayerful support and apostolic witness of the people of the parish.

Parishes should publicize their suggested steps for preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism. Expectant parents and godparents should be encouraged to complete their immediate preparation before the birth of the child, if possible. "This preparation is an especially important opportunity for the church to encourage the parents and godparents of infants to reexamine the meaning of the Christian message in their own lives. It is also the proper time to remind the parents and godparents that "an infant should be baptized within the first weeks after birth. If the child is in danger of death, he/she is to be baptized without delay."" (CDW, Rite of Baptism, #8)

- I. For an infant to be baptized licitly(see CIC, [c. 868](#)):
 - a. The parents or at least one of them or the person who legitimately takes their place must consent;
 - b. There must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be delayed according to the prescripts of particular law after the parents have been advised about the reason.
- II. Disability, of itself, is never a reason for deferring Baptism

- III. If there is a doubt whether a person has been baptized or whether baptism was conferred validly and the doubt remains after a serious investigation, baptism is to be conferred conditionally. (see CIC, [c. 869](#))
 - a. Please note that the term “Christening” means different things to different people. In many Protestant congregations that do not baptize infants they use the term to mean giving the child a Christian name, not baptizing. Care should be taken to verify whether a baptism occurred.
- IV. Godparents should understand their role in the life of the baptized
- V. Instructions concerning godparents:
 - a. Together with the parents, the godparents present the infant for baptism and help the baptized person lead a Christian life (see CIC, [c. 872](#))
 - b.

There are to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each (see CIC, c. 873)

 - c. God parents (for more information, see CIC, [c. 874 §1](#)):
 - i. Are designated by the one to be baptized, or by the parents or the person who takes their place
 - ii. Are at least 16 years old, have been confirmed and have received Holy Eucharist
 - iii. Lead a strong faith life, adheres to the teachings of the Church, and if married, have been married in the Church.
 - d. Parents cannot be the godparents of their children
 - e. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of baptism. (see CIC, [c. 874 §2](#))
- VI. A sample Godparent information form can be found in Appendix C
- VII. Parishes should involve parents and children in parish life after infant Baptism.
 - a. Some parishes send regular mailings to the parents with suggestions of faith formation activities appropriate to the child’s age. (For an example, see Our Sunday Visitor’s [“Parent Letters”](#))
 - b. Parishes may connect trained “mentor parents” with new parents
 - c. Parishes may keep new parents regularly informed about activities which are of special interest to them, such as times and locations of nursery, Catholic preschool registration, parenting workshops, etc.
 - d. Parishes may invite the school principal to the baptismal preparations sessions so that the parents can learn more about the school.
 - e. With the parents’ permission, the names of the newly baptized may be listed in the parish bulletin.
 - f. Those who coordinate the baptismal preparation meetings should take special care to note those parents who may not be actively involved in the life of the parish. Those parents can be invited to an individual “get acquainted” meeting with the pastor, and

perhaps other members of the parish staff, to help the parents learn more about the parish and become more active in parish life.

2C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration

For Infants and Children under the age of 7

- Depending upon the needs of the parish, baptisms may be scheduled with groups of infants and small children, or may be scheduled on an individual basis.
- Baptisms should be scheduled on Sunday, and can be included in the Sunday Liturgy. This inclusion should not occur very often.

For Children and Youth aged 7 and older

- “For the purpose of Christian initiation, children who have reached the age of reason, generally understood as seven years of age, are considered adults in a limited sense. As much as possible, their formation in the faith should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate, making use of the appropriate adaptations permitted in the rite. “They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens.”” (see NDC 36, A; CIC, [c. 852 §1](#); RCIA, Appendix III, no. 18)
- For more information, see **SECTION 6 - RCIA** of this document, beginning on page 32.

Documentation

- It is the pastor’s responsibility to ensure that the baptism is recorded carefully and without delay in the baptismal register. (see CIC, [c. 877 §1](#))
- If it concerns a child born to an unmarried mother, the name of the mother must be inserted, if her maternity is established publicly or if she seeks it willingly in writing or before two witnesses. (see CIC, c. [877 §2](#))
- If it concerns an adopted child, the names of those adopting are to be inscribed and, at least if it is done in the civil records of the region. (see CIC, [c. 877](#))
- If the baptism was not administered by the pastor or in his presence, the minister of baptism, whoever it is, must inform the pastor of the parish in which it was administered of the conferral of the baptism, so that he records the baptism according to the norm of can. 877, §1. (see CIC, [c. 878](#))
- It is recommended that a certificate of baptism is given to the parents.

Section 3 – Reconciliation

3A – Doctrinal Considerations (see also NDC 36, B1)

A doctrinally sound catechesis on Reconciliation should:

- I. Teach that God is loving, merciful and just, and we are sinners
 - a. We are created good, but we have sinned and we do sin
 - b. God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son
 - c. God desires that every person be reconciled to him and live in communion with him forever
 - d. God is a merciful and loving father who runs to greet the penitent and welcome him to a banquet
 - e. God’s love is more powerful than our sin
 - f. We must respond to that love and repent
 - g. God gives us graces to help us conquer sin in our lives
- II. Teach the necessity of confessing to a priest (see [video](#) – Why Do I Have to Confess My Sins to a Priest by Fr. Barron or for a more biblical basis for confessing to a priest see [video](#) – Confessing Sins to a Priest – A Biblical Defense: Catholic Answers. See also [article](#) – Confession of Venial Sin as a Means of Ongoing Conversion of Life: USCCB)
- III. Teach that Reconciliation is the ordinary way that God forgives sin. We are therefore obligated to seek the sacrament.
 - a. Jesus himself gave the divine power for the forgiveness of sins to his Apostles (see [John 20:21-23](#)). He also gave them the power to not forgive. Priests must hear the sin and use discretion as to whether they should forgive or retain (this apologetics point is more appropriate for parents than for 7-year-olds).
 - b. All mortal sin must be confessed ([CCC 1456](#))
- IV. Teach the steps for celebrating the rite.
(from Archdiocesan publication “*The Light is ON for You. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation*”)

A time of brief preparation is important. Ask God in a short prayer for help, repentance, strength and light. If you can, read a brief passage from the Bible and think about your life. What choices are you making that are moving you away from the Lord? If available, use an examination of conscience for your reflection. Go to the Reconciliation Room or Confessional area in your Church, and choose to confess either face-to-face with the priest or anonymously.

Here are the usual steps: NB: It is vital that those being instructed understand that they are to approach the Mercy Seat without fear of forgetting the exact format of the ritual or how to recite certain prayers. The priest is their helper and will guide them in the rite.

1. As the priest welcomes you, make the sign of the cross with him.
2. Say “Amen” if he says a prayer for you.

3. The priest may read a passage from Scripture, recite from memory a scriptural passage or invite you to read from the Bible.
4. You may begin your confession with the words: Bless (forgive) me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (what period of time) _____ since my last Confession. These are my sins.
5. Confess your sins. Simply speak of what brings you to ask for God's forgiveness.
6. The priest may discuss your spiritual situation if that seems helpful.
7. Accept the penance offered to you by the priest. It may be a prayer, a work of charity or another action.
8. You will be invited by the priest to express your sorrow. You can use an Act of Contrition that you either read, recite from memory or express in your own words.
9. An Act of Contrition: *"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you. And I detest all my sins because of your just punishments. But most of all, because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen."*
10. The priest will offer this prayer of absolution: "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Say "Amen" when he concludes this prayer.
11. The priest may add: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is Good," to which you respond: "His mercy endures forever."
12. As the priest bids you good-bye conclude with "Thank you" or "Thanks be to God." Then, later spend a few moments in prayerful reflection in gratitude for God's loving mercy.

3B – Pastoral Considerations

As Parish Catechetical Leaders, we must strive to ensure that our sacramental programs are doctrinally sound, but we must also attend to a pastorally sensitive mode of presentation – we must not only strive to form the mind, we must also attend to hearts and individual circumstances. Our aim should be to lead those we teach to an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, leading to the formation of disciples.

When families come to the Church for their child's sacramental preparation, parish leaders have the opportunity to form, not only the child, but the entire family. We need to take advantage of this blessed time and strive to be welcoming, caring and Christ-like. From the time of the parents' first phone call to inquire about the preparation, through the celebration of the sacrament and beyond, all

those representing the parish, including the parish secretary, the catechists, the PCL, the pastor and others, need to be conscious of the way with which they interact with families. The time of preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation may be uncomfortable for some parents who may not have had good experiences with the sacrament, or who may have been absent from the sacrament for an extended time. Parish leaders need to take on a non-judgmental attitude with the families and strive to show families the mercy and forgiveness shown through the sacrament. This is a unique moment to invite parents who have not been to Confession for quite a while to come back to the sacrament.

- I. Parents and the parish catechetical leader, together with the pastor, are responsible for determining when children are ready to receive First Penance and Reconciliation. (NDC, no. 36 B-2)
 - a. “Readiness for reception includes knowledge of the person of Jesus and the Gospel message of forgiveness, knowledge of sin and its effect, and an understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness, and conversion.” (NDC, no. 36 B-2)
 - b. If it is determined that an individual is not yet ready to receive the sacrament, the celebration may be delayed
- II. “In the Latin Church, children must receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for the first time prior to their first reception of the Eucharist.” ([CCC 1457](#); NDC, no. 36 B-2) In the case of children, it is suggested that there be at least three months between the celebration of first Reconciliation and the celebration of first Eucharist so that the individual understands the distinctions between the two sacraments.
- III. Since young people develop gradually in their ability to understand Reconciliation, children, as well as teenagers, should be provided with ongoing catechesis each year as they mature in the practice of the faith.
- IV. During the preparation period for the sacrament of Reconciliation, parents should be reminded of the love and mercy of God and should be encouraged to receive the sacrament regularly. Parents should be given the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament at the occasion of the child’s First Reconciliation. Many parishes invite parents to participate in individual confessions.
 - a. Parent meetings may include catechetical instruction about the sacrament of Reconciliation, emphasizing the beauty of the sacrament. This instruction may also include information about the necessity of the sacrament in all of our lives.
 - b. It is important to establish ongoing communication with parents and to be continually open to discussion and questions.
- V. Instruction during parent meetings should help parents assess their own understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of Reconciliation. Presenters should be aware that some parents will need instruction on a very basic level. Specific topics could include:
 - a. The rite of Reconciliation
 - b. Ways to help their child recognize right and wrong behavior

- c. Ways of expressing forgiveness at home, and
 - d. The importance of their example as a role model by their reception of the sacrament
- VI. During the meetings, the parents need to hear about God's mercy, love and forgiveness and they also need a strong defense of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- a. As instituted by Christ
 - b. As the primary means for the forgiveness of sins
- VII. During Advent and Lent, many parishes provide Reconciliation services. These are opportune times to catechize on the sacrament, especially from the pulpit.

3C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration

Preparation for the sacrament

- In addition to the classroom catechetical preparation for the sacrament, it is important to allow the children and families the opportunity to visit a reconciliation room/confessional and to “practice” the rite.
- Children should be allowed to choose the format (face-to-face or behind the screen) which best suits his/her needs.
- Because some parents may not have celebrated the sacrament for a long time, or may not be Catholic, it is important to share with parents the steps involved in the celebration of the sacrament.
- Families should be encouraged to “practice” the steps for the celebration of the sacrament at home.

Special preparation activities

- Many parishes plan for special preparation times, outside of the normal Religious Education times, to help families prepare for the sacrament. These special times can include activities such as family catechesis on the sacrament, opportunities to tour the Reconciliation areas, and special prayer opportunities.
- If a parish plans to have special times for children/families to meet to prepare for the sacrament, times convenient to *all* should be chosen. If a program serves both RE and Catholic school students, times other than normal “school” times should be chosen. If the activity is planned to be held during the school year, it should be planned for a Saturday or Sunday, a weekday evening, or a date which the local public school has off.

Documentation

- One must be baptized in order to celebrate Reconciliation. A baptismal certificate must be on file with the parish before a child celebrates the sacrament of Reconciliation. If the individual was baptized in a protestant church which does not provide certificates, a letter affirming a valid Christian baptism may be used.
- See Appendix B for *Valid and Non-Valid Baptisms*

The Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Most parishes choose to use a communal penance service format followed by individual confessions for the celebration of First Reconciliation.
- Those who are selected to prepare the communal service should be determined by the local parish. The pastor may ask the PCL, principal, catechists or parents to help him plan for the celebration. If the parish has both an RE program and a school, representatives from both the parish and the school should be involved.
- Celebrations of the sacrament can be adapted to meet different cultural needs with the pastor's approval. (NDC, no. 36 3b-2)
- There is no specific attire required for the celebration of First Reconciliation, however Sunday attire is recommended.
- On the occasion of the celebration of the sacrament, a sufficient number of priests should be present so that all attending have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament in a timely manner. (A ratio of 1 priest for every 6-10 penitents is suggested, including parents and other family members.)
- If a child misses participation in the group celebration of the sacrament, the family can be invited to the next regularly scheduled confession time or the next communal service when practical.

3D – Working with Children with Special Needs

Specifically on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the US bishops state in the "[Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#)" that "As long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution. Those with profound mental disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability". The elements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be emphasized for the person with intellectual/developmental disabilities are: to show sorrow, express that they have hurt someone and resolve to try not to do it again.

Preparation

- A conversation with the parents about the child's awareness of right and wrong, hurting others, showing sorrow and the child's experience of forgiveness will assist the parish catechetical leader toward assessing the child's progress in his faith formation.
- The parents, catechetical leader and catechist together prepare the child for the reception of the sacrament. The curriculum can be adapted for the understanding of the child. Scripture stories of sin and forgiveness can be told through drama, video, music and art. The rite of reconciliation can be taught with picture flash cards and actually going into the confessional and practicing what to say and what to do. The Office for Evangelization and Family Life has resources available for parish leaders to prepare students with disabilities.
- Resource for preparation for Reconciliation
[Loyola Press Adaptive Reconciliation Kit](#)

Reception

- The readiness of the child is determined by the pastor with the consultation of the parents, catechetical leader and catechist. (NDC, no 36, 3b-2)
- Accommodations can be made for the child/adult. Below are some to consider:
 - o In the case of individuals with poor communication skills, sorrow for sin is to be accepted even if this repentance is expressed through some gesture rather than verbally. (CIC, [c. 978 §1](#), [979](#)).
 - o Catholics who are deaf should have the opportunity to confess to a priest able to communicate with them in sign language, if sign language is their primary means of communication. They may also confess through an approved sign language interpreter of their choice (CIC, c. [990](#)). The interpreter is strictly bound to respect the seal of confession (CIC, c. [983 §2](#) and c. [1388 §2](#)).
 - o When no priest with signing skills is available, nor sign language interpreter requested, Catholics who are deaf should be permitted to make their confession in writing. The written materials are to be returned to the penitent or otherwise properly destroyed.

[Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#) par. 24

Other accommodations can be made that align to the needs of the individual child.

Section 4 – Eucharist

4A – Doctrinal Considerations for Eucharist (See also NDC 36, A3)

A doctrinally sound catechesis on Eucharist should:

- I. Teach that the Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of initiation
 - a. By virtue of our Baptism we are a priestly people and are more deeply conformed to Christ through the Eucharist (see CCC [1322-1323](#))
 - b. The Eucharist gives thanks and praise to the Father; is a sacrificial memorial of Christ and his body, and is offered through the Spirit (see CCC [1362-1372](#))
 - c. The Mass is the principal liturgical celebration of the Paschal Mystery
 - i. The Eucharist is the “source and the summit” of the Christian life (see CCC [1324-1327](#))
- II. Teach that through the Eucharist Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is perpetuated (see CCC [1362-1372](#), [article](#) – *The Sacrifice of the Mass: Catholic Answers*, [article](#) – *The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: USCCB*)
 - a. Christ’s sacrifice is not “re-offered”, rather the one-time sacrifice is made present
 - b. The covenant with Christ is renewed at each Mass
 - c. Through the words and actions of the priest, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ (truly, physically). (see CCC [1374](#))
 - d. Christ is present whole and entirely (body, blood, soul and divinity) (see CCC [1374](#))
 - e. Christ is also present in the Word and in the body of the faithful gathered in his name and in the person of the priest who acts in the person of Christ
- III. Include the effects of the sacrament (see CCC [1391-1397](#))
 - a. Strengthens our union with Christ
 - b. Nourishes spiritually
 - c. Signifies and communicates communion with the Trinity
 - d. Effects the forgiveness of venial sins
 - e. Strengthens the communicant to avoid mortal sin
 - f. Commits us to the poor
- IV. Teach the meaning of the ritual, symbols and parts of the Mass (see CCC [1348-1355](#), [article](#) – *Beyond First Communion: USCCB*, [article](#) – *The Structure and Meaning of the Mass: USCCB*)
 - a. Presents Jewish roots of the Last Supper ([video](#)– *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* by Dr. Brant Pitre,), [article](#) – *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* by Dr. Brant Pitre: USCCB)
 - b. Includes New Testament teaching about the Eucharist (see [article](#) – *Christ in the Eucharist: Catholic Answers*, [article](#) – *Eucharist in the New Testament* by Scott Hahn: USCCB)
 - i. John 6
 - ii. Last Supper discourses

- iii. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians
- c. Illustrate how the bread and wine are changed, "Transubstantiation" (see CCC [1373-1377](#))
- d. Show how Eucharist compels us to serve the poor and spread the Gospel (see CCC [1397](#))
- e. Demonstrate that the Eucharist is the preeminent sign of the unity of the Church (see [article](#) – *Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Church's Unity*: Catholic Culture.org)
- f. Give particulars for the reception of communion
 - i. Explains that only Catholics are to receive Communion (see [article](#) – *Guidelines for the Reception of Communion*: USCCB)
 - 1. Explains why this is the case
 - 2. Shows that we long for true unity; to bring this about we must honestly admit that we are not currently in communion with each other; we believe fundamentally different things.
 - 3. Illustrates that this teaching is not rooted in being closed or unwelcoming
 - ii. Clarifies the roles and ministries within the sacred action so that all may experience full, active and conscious participation in the celebration of the Mass (see CCC [1142-1144](#))
 - iii. Makes people aware of the obligation to be free from mortal sin (see CCC [1385](#))
 - iv. Teaches that Catholics must receive the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season (see CCC [1389](#))
 - v. Encourages Catholics to receive the Eucharist as the culmination of their participation in the Eucharistic celebration (see CCC [1388-1389](#))
 - 1. Teaches about the Eucharistic fast and its rationale (see CCC [1387](#))
 - 2. Teaches about reception of the Eucharist a second time on any given day (see CIC, [c. 917](#))
 - vi. Reminds the faithful that we are to become what we have received
 - vii. Clarifies that the reception of any amount or portion or either the Eucharist species constitutes reception of Jesus in His entirety. (for example, when someone receives only the host, he/she receives Jesus in His entirety, or when someone receives only the wine, he/she receives Jesus in His entirety.)
 - viii. Teaches that communion may be given either in the hand or on the tongue
- g. Properly explain devotion to the Blessed Sacrament (see [article](#) – *Eucharistic Devotion*: USCCB, [video](#) – *Eucharistic Adoration* by Fr. James Martin, [video](#) – *Comments on Eucharistic Adoration* by Fr. Barron)
 - i. Demonstrates its roots in the sacrifice of the Mass
 - ii. Encourages visits and holy hours in adoration of the Eucharistic Lord and teaches proper gestures and postures of communal adoration and benediction

4B – Pastoral Considerations for Eucharist

As Parish Catechetical Leaders, we must strive to ensure that our sacramental programs are doctrinally sound, but we must also attend to a pastorally sensitive mode of presentation – we must not only strive to form the mind, we must also attend to hearts and individual circumstances. Our aim should be to lead those we teach to an encounter with the person of Christ, leading to the formation of disciples.

- I. It is important that everyone who interacts with families preparing for the sacraments be kept in the communication loop. It is important that as many leaders as possible attend planning meetings so that all are aware of the approach and details of the program. Between meetings, all should be kept regularly aware of the program details by way of written communication.
- II. Parents and the parish catechetical leader or catechist, together with the pastor, are responsible for determining when children have attained the age of reason and are ready to receive First Communion. Because reception of the Eucharist, especially for the first time, is integral to the child’s full incorporation into the ecclesial community, the pastor has a responsibility in determining every child’s readiness to receive First Communion. (NDC, no. 36 A-3a) If it is determined that an individual is not yet ready to receive the sacrament, the celebration may be delayed
- III. Catechesis on the Eucharist should follow, and be distinct from, catechesis for Reconciliation and Penance.
- IV. Children being prepared for First Communion and their families are directed to attend Mass weekly and on holy days of obligation, and to pray daily. ([Sacramental Catechesis](#), pg. 20)
- V. Suited to the children’s age and abilities, catechesis should help children participate actively and consciously in the Mass. Parishes should present catechesis in preparation for the first reception of the Eucharist that (NDC no. 36, A-3a):
 - a. Teaches that the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples
 - b. Teaches 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” ([Directory for Masses with Children](#), no. 12)
 - c. Ensures that the baptized have been prepared, according to their capacity, for the Sacrament of Penance prior to their First Communion
 - d. Develops in children an understanding of the Father’s love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ, and of the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - e. Teaches that “the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ” and that “what appear to be bread and wine are actually His living body” (NCD, no. 122)
 - f. Teaches the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread
 - g. Teaches the meaning of reception of the Holy Eucharist under both species of bread and wine (for more information, see [article](#) – *Norms for the Distribution and Reception*

of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America:
USCCB) Helps them to participate actively and consciously in the Mass

- h. Helps children to receive Christ's Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner
- VI. Since young people develop gradually in their ability to understand the mystery of the Eucharist, children, as well as teenagers, should be provided with ongoing catechesis each year as they mature in the practice of the faith.
- VII. The catechesis offered from the parish should help parents grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable them to catechize their children more effectively. (NDC no. 36 A-3a)
- VIII. Instruction during parent meetings should help parents assess their own understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Presenters should be aware that some parents will need instruction on a very basic level. Specific topics could include:
 - a. The Mass
 - b. The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (see [article](#) – The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: USCCB)
 - c. The importance of their example as a role model by their regular attendance at Mass
 - d. Ways to share Scripture stories of Jesus with their child
 - e. Customs to receive Eucharist and the meaning behind the approaches (see [article](#) – The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass: USCCB, [article](#) – The Manner of Receiving Holy Communion: CNA)
 - f. The importance of family mealtime as an opportunity to discuss faith related topics
- IX. Parish Leaders need to seize this opportunity to explain the “what”s, “why”s and “how”s of our Eucharistic faith with parents. If necessary, show to short video clips to show to the parents, and then *take the time* to discuss them afterwards. Possible clips may include:
 - g. Fr. Robert Barron's "[Fr. Barron Comments on the Sacrament of Eucharist as a Meal](#)" (part 1 of 3)
 - h. Fr. Robert Barron's "[Fr. Barron Comments on the Sacrament of Eucharist as a Sacrifice](#)" (part 2 of 3)
 - i. Fr. Robert Barron's "[Fr. Barron Comments on the Sacrament of Eucharist as Real Presence](#)" (part 3 of 3)

4C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration

Preparation for the sacrament

- “Children’s preparation for first reception of the Eucharist begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation for a child’s understanding of Eucharist. Children who participate with their family in the Mass experience the Eucharistic mystery in

an initial way and gradually learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer.”
(NDC 36,A,3a)

- Pastors have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction (see CIC, c. [843 §2](#)).
- Preparation for the sacrament can take place in the parish RE program, in a Catholic school or in the home.
- Because sacraments are parish based celebrations, children should ideally receive their First Communion in their home parish.
- Sensitivity should be exercised within school settings when students from other parishes are being prepared for the celebration of the sacrament.
- Children should be taught both options for receiving Eucharist, either on the tongue or in the hand. Symbolism for each option should be explained to the child. (For explanation, please see [article](#) – The Manner of Receiving Holy Communion: CNA)

Special preparation activities

- Many parishes plan for special preparation times, outside of the normal Religious Education times, to help families prepare for the sacrament. These special times can include activities such as family catechesis on the sacrament, opportunities to participate in special “explanation” Masses, an opportunity to “practice” the reception of Holy Communion and special prayer opportunities.
- If a parish plans to have special times for children/families to meet to prepare for the sacrament, times convenient to *all* should be chosen. If a program serves both RE and Catholic school students, times other than normal “school” times should be chosen. If the activity is planned to be held during the school year, it should be planned for a Saturday or Sunday, a weekday evening, or a date which the public school has off.

Documentation

- One must be baptized in order to celebrate Eucharist. A baptismal certificate must be on file with the parish before a child celebrates the sacrament of Holy Eucharist.
 - o If the individual was baptized in a protestant church which does not provide certificates, a letter affirming a valid Christian baptism may be used.
 - o See Appendix B for *Valid and Non-Valid Baptisms*
- A record is kept of the names of those celebrating First Eucharist in the parish sacramental record book. The PCL should ensure that the names have been recorded.
- It is recommended that a certificate for First Eucharist be given to each child.

The Celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist

- Because sacraments are parish celebrations, it is desirable that children celebrate their First Eucharist with the parish community at a normally scheduled Sunday Mass. However, if this is impractical because of space limitations, a special First Eucharist Mass may be scheduled at another time.
- Young children sometimes are not able to participate fully in Masses that are prepared primarily for adults since they may have difficulty understanding the words, symbols, and actions of the Eucharist. The *Directory for Masses with Children* is the normative reference for the preparation and celebration of Masses with children. This directory is to be used in reference to “children who have not yet entered the period of pre-adolescence” ([Directory for Masses with Children](#), no. 6).
- Those who are selected to prepare for the First Eucharist Mass(es) should be determined by the local parish. The pastor may ask the PCL, principal, catechists or parents to help him plan for the celebration. If the parish has both an RE program and a school, representatives from both the parish and the school should be involved.
- Celebrations of the sacrament can be adapted to meet different cultural needs with the pastor’s approval. (NDC, no. 36 A, 3b-2)
- There is no specific attire required for the celebration of First Eucharist, however Sunday attire is recommended. Local parish traditions may be considered, but should, at all times, show sensitivity to the financial and cultural circumstances of the children and their parents.
- If a child misses participation in the group celebration of the sacrament, parents should make arrangements with the PCL and the pastor to determine a suitable time for their child to celebrate First Eucharist.

4D – Working with Children with Special Needs

The Eucharist is the heart and soul of our Catholic life. God speaks to us in the Liturgy of the Word, and He gives us himself-His Body and His Blood in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Jesus draws us together as a community of faith; to celebrate and to serve one another.

Jesus came for all of us. He desires to be united with us and nourishes our souls in the Eucharist. Jesus calls all of us to the table.

For individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, “The criterion for reception of holy communion is the same for persons with developmental and mental disabilities as for all persons, namely, that the person be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture, or reverential silence rather than verbally.” ([Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#), #20)

An individual with intellectual/developmental disabilities shows his/her readiness through reverence and awe of the sacredness of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Pastors are encouraged to consult with parents, guardians, diocesan personnel involved with disability issues, psychologists, religious educators, and other experts in making their judgment of readiness. Cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the baptized person to receive the sacrament. The existence of a disability is not considered in and of itself as

disqualifying a person from receiving the eucharist. (adapted from [Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, #20](#))

Preparation

Preparation for children with intellectual/developmental disabilities mirrors the usual preparation for the reception of the Holy Eucharist. However, a more tangible and repetitive approach may be needed for these children to prepare to meet Jesus in the form of bread and wine.

Resource for preparation for Eucharist:

[Loyola Press Adaptive First Eucharist Preparation Kit](#)

Reception

Children with intellectual/developmental disabilities are to be provided with the necessary adaptations when needed for their reception of the Holy Eucharist. Examples-a piece of the host instead of the whole host, water to aid swallowing, special seating, a translator and other accommodations that are needed.

Section 5 – Confirmation

5A – Doctrinal Considerations for Confirmation (See also NDC 36, A2)

A doctrinally sound catechesis on Confirmation includes these points:

- I. The Sacrament of Confirmation more perfectly binds the baptized to the Church and enriches each person with special strength of the Holy Spirit so that the individual can be a true witness to Christ ([LG no. 11](#); [CCC 1285](#); [USCCA pg. 207](#); CIC, [c. 879](#)).
- II. The ordinary minister of the sacrament is a bishop in the Latin Catholic Church.
- III. Those preparing for Confirmation in the Latin Church, who have the use of reason, must be able to renew the baptismal promises, be in a state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple ([CCC 1306-1310](#); [USCCA pg. 208](#); CIC, [c. 889 §2](#)).
- IV. Confirmation increases and deepens one’s baptismal grace ([CCC 1303](#); [USCCA pg. 207](#)).
- V. Confirmation marks one with an indelible character on the soul ([CCC 1304-1305](#); [USCCA](#) pg. 208).
- VI. Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit ([CCC 1303](#); [USCCA, 207](#)).
- VII. Confirmation increases in the confirmed the gifts of the Holy Spirit ([CCC 1302-1303](#); [USCCA](#) pg. 207-209).
- VIII. Confirmation strengthens one’s bond with the Church to enable the confirmed to serve the Church’s mission and become Christian stewards ([CCC 1303](#); [USCCA pg. 207](#)).
- IX. Catechesis should be offered on the words, gestures, signs, and symbols of the Rite, including emphasis on the imposition of hands, the anointing of Sacred Chrism, and the words, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” ([CCC 1293-1301](#); [USCCA pg. 204-206](#)).
([Sacramental Catechesis](#), pg. 18-19)

5B – Pastoral Considerations for Confirmation

We need to strive to offer high school religious education programs which are engaging and formational. Our Confirmation programs should not be confused with our High School Religious Education programs. Our immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation should be a small segment of the entire high school formation program.

The Office for Evangelization and Family Life distributed the [Guidelines for Parish Coordinators of Confirmation](#) binder in 2011. Please refer to this binder for further information.

As noted in the publication “[Sacramental Catechesis](#)” from the USCCB:

- I. Parishes should offer catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that: (see NDC, no. 36 A 2)
 - a. Teaches about the roles of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits

- b. Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences
 - c. Includes instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols
 - d. Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation
- II. “Persons who because of developmental or mental disabilities may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian to receive the sacrament of confirmation at the appropriate time.” [Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#), no. 16.
- III. Programs should include a catechetical focus on the relationship between Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation
- IV. Programs should provide catechesis on and opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for all candidates
- V. Programs emphasize a call to discipleship, active witness, and stewardship. Preparation for this sacrament therefore calls for a sound teaching on the meaning of the sacrament, including (1) a catechesis on the increase (*augmentum*) of the activity of the Holy Spirit in this sacrament, (2) the strengthening (*robur*) that the Holy Spirit gives to witness to the faith in the midst of the criticism or opposition, and (3) the call to stewardship that flows from the Spirit’s activity, inviting a person to share his or her time, talent and treasure in service of the Church.
- VI. Programs should include a community service component.
- VII. Programs should include a retreat experience.

5C – Preparing for the Sacrament & Planning the Celebration

Preparation for the Sacrament

- See [Guidelines for Parish Confirmation Coordinators](#), pg. 12-28
- A sample Sponsor information form can be found in Appendix D
- A number of Confirmation preparation resources have been published, including the programs published by [Life Teen](#) and [Ascension Press](#). If you have questions concerning Confirmation resources, please call the OEFL office.

Documentation

- One must be baptized in order to be confirmed. A baptismal certificate must be on file with the parish before the teen celebrates the sacrament of Confirmation.
 - If the individual was baptized in a protestant church which does not provide certificates, a letter affirming a valid Christian baptism may be used.
 - See Appendix B for *Valid and Non-Valid Baptisms*
- A record is kept of the names of those celebrating Confirmation in the parish sacramental record book. The PCL should ensure that the names have been recorded.

- A notification of Confirmation is sent to the baptismal parish of any teen who was baptized in another parish.
- It is recommended that a certificate for Confirmation be given to each child.

The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

- The diocesan bishop is to administer confirmation personally or is to take care that another bishop administers it. If necessity requires it, he can grant the faculty to one or more specific presbyters, who are to administer this sacrament. (see CIC, [c. 884](#))
- If it is possible, the sponsor should be present for the Confirmation. If the sponsor is unable to attend Confirmation, it is permissible for a proxy to stand in at the ceremony. A parent may serve as a proxy at the ceremony if necessary. A proxy should be so designated in writing and meet the same qualifications as a sponsor.
- When requesting the date for Confirmation, the pastor can contact the archbishop by letter one year in advance, offering a number of possible dates which may fit into the archbishop's calendar. The archbishop will confirm the date and his office will provide a liturgy planning guide.
- For more information, see [Guidelines for Parish Confirmation Coordinators](#), pg. 29-32

5D – Working with Candidates with Special Needs

Parents, those who care for persons with disabilities, and pastors--are to see to it that the faithful who have been baptized are properly instructed to receive the sacrament of confirmation and to approach it at the appropriate time (CIC, [c. 890](#)). The diocesan bishop is obliged to see that the sacrament of confirmation is conferred on his subjects who properly and reasonably request it (CIC, [c. 885 §1](#)).

Persons who because of developmental or mental disabilities may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of confirmation at the appropriate time. Adapted from [Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#) par.16

Preparation

Those to be confirmed are baptized persons who have not been confirmed and are capable of receiving Confirmation (CIC, [c. 889](#)). Any person with a disability who is baptized and participates in a community according to his or her ability is an active member of the Church. Each is confirmed as a member according to his or her ability.

Resource for Preparation for Confirmation

- [Loyola Press Adaptive Confirmation Preparation Kit](#)

Celebration

Refer to Inclusion (page 27) in [Guidelines for Parish Confirmation Coordinators](#)

Section 6 – RCIA - Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

6A – “Who’s Who?” - - how to classify those seeking initiation

Sometimes it is difficult to determine the starting point for people seeking initiation into the Church. It’s best to start out with these questions:

- 1 - Has the person been validly baptized? If so, honor that baptism, no matter where it occurred. (More information about valid and non-valid baptisms can be found in Appendix B)
- 2 – If the person has not been baptized, have they reached the age of reason? For matters concerning the sacraments of initiation, the Church treats those who have reached the age of reason (7 years) as adults.
- 3 – Has the person been previously catechized?
- 4 – Is the person validly married? Or, has the person been married before, anywhere?

Our goal in our initial meetings with individuals or families who are seeking to learn more about the Church is to help them in their journey towards God. Since our faith journey is a personal journey, it is important to help families understand that even though our usual RCIA process takes a year, their individual journey, especially if it includes children seeking initiation or marriage issues, may take longer than one year. Assure families that the Church cares for their family as individuals and that we sincerely wish to accompany them every step of the way.

Note - if the person is Orthodox, they were fully initiated at their baptism.

As examples, let’s take these:

- a. An unbaptized adult or older adolescent
John, an unbaptized young adult, inquires about becoming Catholic. He has had no catechetical formation but is interested in learning more about the Church. John is invited to join into the RCIA process and is brought into the Church at the Easter Vigil through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- b. An unbaptized younger adolescent
Ruth, an unbaptized 10 year old, wishes to join her parents as they inquire about the Church. Ruth joins the RCIA process with her parents and receives catechetical instruction through an adapted program more suited to her age and development. After completing her periods of formation through the RCIA, she, along with her family, are welcomed into the Church through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

- c. A validly baptized non-Catholic adolescent, but who is uncatechized.

12 year old Jacob was validly baptized in the Presbyterian church. His attendance at Sunday school classes in grade school was spotty. He now expresses a desire to become Catholic. Jacob is enrolled into the parish RE program and is welcomed into his peer group RE class. Additionally, Jacob is given additional instructions for the celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. These sacraments are celebrated when Jacob is ready.

- d. A validly baptized adult, in a second marriage

Walter, baptized in the Methodist church, was married for a second time 18 years ago. He now seeks to enter the Catholic Church. During his initial interview, the RCIA team member welcomes Walter into the RCIA program and pastorally explains the Catholic teaching regarding marriage, the Metropolitan Tribunal, and the [process for annulment](#). Walter is put into contact with the parish representatives for the Tribunal so that the paperwork may be started.

- e. A validly baptized and catechized Orthodox person, of catechetical age.

Sophia, aged 15, was fully initiated as a member of the Greek Orthodox Church. She is catechized and attended a local Orthodox Church. She now wishes to become a member of the Catholic Church. After a period of inquiry she begins catechesis for her reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church. Since Sophia is Eastern Orthodox, she will make a simple profession of faith in order to be received into the Catholic Church as she was fully initiated at the time of her Baptism (baptism, chrismation/confirmation and Eucharist).

These are but a few examples of the many possible situations which individuals inquiring about the Church may find themselves. Under the direction of the pastor, the PCL and the catechetical team can tailor a program of initiation for each individual. For more information concerning RCIA, please contact the Office for Evangelization and Family Life.

6B – The Periods of RCIA

Although the Church has outlined steps towards initiation into the Church, the time required for each step can be a bit vague. Much will depend upon the family situation and individual concerns. Because the conversion process is gradual and unique to each individual, it is difficult to predict a schedule. The length of the process depends on the needs of the child and his or her family.

One of the most common reasons for adults that entrance to the Church may be delayed is a marriage issue. Although this may not pertain to an individual child or youth entering Church, it may delay a family entrance. At one of the first gatherings of the precatechumenate, leaders

should make an announcement that anyone who has been previously married, or who may have questions about a previous relationship, should make an appointment to speak to the person in the parish who has been trained in the annulment process. If there is a marriage issue, it is important that the annulment process begin as early as possible and that the individuals involved are given a realistic timeframe.

Precatechumenate (or Inquiry) (RCIA, #36-40)

This period marks the beginning of a long period of initiation. This period has several purposes: to form friendships within the community, to discover how Christ is important in people's lives (through their stories) and to learn the many different forms of prayer of the Church. There is no set timeline for this period. This period leads to the rite of acceptance.

Catechumenate (RCIA, #75-105)

The goal of this period is to deepen faith through breaking open the word using the lectionary, participating in the community life of prayer and service, celebrating rites, witnessing to justice and loving others, even at the cost of self-sacrifice (RCIA, #75). Catechesis in this period usually follows the liturgical year. Their inner transition should be shown by a change in outward behavior. This period flows into the rite of election.

Purification & Enlightenment (RCIA, #138-149)

This period usually coincides with Lent. This is a time for spiritual preparation rather than catechetical instruction. The theme of repentance is expressed through the Lenten scrutinies and the penitential rites. This period leads to Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

Mystagogy (RCIA, #244-251)

The newly baptized continue to meet for a year until the first anniversary of their initiation. During this time they continue to learn about the Church and join in the life of the parish.

6C – The Rites of RCIA

The rites of initiation celebrated by the Church are rich in symbols. They serve to open the heart and imagination in ways that words alone cannot. The rites also serve as a bridge from one period to the next. There is no specific preparation for these rites. The symbols of these rites will speak to those engaged in the rite.

Rite of Acceptance or Welcome (RCIA, #262-276)

This is the first public ritual of their journey. This ritual marks the transition from initial inquiry to active involvement in preparation for the sacraments of initiation. This ritual is a rite of acceptance for the unbaptized and of welcome for the baptized. This rite includes the signing with the cross on the forehead or the signing of all of the senses.

Often, parishes give the children a Bible or a book containing the gospels, symbolizing their next step of study to enter the Church.

Rite of Election (RCIA, #277-280)

This rite marks the end of the catechumenate and the beginning of purification and enlightenment. We celebrate this rite at the beginning of Lent with the Archbishop at three locations around the Archdiocese. The Book of the Elect, containing the names of the catechumens the parish, is presented to the Archbishop for his signature. The Archbishop greets the catechumens and candidates from each parish individually. When all those in the area preparing for the sacraments of initiation gather together, those preparing for initiation get a sense of the larger Church which they may not have had before.

Scrutinies (RCIA, #291-303)

The scrutinies are opportunities to look at one's life more closely. The adaptation of the Rite for children calls for at least one scrutiny, though they may have all three, as celebrated with adults. The scrutinies help us to recognize the presence of sin and its effect on our lives, but also assure us that Christ is more powerful than any evil. The First Scrutiny takes place on the Third Sunday of Lent, the Second takes place on the Fourth and the Third Scrutiny takes place on the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Easter Vigil (RCIA, #206-243, 304-329)

Because of the close connection between Jesus' death and resurrection, and the initiation of children who are joined sacramentally to him, the Easter Vigil is the primary time to celebrate baptism-confirmation-eucharist (RCIA, #308). Baptized children and youth may also celebrate confirmation and eucharist with the elect. For guidelines relating to this celebration, see RCIA #566-594).

6D - Pastoral considerations for RCIA Adapted for Children

- I. Entering into the "unknown" can be exciting and yet a bit frightening for many people. When families approach church leaders to inquire about joining the church, we need to be welcoming and demonstrably happy. As we speak with the family, we need to express the joy of the shepherd welcoming them into the flock. As we explain the process for initiation, we need to make sure that our words and actions do not paint our programs as hoops for people to jump through, but instead we should give realistic expectations for the process. In our initial interview with the family, we should:
 - a. Explain the process – the steps and the rites involved. It is important that the family understands that there is no definite timeline. The process will take one or two years, maybe more.
 - b. Assure that entire family will be enriched by the process
 - c. Arrange for parents to talk with someone who has been through the process

- II. It is important to allow the children and youth in the RCIA adapted for children to have the opportunity to form a community with both their RCIA class and with their peer group within the parish. The ties with the peer group can be strengthened in a number of ways. Depending upon the age of the child, the child may be encouraged to become active with the parish youth group so that they can become familiar with the other youth of their age group. Children and youth in RCIA can also attend both RE classes with their age group and also attend the RCIA formation program.
- III. Mass attendance is an important part of the initiation process. Attending Mass helps the family become familiar with the larger parish family and to become familiar with the Catholic way of life.
- IV. If the child or youth has already been baptized in another faith tradition, it is important to determine if he or she was baptized with water and baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If the individual has been baptized validly, the baptism cannot be repeated. If questions arise concerning the baptism, the child can be baptized conditionally.
 - a. Please note that the term “Christening” means different things to different people. In many Protestant congregations that do not baptize infants they use the term to mean giving the child a Christian name, not baptizing. Care should be taken to verify whether a baptism occurred.

6E – Resources for RCIA Adapted for Children

The Office for Evangelization and Family Life library has numerous publications concerning the RCIA

adapted for children. Please check the online “Library World” searchable database for descriptions of the publications.

There are a number of excellent video resources which have been recently published which can be used as supplemental materials for RCIA Adapted for Children.

Resources you may want to consider:

[High School Lesson Plans](#) – developed by the Office for Evangelization and Family Life

Augustine Institute’s [Symbolon program](#)

Fr. Robert Barron’s [Catholicism](#)

When choosing supplemental materials, consider the age and maturity of the individual.

Appendix A

Quick Check-List for Parent Meetings

Planning a meeting with adults? Here's a check-list of needed items!

- _____ Is there outside signage such that people will know where to go?
- _____ Have you reminded parents of the meeting day, place and time in a number of different ways?
- _____ Is the meeting space comfortable? Chairs and tables? Temperature? Adequate lighting? Locations of restrooms clearly marked or announced at beginning of meeting?
- _____ Does it look as if you are looking forward to their arrival? Coffee brewed? Light refreshments? Candy or nuts on the meeting tables? Prayer cards, booklets or some other spiritual gift at each seat?
- _____ Have you checked and double-checked the A/V equipment? Can the speaker and media equipment be heard in all areas of the meeting space? Are other options available in the event of a power or equipment failure?
- _____ Will distractions be kept at a minimum?
- _____ Do you plan to greet each individual as they arrive, or have someone available to greet them?
- _____ Have you planned opening and closing prayers?
- _____ Are handouts, including listings of resources, ready for distribution?
- _____ Are extra pens/pencils available for those who forgot to bring one?
- _____ Does your meeting include time for parents to get to know each other?
- _____ Does your meeting include time for parents to share information/experiences with each other?
- _____ If applicable, do the parents know what steps(s) they should take after the meeting?
- _____ Are evaluation forms available at the end of the meeting?

After the meeting:

- Consider:

- Did you begin the meeting promptly and end it on or before at the time advertised?
- Are there any parents who need a follow up call or meeting?
- What notes need to be shared with the pastor?

- As soon as possible after the meeting, write up your minutes from the meeting and file them for future reference. Read through the evaluations and note modifications which need to be made for future meetings.

- Distribute the minutes of the meeting to the pastor, to parish staff members who work with the group which met, and to those who were unable to attend.

Valid and Non-valid Baptisms

BAPTISM IN PROTESTANT RELIGIONS

Most Protestant baptisms are recognized as valid baptisms. Some are not. Water must be poured and the Trinitarian formula naming Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must be used.

(Many Protestant religions have a dedication ceremony or other ceremony with infants, which is not a baptism. If the church has the dedication ceremony, baptism is generally not conferred until the age of reason or until the approximate age of 13).

BAPTISM IN THE EASTERN CHURCHES

Baptisms in any of the Eastern Churches, Catholic or Orthodox, are valid Baptisms. It is the tradition of those churches to chrismate (confirm) at Baptism; therefore, neither Baptism nor Confirmation is to be repeated since they are recognized as valid.

Typically these churches have valid baptism, however it is a good practice to ask if the baptism was conferred with water and in the Trinitarian formula:

- All Eastern non-Catholics (Orthodox)
- Adventists
- African Methodist Episcopal
- Amish
- Anglican
- Assembly of God
- Baptists
- Christian and Missionary Alliance (may be valid)
- Church of the Brethren
- Church of God
- Congregational Church
- Disciples of Christ
- Episcopalians
- Evangelical United Brethren
- Evangelical Churches
- Liberal Catholic Church
- Lutherans
- Methodists
- Church of the Nazarene
- Old Catholics
- Old Roman Catholics
- Polish National Church
- Presbyterian Church
- Reformed Churches
- United Church of Christ

** Please note that the term "Christening" means different things to different people. In many Protestant congregations that do not baptize infants they use the term to mean giving the child a Christian name, not baptizing. Care should be taken to verify whether a baptism occurred.

The following are some non-Catholic Churches which typically do not have valid baptisms:

- Apostolic Church
- Bohemian Free Thinkers
- Christadelphians
- Christian Scientists
- Church of Divine Science
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Masons (no baptism at all)
- Mormons (Latter Day Saints Church)
- Church of the New Jerusalem
- Pentecostal churches
- Peoples Church of Chicago
- Quakers
- Salvation Army
- Unitarians
- Universalists

Appendix C

SAMPLE BAPTISM SPONSOR FORM

As a Baptism sponsor, your role is to encourage the faith of and be an “example” to your Godchild. As your Godchild grows, it is your responsibility to work with the parents to help form your Godchild’s faith. The Code of Canon Law (Church Law) specifies the requirements for serving as godparents at Baptism (CIC, c. 874): You may not be the parent of the person being baptized; you must be at least 16 years old; you must be fully initiated (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist); if married, be in valid Catholic marriage; and live a life of active faith in the Catholic Church.

I understand the requirements of being a Baptism sponsor and I state that I received the **Sacrament of Baptism**

at _____ Church in _____ (City and State)

I received the **Sacrament of Confirmation**

at _____ Catholic Church in _____ (City and State)

(And if married) celebrated the **Sacrament of Marriage**

at _____ in _____ (City and State)

My Godchild’s name is: _____

Name of parish and city where the **Sacrament of Baptism** is to take place:

Parish _____ City _____

I am active in the Catholic Church, fully initiated into the Catholic Church, regularly attend Mass on Sunday and strive to live my faith.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please print your name _____

(If sponsor belongs to the parish where the baptism is to be held, this form also needs to be signed and sealed by sponsor’s pastor.)

Baptismal Sponsor’s pastor signature _____

Appendix D

SAMPLE CONFIRMATION SPONSOR FORM

As a Confirmation sponsor, your role is to encourage the faith of and be an “example” to your Confirmation candidate. Throughout and beyond the journey for Confirmation, it is your responsibility to reflect with him or her about Catholic Christian discipleship.

The Code of Canon Law (Church Law) specifies the requirements for serving as a sponsor at Confirmation (CIC, c. 893) are the same as those for godparents at Baptism (CIC, c. 874): You may not be the parent of the person being confirmed; you must be at least 16 years old; you must be fully initiated (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist); if married, be in valid Catholic marriage; and live a life of active faith in the Catholic Church.

I understand the requirements of being a Confirmation sponsor and I state that I received the **Sacrament of Baptism**

at _____ Church in
_____ (City and State)

I received the **Sacrament of Confirmation**

at _____ Catholic Church in
_____ (City and State)

(And if married) celebrated the **Sacrament of Marriage**

at _____ in
_____ (City and State)

My candidate’s name is: _____

Name of parish and city where the **Sacrament of Confirmation** is to take place:

I am active in the Catholic Church, fully initiated into the Catholic Church, regularly attend Mass on Sunday and strive to live my faith.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please print your name _____

(If sponsor belongs to the parish where the baptism is to be held, this form also needs to be signed and sealed by sponsor’s pastor.)

Confirmation Sponsor’s pastor signature _____

Appendix E

A Glossary of Terms Related to Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age

Anointing: The ritual application of sacred oil.

Blessing: Ritual prayers signifying God's love and the care of the Church for catechumens.

Book of the Elect: The book in which the elect sign their names. This book is signed by the Archbishop at the Rite of Election. These elect are fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.

Candidate: A baptized adult (for purposes of Christian initiation, anyone 7 years old or older) preparing for full communion with the Catholic Church; used in a broader sense, the term sometimes refers to anyone preparing to receive a sacrament.

Catechetical age: The age at which children have the use of reason; generally, 7 years and older.

Catechumen: An adult (for purposes of Christian initiation, anyone 7 years old or older) who is unbaptized and has been accepted in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

Catechumenate: Generally, the process by which the Catholic Church initiates unbaptized adults and unbaptized children of catechetical age into full membership; specifically, the period of time that begins with the Rite of Welcoming and concludes with the Rite of Election. The length of this period is governed by the needs of the catechumen. (See RCIA, 36 – 40.)

Chrism: A sacred oil mixed with fragrance and consecrated by the bishop; used for anointing in the ritual of Confirmation. The same Chrism is used to anoint priests and bishops at ordination, infants at baptism, churches and altars during their dedication.

Dismissal: The sending forth of catechumens (and where appropriate, candidates) for guided reflection upon God's Word in the Lectionary. Normally this takes place during the Sunday Masses from the beginning of the Catechumenate period to the Easter Vigil.

Elect: Catechumens who have been chosen in the Rite of Election to complete their initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Exorcisms: Prayers for catechumens/elect seeking the power and protection of God in the struggle against evil and falsehood. The "minor exorcisms" found in the Period of Catechumenate may be presided over by a priest, deacon, or duly appointed catechist. The exorcisms which are part of the Scrutinies must be presided over by a priest or deacon.

Godparent: A fully initiated member of the Church (baptized, confirmed, received eucharist), living a Catholic way of life, who accompanies the candidate "on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. . . ." (RCIA 11).

The godparent is chosen by the candidate (or in the case of children of catechetical age, their parents or guardians) on the basis of good example, spiritual maturity, and friendship. Normally, a godparent must be at least 16 years old.

Initiation: The entire process through which a person enters full communion with the Church.

Inquirer: Any adult, baptized or unbaptized, seeking to discover more about the faith and life of the Catholic Church prior to making a decision to join.

Inquiry: see Precatechumenate.

Mystagogy: The period after Easter when the neophytes and the entire community reflect upon the meaning and experience of the Easter sacraments.

Neophyte: A newly initiated Christian. This term is used during the period of post-baptismal catechesis (also known as mystagogy).

Precatechumenate: The time before formal acceptance into the order of Catechumens when inquirers hear the Gospel, share stories of faith, and foster initial conversion.

Presentations: Rites celebrated during the period of Purification and Enlightenment in which the church formally hands over to the elect the tradition of faith (in the Creed) and prayer (in the Lord's Prayer).

Purification and Enlightenment: Final preparation of the Elect, to help them and also the entire community prepare spiritually for the Easter sacraments.

Rite of Acceptance: The rite by which unbaptized inquirers become catechumens. (For baptized candidates, see Rite of Welcome)

Rite of Election: The rite celebrated at the beginning of Lent in which catechumens are chosen by the Church for baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. This rite marks the end of the Period of Catechumenate and the beginning of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

Rite of Sending: An optional rite at the end of the Period of Catechumenate during which catechumens are sent forth by the parish community to the Rite of Election. The ritual text also provides adaptations for sending of candidates as well.

Rite of Welcome: The rite by which baptized candidates are formally included in the life of the community in preparation for full communion through confirmation and eucharist.

Ritual text: In general, the book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (abbreviated RCIA); in particular, those sections of the RCIA which pertain to the different stages and celebrations of the initiation process.

Scrutinies: Rites celebrated with the elect (usually on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent) in which the Church prays for the spirit of repentance, for strength in the struggle against evil and for freedom in the pursuit of holiness. The presider for the scrutinies must be a priest or deacon.

Sponsor, parish: A member of the parish community who, through example and presence, accompanies persons seeking full initiation on the journey of conversion and helps the parish to know and welcome them more fully.

Sponsor, sacramental: A fully initiated Catholic who accepts responsibility for supporting the person seeking full communion, through prayer, example, and witness. The sacramental sponsor may or may not be a member of the parish. Normally, a sacramental sponsor must be at least 16 years old.

Triduum: The single celebration of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil.

Uncatechized: Having little or no formation, systematic or informal, in the practice and teachings of the Catholic faith; lacking familiarity with the spiritual, doctrinal, moral and sacramental basics of Catholic life.

Appendix F

Notations Used in This Document

CCC – [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

CDW – Congregation for Divine Worship

CIC – [Code of Canon Law](#) (*Codex Iuris Canonici*)

[Directory for Masses with Children](#)

GDC – [General Directory for Catechesis](#)

GIRM – [General Instruction of the Roman Missa](#)

[Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities](#)

LG – [Lumen Gentium](#) Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

NDC – National Directory for Catechesis

[Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities](#)

RCIA – Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

[Sacramental Catechesis](#) - An Online Resource for Dioceses and Eparchies, from USCCB

USCCA – [United States Catholic Catechism for Adults](#)