

Transformation In God's Love



Policies for the Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacrament of Reconciliation

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**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCL	Code of Canon Law
CSL	Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
GIRM	General Instruction on the Roman Missal
IOIB	Instruction on Infant Baptism
NCD	National Catechetical Directory
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis
O	Origins
PO	Presbyterorum Ordinis
RC	Rite of Confirmation
RBC	Rite of Baptism for Children
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
SIDV	The Sacraments of Initiation in the Documents of Vatican II

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Sacraments is to sanctify, to build up the body of Christ, and finally to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it. (CSL #59)

Sacraments are outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace. Through the Sacraments the faithful encounter the presence and power of God and receive God's saving grace.

The Sacraments of Initiation are foundational for the Christian life. Through these Sacraments, a person is brought into an ongoing, living relationship with God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The font and summit of Christian life is the Eucharist, for it is from the Paschal Mystery that we draw life and our lives lead us back toward the Heavenly Banquet. Through Baptism, a person enters into new life through the Paschal Mystery of Christ and comes to call God "Father" through water and the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens the person in the living of their Baptismal faith. For us as Catholics, we bear witness to our faith in full, conscious, and active participation in the Eucharist. We live in the world as living members of the body of Christ; that is to say, we live in communion with His Church, the People of God. Our participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is an expression of our communion, and our reception of Holy Communion is an expression of the *communion* of the family of God.

The Sacraments of Initiation are not "things" we receive. They are rather a living encounter between God and man. Baptism affects us every moment of our lives. It is the new life in Christ which plants within us the Call to Holiness. In Confirmation, we are strengthened in our capacity to love God and neighbor in a more Christ-like manner. The celebration of the Mass is about our response to God's call to holiness by choosing to participate as a living member of the Body of Christ. Giving praise and worship to God is our participation in the Liturgy which is the great work of Christ done on our behalf (CCC 1069). Receiving Holy Communion is the richest expression of this offering of ourselves through the entire Eucharistic celebration.

PRINCIPLES IN CATECHIZING FOR AND CELEBRATION OF SACRAMENTS

There are 6 significant principles presumed in catechizing for and celebration of the Sacraments:

1. The person's faith-relationship with Christ in the Church and on-going conversion of heart
2. The implementation of a parish process that helps determine the person's readiness for reception
3. The involvement of the family of the candidate in the preparation process and in the celebration
4. The participation of the parish community in the preparation and in the celebration
5. The person's desire to receive the Sacrament shown by the individual and/or the individual's family
6. Pastoral sensitivity to the circumstance of each individual

THE SACRAMENTS

The Church cannot institute new Sacraments. There never can be more or less than seven, the seven Jesus has given us: **Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation (Confession or Penance), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.**

First and most importantly, Sacraments confer **sanctifying grace**. This supernatural grace is the sharing-in-God's-own-life as a result of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the soul.

- to the soul cut off from God by original sin, **Baptism** brings sanctifying grace for the first time. **Baptism** opens the soul to the flow of God's love, and establishes union between the soul and God.
- to the soul cut off from God by its own sin, by mortal sin, the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** restores the sanctifying grace that has been lost. **Reconciliation** removes the barrier that has kept the Holy Spirit outside and once again gives entrance to God's life-giving love.

The other five Sacraments—**Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony**—give an **increase** in sanctifying grace. They deepen and intensify the spiritual life of sanctifying grace which already pulsates through the soul. As each additional Sacrament is received (and repeated, when permissible) the level of spiritual vitality rises in the soul—somewhat as the brightness of a fire increases as more fuel is added.

(God's love does not increase—it is infinite to begin with. But the soul's capacity to **absorb** His love increases as a child's capacity for life increases with each meal that he eats.)

Other Kinds of Grace

God gives us spiritual life with sanctifying grace, and then does all that He can (short of taking away our free will)...

- to make that life operative within us
- to expand that life and intensify it
- to preserve and protect it

In addition to the sanctifying grace which is common to all the Sacraments, each Sacrament also gives the **Sacramental grace**, also known as **actual grace** that is particular to each. There are other special helps which God wills to give us, helps that are keyed to our particular spiritual needs and our particular state in life.

In **Baptism** we receive sanctifying grace and also a continuing chain of graces enabling us to preserve and extend that grace by the practice of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

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Confirmation increases our basic vitality (sanctifying grace) but also establishes a permanent fund of actual graces (Sacramental grace) upon which we may draw in order to be strong, active and productive exemplars of Christian living.

The **Anointing of the Sick** strengthens us in sickness or prepares us to meet death with confidence. Its Sacramental grace comforts us in our sufferings and, by supporting us in any final temptations that may assail us, enables us to face eternity unafraid.

Receiving **Holy Eucharist** confers a Sacramental grace which enables us to grow in supernatural charity (love for God and neighbor).

The **Sacrament of Reconciliation** provides the Sacramental grace to cure us of the spiritual illness of sin and to help us resist temptation.

There are also the two great states in life which impose upon us grave responsibility for the souls of others: the priesthood and marriage. The two Sacraments of **Holy Orders** and **Matrimony** give to their respective recipients the grace to enable priests and spouses to discharge, creditably before God, the sometimes heavy burdens of their state in life.

Proper dispositions

A Sacrament gives grace of and by itself, by its own power. This is because Jesus attached grace to the outward sign, so to speak, so that the outward sign and internal grace received always go together.

However, our own **attitude** towards the reception of the Sacrament also matters. Our interior disposition has an effect on the amount of grace we receive. The more perfect is our sorrow in the Sacrament of **Reconciliation**, the more ardent our love in receiving the Holy **Eucharist**, the more lively our faith in receiving **Confirmation**—then the greater will be the grace we receive.

Our disposition does not **cause** the grace; it simply removes the obstacles to the free flow of grace. Once we say “yes” to receiving Sacramental grace, it is the very grace received that enables us to say yes to additional opportunities for grace (good works, for instance). We might illustrate this by saying that the more sand we empty out of the pail, the more water the pail will hold.

We can, of course, by a positive act of the will prevent the grace of the Sacrament from entering our soul: for example, by positively not wanting to receive it or by not being truly repentant for mortal sin. But, unless we interpose an outright barrier, when we receive a Sacrament we receive the grace that the Sacrament confers.

The disposition of the one who administers the Sacrament does **not** influence the effect of a Sacrament. It would be very wrong for a priest to administer a Sacrament if he were guilty of a mortal sin, but it wouldn't diminish the grace the Sacrament gave one bit. All that is required of the one who administers a Sacrament is that:

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- he have the authority to confer it (the authority of the priesthood or the diaconate in cases of **Baptism** and **Matrimony**)
- he have the intention of administering the Sacrament (the intention of the Catholic Church)
- he performs the essential ceremonies of the Sacrament (such as the pouring of the water and the saying of the words in **Baptism**).

If you assume a receiver who does not put any obstacles to grace and a giver who is qualified to administer the Sacrament—then always and infallibly a Sacrament will confer grace.

Special "marks" on the soul

Besides the bestowal of grace (sanctifying and Sacramental) we should mention another effect specific to three of the Sacraments.

This is the **character** imprinted on the soul by the Sacraments of **Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders**. We sometimes say that in these Sacraments God puts a "mark" on the soul. The individual mark imparted by **Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders** is defined by theologians as a "quality" which imparts to the soul powers which it did not previously possess.

It is a permanent quality of the soul, an alteration in the soul which forever will be visible to God, the angels, and the saints. The effects of this character are as follows:

- the character of **Baptism** is a supernatural quality which gives us the power to absorb the grace of the other six Sacraments and to participate in the Mass.
- the character of **Confirmation** gives us the power to profess the faith fearlessly and to spread the faith.
- the character of **Holy Orders** gives the priest the power to celebrate Mass and to administer the other Sacraments.

The extraordinary through the ordinary

God in His wisdom chose to bestow His grace in a visible way to give us the quieting certainty that we had received grace when He did give it. Christ has given us so many tremendous gifts. In His Sacraments, He continues to provide those gifts to us, beyond all measure, whenever we need them.

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SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

The Diocese of Venice in Florida models its Sacramental processes and celebrations on the paradigm offered in *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

The structure indicated in the "Introduction to the Rite" is that of a process which involves the entire Church community. It calls upon the community of the faithful to journey step by step with those preparing for initiation, to be welcoming and to give witness as together the whole community grows in faith and relationship with Christ and with one another.

The RCIA process offers the local Church the opportunity of an experience of living the faith while learning about the faith. Religious experience, community, and catechesis form the basis for approaching celebration. Thus, the time of preparation for and celebration of Sacraments becomes a time of renewal for the entire parish community. The RCIA should be ongoing. Full initiation occurs in stages.

**REMOTE AND PROXIMATE PHASES
OF SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Remote Preparation

By remote preparation is meant that the candidate has acquired a basic understanding of the meaning of the Sacraments as well as of the signs and symbols used in the rites. Remote preparation includes, but is not limited to, at least one year of intentional focus on the Catholic faith. Formats include participation in parish life along with participation in a Catholic school, parish religious education, or home school program.

Proximate Preparation

Proximate catechesis for Sacraments refers to the time immediately preceding the first reception of the Sacrament when an intensive catechesis takes place for those persons whose faith development and readiness level indicate their desire to receive the Sacrament. **The proximate preparation program takes place in addition to school and parish regularly scheduled classes in religion.** Sacramental catechesis "is an essentially ecclesial act" (GDC #78) and therefore "not an action which can be realized in the community on a private basis or by purely personal initiative" (GDC #219b). **Proximate Sacramental catechesis, therefore, is to take place in a parish-based context, not in the Catholic school or a home-school setting.**

The celebration of first Sacraments takes place in the parish in which the family is registered and regularly participates. The family and parish community are to be involved in both the remote and proximate phases of Sacramental preparation. While a child may attend school in another parish, it is vitally important that the child celebrate the sacrament in their home parish. Sacraments are not the function of a "class," but of the parish community.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Baptism is a Sacrament by which men and women are incorporated into the Church, built up together in the Spirit into a house where God lives... (RCIA #4)

Christian instruction, including the preparation for **Baptism**, is a vital concern of God's people, the Church, which hands on and nourishes the faith it has received from Christ through the apostles. **Baptism** is the first step taken towards providing the person with a spirituality for living a Christian life; it initiates the process of conversion and discipleship; it incorporates one into the mystery of Christ, and into the Church community.

Baptism in water and Spirit brings about new birth. **Baptism** celebrates by means of rites and symbols this gift of new life making us God's people by adoption. The Sacrament seals the person with the Spirit and initiates that person into a community whose very existence is a positive force in a world marred by sin and suffering. **Baptism** remits sin, purifies and cleanses.

Baptism:

...is a manifestation of the Father's prevenient love, a sharing in the Paschal Mystery, and a communication of new life in the Spirit: it brings people into the inheritance of God and joins them to the Body of Christ, the Church. (IOIB #9)

Beyond this, **Baptism** calls for conversion and points to a newness in lifestyle. The newly baptized accepts the invitation to follow the Risen Christ molding his or her values to the principles and values of the Gospel. **Baptism** initiates this process of conversion and discipleship experienced in the community into which one has been incorporated, and ultimately, **Baptism** initiates the person into the Paschal Mystery of Christ, namely, a sharing in His dying and rising.

As a result of **Baptism** one becomes a member of the Church community whose mission is to join with the Risen Christ to bring about the reign of God. The newly baptized person is commissioned to teach, to heal, and to reconcile. With the parish community, the new Christian shares a process of instructions and experiences that proceeds through stages of being drawn ever more closely into the mission of the Church.

The catechesis for and celebration of **Baptism** is properly the responsibility of the parish community. Catechesis for **Baptism** is directed primarily to adults: adult candidates for **Baptism** and the parents and godparents of children who are to be baptized. (cf. NCD #117). In difficult cases, certain Sacramental decisions are at the discretion of the pastor, who is strongly encouraged to read and understand the Rite for **Baptism** and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults before making such decisions.

BAPTISM OF INFANTS

From the earliest times, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the Gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized children as well as adults. Our Lord said: "Unless one is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God." The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of **Baptism**, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church. (RBC #2)

Catechetical and liturgical preparation for **Baptism** is the responsibility of the parish. The tradition of infant Baptism is based on the faith of the Christian parents, and catechesis is directed primarily to adults, both the parents and the godparents who are responsible by word and example to form the children in faith. These adults also continuously nurture the process of conversion in the child. (cf. RCIA #308b, CCL #868) The **Baptismal** rite for infants is according to the 1969 "Rite of **Baptism** for Children."

While the faith of the adult person requesting **Baptism** for the infant is important, it is not as crucial as the faith of the Church. If the sponsor or close relative gives assurance of nourishing the faith of the child, the **Baptism** should take place, for "**Baptism** is not just a sign of faith but also a cause of faith." (cf. IOIB #18, 28)

However, where the parent(s) is a non-practicing Catholic, serious consideration should be given to instructing the parent on the responsibilities of faith-sharing and pending some sign of parental commitment, the **Baptism** might be postponed until a later time or when the child has reached a catechetical age. (cf. IOIB #30)

The catechesis for **Baptism** is directed primarily toward parents and godparents in seminars prior to the birth of the child or prior to the **Baptism**. Those involved in this ministry will remind parents of their responsibilities in awakening their children's faith and educating to these responsibilities.

It is in fact for parents to begin the religious initiation of the child, to teach it to love Christ as a close friend and to form its conscience. This task will be more fruitful and easy if it builds on the grace of Baptism present in the child's heart. (IOIB #32)

The meaning of **Baptism** is also reflected in the way the parish prepares for and celebrates the Sacrament. The entire parish community is involved in the pastoral practice regarding **Baptism**. The parish should regularly provide formation sessions (usually 2-4 sessions) for parents who wish to present a child for **Baptism**. Godparents should be encouraged to participate in these sessions. The parish also continues catechesis for the entire parish through homilies, bulletin board usage, inclusion of notices in the parish bulletin and other creative means.

It is the local Church which hands on and nourishes the faith both by the witness of their lives and by their participation in various catechetical activities. In addition, the community itself

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continues to deepen its faith as it in turn is nourished by participation in the preparation process and in the liturgical rites.

It is important to stress with the parents that they are the primary catechists of their children and that the foundational elements of the faith including but not limited to: regular attendance at Sunday Mass, prayers, the Sign of the Cross, and Bible stories.

A periodic, but not weekly, Sunday Mass is the recommended time and place of celebration of **Baptism** so that the entire parish community may participate. If **Baptism** is rotated at the Sunday Masses, it offers exposure to many more parishioners. However, pastoral practice may necessitate that **Baptism** be celebrated at another time. When this occurs, it would be in keeping with the sense of Church that members of the parish community should represent the parish at the **Baptism**.

After **Baptism**, it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, to enable the child to know God. Godparents also have the responsibility to ensure their godchild takes part in the faith life of the parish and receives instruction for **Eucharist** and **Confirmation**. When possible, one of the **Baptismal** godparents is encouraged to be the **Confirmation** sponsor. In this duty they are to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means. (RBC #5)

These directives from the ritual are formulated to insure that our **Baptismal** celebrations express well and beautifully the theology of our Church regarding the importance and meaning of **Baptism**.

**SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS DESIRING THE BAPTISM
OF AN INFANT**

Congratulations on the birth of your child!

The Priests and people of (parish name) look forward to welcoming your child into the Church and into our parish family. We wish to do everything we can to provide a beautiful and meaningful **Baptism** Ceremony for you and your child.

In arranging a **Baptism** at (parish name), the first step for parents is to contact one of the parish priests. The Introduction of *The Rite of **Baptism** for Children* in the Roman Catholic Church (hereafter referred to as Rite) speaks of the need for parents and priest to come together before **Baptism**:



Before the celebration of the Sacrament, it is of great importance that parents moved by their own faith should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding.

Sunday is the preferred day for all **Baptisms**. The Rite states, "To bring out the paschal character of **Baptism** it is recommended that the Sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday, when the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection."

Moreover, the Rite states, "As far as possible, all recently born babies should be baptized at a common celebration on the same day." The reason for a group celebration of **Baptism** is to show that while by birth a child enters in to an individual family, by **Baptism** the child is born anew into a larger family, the Church, which is the family of God. "In this way it is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family but is the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ."

For this reason we provide a solemn celebration of the Sacrament involving several families on the last Sunday of the month at the 12:00 Mass and we encourage all families in the parish to plan **Baptisms** at this time.

The Rite further directs, "except for a good reason, **Baptism** should not be celebrated more than once on the same day in the same Church." Accordingly, while we would discourage individual (private) **Baptisms** for the reasons indicated above, we would continue to schedule such when families have a good reason for such a request; but in keeping with the directives above, we would not schedule more than one on any particular day.

Our entire parish looks forward to welcoming your little one into our faith community. May God bless your child and you as you prepare for their becoming our newest little Christian.

A Word about Godparents

What does the Church say about **Baptismal** sponsors (Godparents)? We can look at the New Code of Church Law which became effective on November 27, 1983.

Canon 872 states: "in the case of an infant **Baptism**, the sponsor's role is, together with the parents, to present the child for **Baptism**, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in **Baptism**."

Canon 873 states: "One sponsor, male or female, is sufficient, but there may be two, one of each sex."

Canon 874 states: "to be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:

- be appointed by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing this, by the pastor; to be appointed, the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it.
- be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan Bishop, or unless the pastor considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made.
- be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed **Eucharist** and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.
- not be excommunicated.
- not be either the father or mother of the person to be baptized.

A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the **Baptism**."

Canon 851 states: "The parents of a child who is to be baptized, and those who are to undertake the office of sponsors, are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this Sacrament and the obligations attached to it."

From all the above we can see that choosing a godparent involves a serious, prayerful decision.

Please be sure that your child's godparents fulfill the requirements specified above.

After you have carefully made the selection, ask the godparents to get a testimonial letter from the priest in their own parish. Bring the letters with you to the meeting with the priest.

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BAPTISM OF ADULTS

The restored catechumenate is the ordinary process to be followed with adults seeking **Baptism** and initiation into the Church. The process includes a journey of faith-sharing and liturgical rites celebrated over a period of time and progressing through an inquiry period, the catechumenate, a period of enlightenment and of mystagogia. In the ordinary process of adult initiation, the new Christian is baptized, confirmed and receives **Eucharist** at the same liturgy. The time for celebrating these **Sacraments of Initiation** is at the Easter Vigil. Only for *exceptional pastoral reasons* may they be postponed to another more suitable time. Please note, however, **that these Sacraments may not be separated from each other regardless of the time set for the initiation of the catechumen.** This process always involves the parish community.

BAPTISM OF CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

*The catechumenate for children can only be understood
in the context of the catechumenate for adults. (GDC 88 - 89)*

From the Instruction of the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults:

The Catechumenate for Children is the form of the Rite of Christian Initiation intended for children not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age (see note below). They seek Christian initiation either at the direction of their parents or guardians or, with parental permission, on their own initiative. Such children are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith and of recognizing an obligation in conscience. But they cannot yet be treated as adults because, at this stage of their lives, they are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings (no. 252).

Since children are dependent on their parents, the role of the parent or guardian is primary in the catechetical process. Parents' permission for and participation in the catechesis and in the rites are essential to the formation process. (cf. RCIA #308b)

N.B. Children of catechetical age, according to Canon Law, are between seven and fourteen years old. Although pastoral judgment may be exercised in individual circumstances, these are the general parameters. If a child is mature enough to participate in a preparation program for First Communion, the child is considered to be “of catechetical age.”

The name “Rite of Christian Initiation of Children” should not be used for children of catechetical age. This is the name reserved for the rite used for infants (children who have not yet reached catechetical age).

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From the National Statutes for the Catechumenate:

Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian Initiation, to be adults (**Canon 852.1**), their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary Catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted in the ritual. They should receive the Sacraments of **Baptism**, **Confirmation**, and **Eucharist** at the Easter vigil, together with the older catechumens (no. 18).

Their condition and status as catechumens should not be compromised or confused, nor should they receive the Sacraments of Initiation in any other sequence than that determined in the ritual of Christian Initiation (no. 19).

The process for the initiation of adults into the Church is also the norm for children of catechetical age. The catechesis is patterned after that of adults, but the process is adapted to the circumstances and developmental level of children. In the RCIA, **Confirmation** and **Eucharist** immediately follow **Baptism** in the same ceremony, and this is true in the case of children of catechetical age who are entering the Church. In other words **Confirmation** and communion are not postponed for the catechized child who is baptized, but are celebrated immediately after **Baptism** in the same ceremony. **There are no exceptions to this order of initiation for unbaptized children of catechetical age.**

Therefore:

- Children of catechetical age are those who are seven years of age and older. It is imperative that any child who comes forward to receive the Sacraments have the support of parent or guardian in this journey of faith.
- All children of catechetical age who are unbaptized should be placed in a Catechumenate for children of catechetical age which would include interaction and instruction with other children of the parish community so that they be formed and supported in a community of faith. The celebration of the various rites should take place according to the norms for these rites.
- Children who are baptized in another faith tradition and come forward with parents who are entering the Catechumenate may, at the discretion of the Pastor, parents and catechetical team, be admitted to the Catechumenate with their parents and/or enter the religious education program of their parish.
- Children who have been baptized Catholic and are uncatechized should be placed in the regular religious education program of the parish. These children should receive the Sacrament of the **Eucharist** when they have demonstrated sufficient understanding of Sacrament. They then receive **Confirmation** with their peers.
- At age fourteen, for the purposes of Church law, one becomes an adult. This means that the norms of the adult rite are to be followed for teenagers, even if there is a separate teen catechumenate group.

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The parish staff including priests, DRE, principal, deacons, and catechists develop and offer a catechetical program following the guidelines intended for children of catechetical age. (cf. RCIA Chapter 5) The catechist is an active and fully initiated Catholic who is skilled in the catechumenate process, one who will journey with the catechumen sensitively and prayerfully. The catechist is invited to participate in all the rites of initiation with the candidates and their families.

Both the RCIA and the Code of Canon Law clearly state that the entire parish community supports and assists in the preparation of the catechumens. The more parishioners are involved, the more effective the process. This involvement includes participation in the rites, prayer, example, and the provision of adequate preparation and support for catechists. The faith and enthusiasm of the parish community speaks clearly to the young catechumens of the meaning of faith.

The process itself is open to children enrolled in one of the parish religious education programs, and covers a suitable period of time to journey reflectively in the faith. The content of the process includes: an understanding of initiation as a means of becoming full members of God's family and incorporation into Christ as priest, prophet, and king; the **Baptismal** commitment to Jesus as model for living; experiences of prayer; catechesis on Church, redemption, Sacraments, sin, forgiveness, sharing, and new life. It also includes other points of Catholic doctrine as presented in the Creed.

Along with the content is the opportunity for the older children who are to be baptized to make "an increasingly personal response to God's words and gifts" and for the catechist to "take note of children's experience." (cf. NCD #178) Throughout the process of initiation, children should begin to experience something of what community is by praying with other children and sharing ideas and experiences in a faith-filled setting.

After the celebration of the Sacraments at the Easter Vigil, catechesis continues. The children grow in faith by experiencing the community as welcoming and encouraging, and by continuing instruction.

NORMS

BAPTISM OF ADULTS

- RCIA is the norm for catechesis in regard to adults.
- The initiation of catechumens takes place in the midst of the community at the Easter Vigil Mass.
- The four periods of the catechumenate are to be experienced.
- The Rites are to be properly celebrated at Mass.
- The parish community and its team take an active part in the RCIA. (Canons #850 to 878 apply)

BAPTISM OF CHILDREN AND INFANTS

- The process of the RCIA is the process of initiation for children of catechetical age.
- Parental permission for **Baptism** and preparation for celebration are essential to the process.
- The tradition of **Baptism** is always by immersion/pouring of water over head.
- In the case of infant **Baptism**, catechesis is directed primarily to parents/ guardians and godparents.
- Assurance by parents/legal guardians gives a well-founded hope for the Christian upbringing of a child. (cf. IOIB #28-2)

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN

GUIDELINES

Although **Baptism** may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that ordinarily it be celebrated on a Sunday or if possible at the Easter Vigil.

A. The term “children” or “infants” refers to those who have not yet reached the age of reason (age 7) and therefore cannot profess personal faith.

B. Infant Baptism is the normative way to begin the initiation of children into the Church. Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth.

C. Parents should be instructed in the following topics.

- a. Theology of Baptism/Initiation
- b. Role of the parents and godparents in the faith formation of the child
- c. Preparation for the Celebration of Baptism

Canon 849

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

Canon 850

Baptism is administered according to the order prescribed in the approved liturgical books, except in case of urgent necessity when only those things required for the validity of the sacrament must be observed.

Canon 851

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

Canon 853

Apart from a case of necessity, the water to be used in conferring baptism must be blessed according to the precepts of the liturgical books.

Canon 854

Baptism is to be conferred either by immersion or by pouring, the prescriptions of the conference of bishops being observed.

Canon 855

Parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given.

Canon 861

*§1 The ordinary minister of **Baptism** is a bishop, presbyter or deacon, with due regard for the prescription of can. 530, n.1.*

*§2 If the ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or other person deputed for this function by the local ordinary confers **Baptism** licitly as does any person with the right intention in case of necessity; shepherds of souls, especially the pastor, are to be concerned that the faithful be instructed in the correct manner of baptizing.*

Canon 867

§1 Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth; as soon as possible after the birth or even before it parents are to go to the pastor to request the Sacrament for their child and to be prepared for it properly.

§2 An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without any delay.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

GUIDELINES

It is recommended that baptism be celebrated on Sundays, or at the Easter Vigil.

Baptismal Sponsors/Godparents

GUIDELINES

A. Sponsors must have completed the sixteenth year.

B. Sponsors must be practicing Catholics who have been confirmed and have already received the Sacrament of the Eucharist and lead a life in harmony with faith and the role to be undertaken.

C. Sponsors cannot be the father or mother of one to be baptized.

Baptismal Register

GUIDELINES

A. The Church of Baptism is the Church of record for the child who is baptized.

B. Prior to the date of baptism, the parents should bring the birth certificate to the parish office.

C. Parents must reside within the boundaries of the parish where the baptism is to take place. If they do not reside within the parish boundaries a letter of permission is required from the pastor of the territorial parish. (See Canons 107, 528, §2 and 530)

D. No change in name, date, or place may be made in the Baptismal Register without first consulting the Chancery office.

Canon 868

§1 For the licit **Baptism** of an infant it is necessary that:

1. the parents or at least one of them or the person who lawfully takes their place gives consent;
2. there be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such a hope is altogether lacking, the **Baptism** is to be put off according to the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reason.

§2 The infant of Catholic parents, in fact of non-Catholic parents also, who is in danger of death is licitly baptized even against the will of the parents.

Canon 874

§1 To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:

1. be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the one who takes their place or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role;
2. have completed the sixteenth year, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for a just cause;
3. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Sacrament of the Most Holy **Eucharist** and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
4. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
5. not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized.

§2 A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to **Baptism** and together with a Catholic sponsor.

Canon 877

The pastor of the place where the Baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the Baptismal register the names of the Baptised, with mention made of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses, if any, the place and date of the Baptism, and the date and place of birth.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM FOR ADULTS

GUIDELINES

Adults seeking baptism participate in the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)**. This process includes liturgical rites, a program of formation and catechetical instruction.

Adults are to receive the Sacraments in the prescribed order of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The Sacraments are not to be separated.

The prescribed time for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation is the Easter Vigil.

Baptisms in Other Faith Traditions

There are three criteria for determining the validity of any Baptism: the use of water, the use of the Trinitarian formula, and the intention to do what the Church does when it baptizes.

Inability to obtain a baptismal certificate from a particular Church or communion does not in itself constitute reasonable proof that a Baptism was invalid. Ordinarily a certificate is to be obtained, but sometimes there are reasons that written records do not exist or have become unavailable. Each case is to be considered individually. The Chancery is to be consulted.

Canon 851

*It is necessary that the celebration of **Baptism** be properly prepared. Thus:*

§1 *An adult who intends to receive **Baptism** is to be admitted to the catechumenate and, to the extent possible, be led through the several stages to Sacramental initiation, in accord with the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms published by it;*

Canon 852

§1 *What is prescribed in the canons on the **Baptism** of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the age of reason.*

§2 *One who is not of sound mind (*non sui compas*) is equated with an infant so far as **Baptism** is concerned.*

Canon 865

§1 *To be baptized, it is required that an adult have manifested the will to receive **Baptism**, be sufficiently instructed in the truths of faith and in Christian obligations and be tested in the Christian life by means of the catechumenate; the adult is also to be exhorted to have sorrow for personal sins.*

§2 *An adult in danger of death may be baptized if, having some knowledge of the principal truths of faith, the person has in any way manifested an intention of receiving **Baptism** and promises to observe the commandments of the Christian religion.*

Canon 861

§1 *The ordinary minister of **Baptism** is a bishop, presbyter or deacon, with due regard for the prescription of can. 530, n. 1.*

If, however, there is a doubt about the validity of Baptism, and the doubt remains after serious investigation, Baptism is to be conferred conditionally. The certificate of Baptism should ordinarily be obtained before the Rite of Acceptance.

Conditional Baptism

Conditional Baptism must be celebrated privately rather than at a public liturgical assembly of the community and with those limited rites, which the diocesan bishop determines. The doctrine of the Sacrament of Baptism and the reasons for the doubtful validity of the Baptism should be explained to the person before conditional Baptism is conferred. Each case should be handled separately.

Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and, therefore, provision should be made for its more frequent use in the Baptism of adults. (RCIA National Statutes # 17) Immersion does not necessarily mean submersion; but rather standing in water and water poured over the head of the elect three times while pronouncing the Trinitarian formula of Baptism, is completely acceptable. (Note also that the same minister—bishop, priest or deacon—who pours the water is the one who pronounces the formula.)

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION
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Because of human weakness, Christians "turn aside from [their] early love" (cf. Rev. 2:4) and even break off their friendship from God by sinning. The Lord, therefore, instituted a special Sacrament of Penance for the pardon of sins... (Rite of Penance, Decree)

The policies and guidelines in this book will refer to the Sacrament as the Sacrament of **Penance** and **Reconciliation** in order to be in agreement with the terminology used in the 2005 National Directory for Catechesis.

Sin consists of cutting one's self off from God, self or others, causing a separation. When this separation occurs, a reunification is needed. **Reconciliation** undoes the separation and division brought about by sin. This **Reconciliation** or bringing humankind back into unity with God is the main purpose of the Church. The Sacrament of **Penance** is a uniquely clear and eloquent expression of this mission. (O 12/25/86)

The restoration of the grace relationship is a gift of God and takes place at God's initiative. **Reconciliation** addresses the elements it intends to heal: the break, the disunity, the individual responsibility in the sin. **Reconciliation** also calls for the individual's acknowledgment of guilt, and has a social component to heal the social wounding that is part of sin.

The Church calls sinners to a personal encounter with Christ in the Sacrament of **Penance** and **Reconciliation** and to a celebration of God's unconditional love and forgiveness. Both repentance and **Reconciliation** are part of the theology of **Reconciliation** as is healing and forgiveness. Forgiveness is received in the Sacrament of **Penance** and **Reconciliation** even when there is no serious sin.

Reconciliation is putting back together again that which was once one. It is a reuniting. **Reconciliation** heals what has been broken - our relationship with God and with each other in Christ. God always desires **Reconciliation**, and human nature needs **Reconciliation** - being right with God and with one's neighbor. **Reconciliation** is a call to a deepening of the whole Christian life through genuine repentance, a sense of a community which reconciles and a sense of conversion as on-going.

The Rites of **Penance** and **Reconciliation** are intended for Catholics called to celebrate conversion and **Penance**. Adults and children today face many new and difficult moral problems and need to be equipped to deal with the complexity of faith and morals in the modern world. The rites offer rich possibilities for conversion of mind and heart as they speak to the quality of Christian moral living, and call to a deeper life of faith. The three different rites offered by the Church provide us with a mosaic of the different aspects in the process of repentance, confession, **Penance**, forgiveness and **Reconciliation**. The Rites of **Reconciliation** are intended for those who are conscious of personal sin committed since **Baptism**.

The rites present the Sacrament as an act of worship which is meant to be an experience of God in the Church. Scripture is an integral part of the Sacramental celebration. It is through this

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Sacramental celebration that the sinner is forgiven and restored to a loving relationship with God and with his people.

Catechumens celebrate **Reconciliation** during the Easter season. Baptized non-Catholics seeking full community with the Church celebrate the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** before reception into the Church.

*According to Canon Law (Canon 914), the reception of First **Penance** precedes First Communion.*

Catechesis for First **Penance** and **Reconciliation** for children takes place proximately in the parish context prior to the reception of the Sacrament. This catechesis must be distinct from the program for **First Holy Communion** and will precede the program offered to parents preparing children for First **Eucharist**.

The penitential rite, which marks the second step in the children's initiation, is held within a celebration of the word of God as a kind of scrutiny. In particular, the penitential rite is a proper occasion for baptized children of the catechetical group to celebrate the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** for the first time. (RCIA #291, 292, 293, 303) Parents of these children are invited to participate in the preparation program provided by the parish to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their child's readiness to celebrate the Sacrament.

The Church instructs that the celebration of First **Penance** and **Reconciliation** occur before the celebration of **First Holy Communion**. Catechesis is provided for children who have reached the age of reason. Children are to be encouraged to receive the Sacrament after this period of proximate catechesis.

Summary of Knowledge Required for Reconciliation Preparation:

*Although Canon Law requires that children be given suitable catechesis for the Sacrament of **Penance and Reconciliation** (Canon 777), it does not specify the content of this catechesis.*

By tradition, the candidate for first reception of the Sacrament must:

- have reached the age of reason, which is given to be age seven (7); i.e. be able to distinguish right from wrong,
- have a basic understanding of the concept of sin and the difference between mortal and venial sin,
- recognize that the Sacrament offers God's forgiveness.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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The National Catechetical Directory, Sharing the Light of Faith, outlines a four-fold catechesis for the Sacrament of **Penance** and **Reconciliation**, stressing:

- the relationship of the Sacrament to the child's own life,
- the understanding of moral good and evil, the necessity of repentance, and the desire to turn to Christ and His Church for forgiveness,
- the knowledge that faith is expressed in this Sacrament through forgiving and being forgiven,
- the importance of approaching the Sacrament freely and regularly.

In addition, the child is required to know:

- the steps of the Rites of **Penance** and **Reconciliation**, and the various forms of celebration of the Sacrament,
- the conditions for approaching the Sacrament worthily (an attitude of sincere contrition, a firm purpose of amendment, and the willingness to do **Penance**),
- the requirement to confess serious sin at least once a year (Canon 989),
- the benefit of confessing venial sin regularly (Canon 988), which helps to form one's conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let oneself be healed by Christ, and progress in the life of the Spirit (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1458),
- that the frequent reception of the Sacrament continues **Baptism**'s work of conversion and forgiveness and enables the individual to form his or her conscience and grow in grace.

Well-informed parents, who, after consultation with the pastor and catechist, decide that their child is to delay reception and those parents who decide to celebrate, are equally respected. Parents are affirmed and assisted in implementing their decisions.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

NORMS

First Reconciliation

- Any baptized Catholic who has reached the age of reason may be reconciled by the celebration of the Sacrament of **Reconciliation**.
- A baptized person being received into the Church during a Mass, celebrates the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** before the reception into the Church.
- Regular reception of the Sacrament is encouraged.
- One who is conscious of mortal sin must celebrate the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** before celebrating the Sacrament of **Eucharist** unless a grave reason is present. If this occurs, the person makes an act of contrition with the intention of confessing as soon as possible. [CCL #916]
- The faithful are obliged to confess mortal sins at least once a year. [CCL #989] [Canon #961 to 964 apply]

General Practices for First Reconciliation

- The Sacrament of **Reconciliation** should be celebrated within the context of a prayer service.
- There should be at least one practice prior to the reception of the Sacrament.
- Use should be made of the Seasons of Advent and Lent as opportunities for children to receive the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** (for the first time and on-going).
- The Sacrament should be immediately recorded in the person's parish record.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE RECEPTION
OF FIRST PENANCE AND
GUIDELINES FOR THE FAITHFUL
FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF
PENANCE/RECONCILIATION**

The ecclesiastical discipline concerning the time of First Confession prescribes that children must be prepared to receive First Communion after sacramental confession. The goal of this practice is to educate them, from a tender age, to the true Christian spirit of penance and conversion, the just sense of sin and the necessity of asking for pardon of God. Such an education is the task of the parents, educators and priests.

GUIDELINES

- A. First Penance/Reconciliation is to precede First Communion.
- B. The Catechesis and Celebration for the Sacrament of Penance is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation.
- C. Catechesis of children for Reconciliation must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of individuals. It should seek to help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong doing and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church.
- D. Children should be encouraged to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

GUIDELINES

- A. The age of discretion both for Penance and Holy Communion is the seventh year. From that time on begins the obligation of fulfilling the precept of both Penance and Communion.

Canon 959

*In the Sacrament of **Penance** the faithful, confessing their sins to a legitimate minister, being sorry for them, and at the same time proposing to reform, obtain from God forgiveness of sins committed after **Baptism** through the absolution imparted by the same minister; and they likewise are reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by sinning.*

Canon 914

It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents as well as of the pastor, to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession: it is also for the pastor to be vigilant lest any children come to the Holy Banquet who have not reached the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed.

Canon 960

*Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary way by which the faithful person who is aware of serious sin is reconciled with God and with the Church; only physical or moral impossibility excuses the person from confession of this type, in which case **Reconciliation** can take place in other ways.*

Canon 988

§ 1. A member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess in kind and number all grave sins committed after baptism and not yet remitted directly through the keys of the Church nor acknowledged in individual confession, of which the person has knowledge after diligent examination of conscience. § 2. It is recommended to the Christian faithful that they also confess venial sins.

Canon 989

After having reached the age of discretion, each member of the faithful is obliged to confess faithfully his or her grave sins at least once a year.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

B. Parents should be invited by the parish at the beginning of the year in which the child is to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance to participate in an information meeting outlining the requirements for preparation and celebration of the Sacrament.

C. Parents should be encouraged to be an integral part of the child's preparation, which should inform and challenge them to a better understanding of the teachings and practice of the Church regarding the Sacrament of Penance.

D. Parent(s) should provide baptismal information for their child before the celebration of the Sacrament.

Persons with Developmental Disabilities

GUIDELINES

Appropriate adaptations should be made for those with special needs.

(See Religious Education and Sacramental Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs, DOV, 2011.)

SACRAMENT OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION
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...the Eucharist appears as the source and the summit of all preaching of the Gospel. Catechumens are gradually led up to participation in the Eucharist, while the faithful who have already been consecrated in Baptism and Confirmation are fully incorporated in the Body of Christ by the reception of the Eucharist. (Vatican II P.O. #5)

Jesus in the **Eucharist** is the active, effective sign of God's covenant with his people. The early Christians gathered together and believed that through sharing in the breaking of the bread and in the blessing of the cup, the presence and Spirit of the risen Christ was among them. They sang and praised the Father for what He had done in Jesus. They did this as the major sign of Jesus' presence in the assembly.

The mode of Christ's presence under the **Eucharistic** species is unique. It raises the **Eucharist** above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the **Eucharist** "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially* contained." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present." (CCC 1374)

In our time, the repeated celebration of the liturgical mysteries is meant to enable the present day community to grow in understanding of what has been in terms of Paschal Mystery, and of what it means for the risen Christ to be experienced by the Church today.

Eucharist is the central liturgical action of the Church as gathered assembly, for in the celebration of the Mass whereby the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very community which has gathered in His name... (cf. Vatican II GIRM #7) The initiation which began in **Baptism** and continued in **Confirmation** is completed first and then deepened in each celebration of the **Eucharist**. Christians are fully joined to the Body of Christ in the **Eucharist**. (cf. NCD #120)

Through the **Eucharist**, Christians are led to a deeper relationship with Christ and with one another and to a deeper realization of the sharing in His mission. This saving mission is the bringing about of the reign of God through the action of the Spirit in the community.

Reconciliation with the Father is also proclaimed and effected by **Eucharist**:

The Eucharist is also a Sacrament of Reconciliation, completing and fulfilling the Sacraments of Initiation. In each Eucharist we reaffirm our conversion from sin, a conversion already real but not yet complete. (NCD #120)

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

The preparation of adults for first reception of the **Eucharist** is an integral part of the catechumenate process. In the preparation of children, parents have the right to be intimately involved.

Catechesis for First Communion is conducted separately from catechesis for First **Penance**. Catechesis for First **Penance** precedes catechesis for First Communion. Parish leaders schedule the program for proximate catechesis for **Penance** so that it precedes proximate catechesis for First **Eucharist**. Parents of these children are invited to participate in preparation programs to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their child's readiness to participate in the First **Penance** program. Pastoral sensitivity ensures that children and parents are invited to the proximate catechesis for **Penance** so that the celebration of **Penance** may precede the first celebration of **Eucharist**.

Only children who are able, ready, and willing should celebrate the period of proximate catechesis.

As with **Baptism**, well-informed parents, who, after consultation with the pastor and catechist, decide that their child is to delay reception, are respected as well as those parents who decide to celebrate. Parents are affirmed and assisted in implementing their decisions.

Summary of Knowledge Required for First Eucharist Preparation

In the decree *Quam Singulari*, Pope Pius X indicated that the child preparing for First Communion must have the following:

- knowledge of the Church's belief about Jesus Christ;
- knowledge of the difference between Holy Communion (the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine) and ordinary bread and wine;
- the desire to receive Jesus Christ in the **Eucharist**.

In addition to these minimum requirements, *The National Catechetical Directory, Sharing the Light of Faith* (#120), encourages presentation of these essential Catholic beliefs regarding the **Eucharist**:

- the **Eucharist** is both meal and sacrifice;
- the **Eucharist** celebrates the central saving mystery of our faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again;
- the **Eucharist** is the memorial of the last Supper;
- the **Eucharist** forms and nourishes the Christian community.

Finally, the child is required to know:

- the forms of reception of Holy Communion (in the hand, on the tongue, under both species);
- the conditions for receiving Holy Communion worthily (in the state of grace and at least once a year during the Easter season);
- the requirements of the **Eucharistic** fast (no food or drink -- except water or medicine for one hour before receiving Holy Communion)

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Insure that, immediately following the child's reception of the Sacrament, the date and place of the first reception of Communion is recorded on the student permanent record card and in the parish register.

NORMS

First Holy Communion

- Preparation of adults for first reception of **Eucharist** is integral to the catechumenate process.
- Parents are to be intimately involved in the preparation of their children for the first reception of **Eucharist**.
- Catechesis for the first reception of **Eucharist** follows catechesis for the first reception of **Reconciliation**. (Canon #897 to 916 apply)
- A child of catechetical age should receive the Sacrament of **Reconciliation** prior to receiving the Sacrament of **First Holy Communion**.

General Practices for First Holy Communion

- Provide each family in late August with a calendar of dates for parent meetings, immediate preparation sessions, days of prayer, interviews, rehearsals, ceremonies, etc., as well as written explanations and directives for participation in the Sacramental preparation programs.
- Require that each child's **Baptismal** certificate be presented at the time of initial registration into the program.
- Promptly record the **Baptismal** information on the permanent record card and return the original to the parent. It is advisable to keep a photocopy of the **Baptismal** certificate on file so that the address of the Parish will be readily available at the time of the child's **Confirmation**.
- Baptized Catholic children must have at least one (1) year of faith formation prior to the year that the child will be receiving the Sacraments of **Reconciliation** and **First Holy Communion**.
- Canon Law states that a child is to receive **First Holy Communion** at the age of reason which is given to be age seven (7).
- Preparation for the Sacraments of **Reconciliation** and **First Holy Communion** takes place at the parish and outside the regular parish religious education and school religious

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

education programs. Preparation for First **Reconciliation** should be several months prior to **First Holy Communion**.

- It is recommended that a priest visit class and/or participate in a prep session.
- Prep sessions for parents/children should be 3-4 for **Penance/Reconciliation** and 4-6 for **First Holy Communion**, to be no more than 10 in total.
- Families are strongly encouraged to attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis.
- At least one practice should be held for the reception of each Sacrament.
- A retreat for First Communicants is strongly recommended.
- A celebration after the reception of a Sacrament:
 - Reconciliation: Children are given darkly colored balloons and allowed to release them into the air to show that their sins are gone.
 - First Communion: For example, organize a social celebration for families such as pot luck, finger food buffet, cake and punch, etc.
- Insure that the appropriate record keeping is done immediately after the child's reception of each Sacrament.

**RECEPTION OF FIRST HOLY
COMMUNION and
PARTICIPATION IN THE MOST
HOLY EUCHARIST**

GUIDELINES

It is the responsibility of parishes to provide programs for all children and parents preparing for the celebration of First Penance and First Eucharist.

A. Children in home school settings and Catholic schools are required to participate in the immediate preparation for the sacraments at the child's parish of registration.

B. The celebrations of First Penance and First Eucharist should occur in the child's home parish. In special circumstances, permission may be granted (in writing) by the pastor of the home parish for the celebration to take place outside the diocese.

C. The rights of children to the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist can best be served when pastors, parents and catechists offer formation for these sacraments appropriate to the level and development of the child. Normally a full year of catechesis should precede the year in which the celebration of these sacraments takes place.

Canon 897

The most august sacrament is the Most Holy Eucharist in which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered, and received and by which the Church continually lives and grows. The Eucharistic sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated through the ages, is the summit and source of all worship and Christian life, which signifies and affects the unity of the People of God and brings about the building up of the body of Christ. Indeed, the other sacraments and all the ecclesiastical works of the apostolate are closely connected with the Most Holy Eucharist and ordered to it.

Canon 899

§ The celebration of the Eucharist is the action of Christ Himself and the Church; in it Christ the Lord, by the ministry of a priest, offers Himself, substantially present under the forms of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives Himself as spiritual food to the faithful who are associated with His offering.

§ In the Eucharistic banquet the people of God are called together, with the bishop or, under his authority, a presbyter presiding and acting in the person of Christ; and all the faithful present, whether clergy or laity, participate together, in their own way, according to the diversity of orders and liturgical roles.

Canon 912

Any baptized person not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to Holy Communion.

Canon 913

1 For Holy Communion to be administered to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and be accurately prepared, so that according to their capacity they understand what the mystery of Christ means, and are able to receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.

2 The blessed Eucharist may, however, be administered to children in danger of death if they can distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food and receive communion with reverence.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

D. Parents have the responsibility to participate in their own catechetical formation so that they will be able to prepare their child for these sacraments in collaboration with the parish community.

E. Parents, in consultation with the catechetical staff, discern the readiness of their child for the sacraments.

F. The preparation and celebration for the sacrament of Penance is separated from and precedes the preparation for and celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist.

G. The age of discretion both for Penance and the sacrament of the Eucharist is the seventh year. From that time on begins the obligation of fulfilling the precept of both Penance and Eucharist.

Persons with Developmental Disabilities

GUIDELINES

Appropriate adaptations should be made for those with special needs.

(See Religious Education and Sacramental Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs, DOV, 2011.)

Canon 916

Anyone who is conscious of grave sin may not celebrate Mass or receive the Body of the Lord without previously having been to sacramental confession, unless there is grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, which includes the resolve to go to confession as soon as possible.

Canon 919

A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation. In this Sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit, who was sent upon the apostles by the Lord on Pentecost. (RC #1)

Confirmation, along with the Sacraments of **Baptism** and **Holy Eucharist**, form the Sacraments of Initiation and are intimately connected to one another. In the Sacrament of **Confirmation**, the baptized person is “sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit” and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ. The reception of **Confirmation** is necessary for the baptized to be more perfectly bound to the Church and be enriched with the special strength of the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Confirmation confers a character. By it the baptized continue their path of Christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith. Can. 879

The Effects of Confirmation (CCC 1302-1305)

From this fact, **Confirmation** brings an increase and deepening of **Baptismal** grace:

- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
- it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.

Like **Baptism**, which it completes, **Confirmation** is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an *indelible spiritual mark*, the "character." This is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be His witness.

This "character" perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in **Baptism**, and "the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and, as it were, officially (*quasi Ex officio*)."

God's special gift in the Sacrament of **Confirmation** is the gift of continued empowerment of mission in the Church through the Holy Spirit which was begun in **Baptism**. The person is confirmed or sealed in the Holy Spirit. The Introduction to the Rite sums up the theology of the Sacrament in this way:

1. Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the Sacrament of **Confirmation**. In this Sacrament they receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, who was sent upon the Apostles by the Lord on Pentecost.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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2. This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of His body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or seal of the Lord that the Sacrament of **Confirmation** cannot be repeated. (RC #2)

The phrase "...that they may bear witness to Christ..." indicates a focusing of the minds of those confirmed, and of the entire community, on their participation in the mission of the Church which is the transformation of the whole of creation. Regarding the Sacrament of **Confirmation** the *National Catechetical Directory* states:

As with Baptism, catechesis for this Sacrament (Confirmation) takes place within the parish community which has an obligation to participate in the preparation of those to be confirmed. (NCD #119)

It is clear that **Confirmation** is to be a community event, and that the community be conscious of the movement of the Spirit in its life, be aware of its mission, and be willing to journey with those in the process of initiation.

The sponsor is one who is willing to walk on this journey with the candidate toward fuller initiation. It is desirable that the sponsor be the same person who undertook the role at **Baptism** (CCL #893) and who fulfills the canonical conditions (CCL #874). This person should be one who is an example of what it means to be a Catholic Christian.

Guidelines for Confirmation of Baptized Catholics

Those desiring Confirmation should be:

- a baptized Catholic who regularly receives Communion
- registered in a parish (both preparation for and celebration of the Sacrament will take place in that parish)
- be enrolled in a catechetical program at a parish or in religion classes at a diocesan Catholic high school (in addition to the Sacramental Preparation program) which takes place at the parish of registration
- in the Diocese of Venice in Florida, preparation normally begins in the 9th grade, with the celebration of **Confirmation** occurring at the end of 10th grade (around the age of 16).

Note on Adult Confirmation:

- The preparation program for adult **Confirmation** welcomes Catholics in good standing with the Church, who are attending Mass and receiving the **Eucharist** faithfully but missed receiving the Sacrament of **Confirmation** at an earlier age. Parishes are encouraged to provide adult learning sessions, perhaps in conjunction with parental sessions.
- If an adult Catholic needs both First **Eucharist** and **Confirmation**, or if they were baptized in another Christian denomination, the proper method of receiving them into the Church is through the Rite of Christian Initiation.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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“*Preparation for Confirmation* should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – His actions, His gifts, and His biddings - in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end, catechesis for **Confirmation** should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1309).

Enrollment of all candidates is to be based on:

- a candidate’s expressed desire. A candidate must demonstrate a willingness to participate in the **Confirmation** process, and exhibit a personal commitment to their faith and a desire to be confirmed. This includes regular attendance at and participation in the Sunday Liturgy.
- the candidate’s understanding and appreciation for the Sacraments already celebrated (**Baptism, Eucharist, and Reconciliation**), as well regular celebration of **Reconciliation and Eucharist**.
- the candidate must have a history of formal and continuous faith formation. A minimum of two full years, during 9th and 10th grade, is required in Youth Group/ Religious Education / Catholic School. Those who start the process as adults must demonstrate a commitment to their faith formation in an appropriate manner.
- candidates enrolled in a Diocesan Catholic School must attend the Sacramental Preparation program in the parish in which they are registered in addition to a formal catechetical program as noted in the above bullet.

Candidates for Confirmation:

“The faithful are obliged to receive this Sacrament at the appropriate time; their parents and shepherds of souls, especially pastors, are to see to it that the faithful are properly instructed to receive it and approach the Sacrament at the appropriate time.” (Canon 890)

- must be baptized,
- must give sufficient evidence of readiness,
- expresses a desire to receive the Sacrament, a decision which is a personal choice not based on pressure from parents, peers, parish, nor unduly influenced by culture or custom,
- participates actively in the liturgical and Sacramental life of the Church,
- completes the parish preparation program for the reception of the Sacrament,
- demonstrates an adequate grasp of the content of the Catholic faith according to the age level of the candidate,
- demonstrates an understanding that the commitment inherent in choosing to receive the Sacrament involves a way of life based on the values and morality of the Catholic Church,
- understands that faith-development is an ongoing process and is furthered by participation in the life of the parish through comprehensive youth ministry (those which include a catechetical component) and ongoing adult faith formation.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Policies and guidelines for parents:

Parents are encouraged to be role models in the faith life of their child preparing for **Confirmation**. Parents are encouraged to help their child by:

- modeling a Christian commitment of prayer, community worship, and service.
- attending the parent sessions.
- being committed to help the candidate meet the attendance and formation requirements for the Sacrament of **Confirmation**.

*“The initiation of children into the Sacramental life is, for the most part, the responsibility and concern of Christian parents. They are to form and gradually develop a spirit of faith in the children and, with the help of catechetical institutions, prepare them for the fruitful reception of the Sacraments.... This responsibility of the parents is also shown by their active participation in the celebration of the Sacraments.” (Rite of **Confirmation** # 3)*

Parents:

- serve as models for their son or daughter by growing in their own personal relationship with God and living as committed Christians,
- share their own faith with their son or daughter, both in word and action,
- attend parent programs conducted to deepen their awareness of the meaning of **Confirmation** for Christian living, and to assist them as they help their son or daughter to come to freely request the Sacrament,
- participate with their son or daughter in the special liturgies and events of the preparation program,
- assist and encourage the candidate to understand and assimilate what is being presented during the preparation period, encourage the newly-confirmed to continue to be actively involved in the Church, especially their own parish.

Policies and guidelines for sponsors:

“The sponsor's function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the duties inherent in this Sacrament.” Can. 892

Each candidate is to have one male **or** one female sponsor for **Confirmation**. The preference in Canon law (canon #874) is that a Baptism godparent be the Confirmation Sponsor to show the bond between the Sacraments of **Baptism** and **Confirmation**. **Parents are not to be considered as sponsors**. The sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this Sacrament. The sponsor must have completed the sixteenth year of age, be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy Sacrament of the **Eucharist**, and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on. Further, the sponsor cannot be bound by any canonical penalty and cannot be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate as a sponsor, except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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Those chosen to be a sponsor must:

- be sufficiently mature (having attained the sixteenth year) in his/her faith commitment, and should be actively expressing it within the Catholic community (Canon 874),
- be fully initiated into the Church through the Sacraments of **Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist**,
- be practicing the Catholic faith and in good standing with the Church,
- act as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfill the obligations connected with this Sacrament,
- not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed (Canon 874), need not be of the same gender as the candidate,
- belong to the Catholic Church and be fully initiated, having received **Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist** (Canon 874),
- present a written statement of eligibility from his/her Pastor,
- know the candidate and be able to help him/her on the spiritual journey, sharing faith and modeling the life of the mature Catholic,
- encourage the candidate to grow in a faith relationship with Jesus,
- assist and encourage the candidate with the study and practice of the Catholic faith,
- accompany the candidate to special liturgies and events in the preparation program.

It is desirable that the sponsor for the candidate be present at the ceremony itself. The sponsor should be able to witness that the confirmed person acts as true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with this Sacrament.

If the sponsor is unknown to the pastor, it is necessary to obtain a letter or statement from the sponsor's parish, confirming that he or she is an active member in good standing in the parish and has completed the Sacraments of **Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist**.

The Parish Confirmation Program

The program should include the following components:

- Six to eight sessions of “Sacramental Preparation” which are specific to **Confirmation**. These sessions are to be spread over a two year period. Please see Bishop’s Study Guide for specific items to be taught (available online at: www.dioceseofvenice.org)
- Selection of Confirmation Name by the candidate. This should be a canonized saint who is the same gender as the candidate and chosen for a particular religious reason. The candidate should know (and conduct research on) basic biographical details as well as their namesake’s contribution to the Faith. The candidates are also to wear a nametag with only their **Confirmation** name (which may also be their **Baptismal** name) printed in large and legible letters for the bishop to read.
- Retreat or Reflection Day. A period of extended reflection and prayer for the candidates, and possibly their parents or sponsors, to reflect on the meaning of their faith in their lives.

Study guide and Bishop’s questions: The bishop expects that the candidates know the material enclosed in the study guide and are prepared to correctly answer questions on this material. The study guide appears in this document’s appendix and is also available online at the Diocese of Venice’s website (<http://www.dioceseofvenice.org>).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation for candidates: “To receive **Confirmation** one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the Sacrament of **Penance** in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1310*). Thus, it is fitting to organize a **Penance** service or to encourage the candidates to go to individual Confession, near the day on which they are to receive the Sacrament of **Confirmation**.

Guidelines for the Liturgy of Confirmation

In keeping with the solemnity of celebrating a Sacrament, please see the current liturgical guidelines for the actual Rite of **Confirmation**. They are available online at: <http://www.dioceseofvenice.org>. Each year, the Bishop’s office will contact Parishes to begin the process of scheduling **Confirmation** across the Diocese.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

NORMS

Confirmation

- The catechetical model for **Confirmation** is the RCIA process. Candidates must participate in the total preparation for **Confirmation** provided by the parish.
- In the Diocese of Venice, if a child is baptized as an infant and properly catechized in his or her early years, the norm for the remaining Sacraments of Initiation would be **Eucharist** around the age of reason (7) and **Confirmation** at the end of tenth grade. Both have two year preparation programs (see section on remote and proximate preparation for details).
- **Confirmation** is necessarily tied to full initiation with the Church, and should be conferred on the Easter Vigil.
- For baptized but uncatechized Catholics adults and for unbaptized children over the age of 7, Canon Law states that the Sacraments of Initiation must not be separated but must be conferred at the Easter Vigil.
- The parish community participates in the process.
- The sponsor is one other than a parent and one who fulfills the canonical conditions. The **Baptismal** sponsor is preferred. (Canon #879 to 896 apply)

General Practices for Confirmation

Involve Parents

- Communicate regularly regarding program (phone, email, web, mail).
- Provide at home study materials, such as “Growing Faith” or “Catholic Update”.
- Communicate / provide materials in English and Spanish as needed
- Provide concrete ways they can support their teen’s preparation (i.e. how to help them choose a saint’s name).
- Invite letters of support and inspiration to be written by family members and friends to teens and given during retreat or prayer service.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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Involve Sponsors

- Many of the parent involvement strategies would work with sponsors.
- Particular to their role, provide concrete ways for them to faith share with their candidate, such as journals, discussion questions and/or retreat involvement.

Connect with Parish when Possible

- Invite and involve **Confirmation** families into existing parish prayer and social events, etc.
- Ask teens to go to “at least X” number of parish events as part of their preparation. They get to choose which ones.
- Celebrate small rites during regular weekend Masses throughout the preparation, for example: welcome blessing at the start of the process, a Pentecost commitment blessing, etc.
- Just before or after **Confirmation** is celebrated, host a ministry party and have current volunteers come and give information about how to get involved with their ministry.
- Publish the names of the Confirmandi in the parish bulletin.
- Ask Confirmandi and their families to bring the gifts to the altar during the Sunday liturgy.
- Place an intention for the Confirmandi in the Petitions for Sunday Liturgy.

Connect with area parishes/diocese when possible

- Open teens up to the local, regional and worldwide Church community by attending Diocesan youth events or participating in larger Catholic efforts.
- Consider collaborating with other local parishes for retreats or service projects.

Possible Retreat Outline

- Gathering Activities and Announcements (20 minutes, can include group icebreakers and individual tasks that prepare for later sessions, name tags.)
- Opening Prayer (25 minutes, based on the Holy Spirit, possibly includes readings from **Confirmation** ceremony.)
- Break (10 minutes.)
- Introduce the day (15 minutes: What is a retreat? What is a Sacrament? Why retreat to prepare? Specifics on what to expect.)
- Activity (20 minutes, to draw teens into reflecting on the symbols of **Confirmation**. Possibilities include creating a banner or scrapbook page.)
- Witness Talks: (60 minutes, but in 3 segments of 10 minute talks to the large group followed by 10 minute individual journal responses. Break of 10 minutes after the first Witness/Response. Witness on: what Church is to me, who the Holy Spirit is to me, how the Saints help me.)

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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- Opportunity for Sacrament of **Reconciliation**: (45 minutes)
- Meal.
- Reflection on the Gifts of the Spirit (60 minute, small group focuses on one gift and reports back to the large group. Use song, video or multimedia when possible).
- Taking it Home (20 minutes. Create a **Confirmation** countdown calendar, with 3 columns. The teen lists the months or weeks before **Confirmation** in the first column, one of the Gifts in the second column, and ways to practice it in the third. Have them fill in each box (at least 4 weeks/months is recommended.)
- Commissioning Prayer (within Mass or as a closing prayer.)

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of **Confirmation**. In this sacrament they receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit whom the Lord sent upon the apostles at Pentecost. This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more fully to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of His Body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or seal of the Lord that the sacrament of confirmation cannot be repeated.

GUIDELINES

- A. The candidates must have attained the 10th grade and/or high school.
- B. Candidate must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate. Baptismal certificates of adults must have been issued within the last six months.
- C. Must be participating in a program of systematic catechesis either in the parish, the Catholic school or the home. (Guidelines for study follow in the appendix).
- D. Must be in a Sacramental preparation program at the parish in which he/she is registered.
- E. Must have no impediments to participating in the Eucharist such as being in the state of mortal sin or not married in the Church.
- F. Participate in the sacramental life of the Church, especially Eucharistic liturgies.
- G. Confirmation may not be repeated.

Canon 879

The Sacrament of confirmation strengthens the baptized and obliges them more firmly to be witnesses of Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith. It imprints a character, enriches by the gift of the Holy Spirit the baptized continuing on the path of Christian initiation, and binds them more perfectly to the Church.

Canon 880

§1. The sacrament of confirmation is conferred by the anointing of chrism on the forehead, which is done by the imposition of the hand and through the words prescribed in the approved liturgical books.

§2. The chrism to be used in the sacrament of confirmation must be consecrated by a bishop even if a presbyter administers the sacrament.

Canon 881

It is desirable to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation in church and during Mass; for a just reasonable cause, however, it can be celebrated outside Mass and in a worthy place.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

H. The confirmands are required to send letters to the Bishop expressing their reason for wanting to be confirmed as well as providing some information about themselves, such as studies, interests, family etc.

The Celebration of Confirmation

GUIDELINES

A. The sacrament of confirmation is to be celebrated according to the norms of the *Rite of Confirmation*.

B. The sacrament of confirmation should be held at a time when the parish community can witness and participate in this celebration of the growth of their parish family.

C. Since the stole is the vestment of Holy Orders (priest, deacon), the use of stoles is prohibited.

D. Sensitivity to the cultural experience of the community needs to be considered when preparing the liturgy.

E. Accommodations should be made for candidates with special needs. Interpreters of sign language for deaf and hearing-impaired candidates should be provided.

F. The dress encouraged for the candidate should be modest and reflective of the spirit of the ceremony.

G. In order to express the intimate relationship of Confirmation to Baptism, all candidates may retain a Baptismal name or choose an additional patronal name.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Confirmation Sponsors

GUIDELINES

A. Opportunities for catechesis should be offered to the sponsors in order to assist them in fully understanding their role in the ongoing formation of the candidates.

B. The sponsors should participate with the candidates in their preparation, as well as the celebration.

C. To perform the role of sponsor, it is necessary that a person:

- a. Be designated by the one to be confirmed, by the parents or the one who takes their place or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing the role
- b. Has completed the sixteenth year.
- c. Be a practicing Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Sacrament of the Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with faith and the role to be undertaken.
- d. Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
- e. Not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.

D. More than one sponsor can be used but only one is designated as the liturgical sponsor if permitted by the pastor.

Canon 874

§1 To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:

1. *have completed the sixteenth year, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for a just cause;*
2. *be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;*
3. *not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;*
4. *not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized.*

Canon 892

Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.

Canon 893

It is desirable to choose as a sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.

Canon 889

§1. Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving confirmation.

§2. To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.

Canon 890

The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.

**APPENDIX A – SUGGESTIONS FOR SACRAMENTAL
PREPARATION**

First Reconciliation

For Children

1. Bible stories: Zaccheaus, Prodigal Son, Good Shepherd
2. Role play Bible stories
3. Act of Contrition prayer cards for nightly use
4. Tour of Church with visit to confessional room
5. **Reconciliation** ritual between parents and child, child and parents
6. Testimonials: older students talk to younger ones
7. Children compose “exam of conscience” based on Commandments, Beatitudes
8. Children paint prayer rocks, placed in baskets. Their name slips in basket in Church for parishioners to take as prayer partners.
9. Basket of hearts in worship corner of room. Each child makes a heart with *Jesus is calling me to change*_____.

Parent Involvement

1. Parents participate in prep sessions.
2. Parents work with child at home on **Reconciliation** prep materials and memorization of traditional prayers
3. Families attend Mass and Parish Advent **Penance** Service as prep (Parents receive Sacrament)
4. Parent plays priest and hears child’s make believe confession.
5. Parents and children interviewed by the Pastor, his designate, or the DRE.

First Holy Communion

For Children

1. Bible stories: Loaves and fishes, Last Supper, The wedding at Cana. Role play these
2. Use available children’s books and media resources, ex: *Mama’s Bread*
3. Family *Bread Prayer*. Children or parents could make/bring bread and act out the Last Supper
4. Learn about Mass vestments & altar vessels. Make a booklet with these
5. Learn about the Mass. *Teaching Mass*, walk through explanation by priest, learn prayers (responses, Holy Holy, Lamb of God, etc.)
6. Make individual First Communion banner to use in Church with child’s photo
7. Have Confirmandi, older students, parishioners or parents adopt a child as prayer partner and follow up with a letter of prayer and support

Parent Involvement

1. Parents participate in prep sessions
2. Parents work at home with child on First Communion materials and Mass prayers
3. Interview

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Confirmation

1. www.cornerstonemedia.org : annual CD of current songs and reflections, focused on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Catholic)
2. www.movieministry.com : online database with themes and discussion questions for current and recent films (Christian)
3. Joe Poprocki (Loyola Press) – chart of music correlated to the gifts of the Spirit and sins
4. For adults- *Enkindled: Holy Spirit, Holy Gifts* by Albert Haase and Bridget Haase
5. For teens and sponsors: *Have Faith* by Michael Carotta

Videos:

1. *The Choice – Sacrament of Confirmation*, Franciscan Communications (SA-025)
2. *Celebrating Sacraments – Confirmation: Celebrating Faith*, Twenty-Third Publications (SA-032)
3. *Sacraments – God’s Amazing Grace: Initiation, Healing, Service*, Twenty-Third Publications (SA-052)
4. *The Spirit Sets Us Free – Celebration of the Spirit Mass with J. Glenn Murray, S.J.*, William H. Sadlier, Inc. (PU-022)

Catholic Youth Updates (www.AmericanCatholicYouth.org)

1. *Baptism – First But Forever* (Y1200)
2. *Eucharist – Say Yes!* (Y0300)
3. *The Sunday Zone – Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy* (Y0301)
4. *Holy Spirit, Giving Your Life the Light Touch* (Y0998)
5. *Confirmation – 7 Symbols in 1 Sacrament* (Y0497)
6. *Gifts of the Holy Spirit – Yours to Open and Use* (Y0695)
7. *Discipleship – Going Places with Jesus* (Y0401)

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

APPENDIX B – RESOURCE LIST FOR CATECHISTS

Celebrating the Lectionary. (series includes PreK-Adult). Resource Publications, Inc., 160 E. Virginia St. #290, San Jose, California 95112. Yearly publication.

A Child Shall Lead Them. Pottebaum, Gerard; Freeburg, Paule, and Kelleher, Joyce. Loveland, OH: Treehaus Communications, Inc., 1992. treehaus@treehaus1.com

Children and Christian Initiation: A Practical Guide (including additional series of texts for Precatechumenate, Catechumenate, Purification and Enlightenment, and Mystagogy). Coffey, Kathy. Denver: Living the Good News. 1997/2002.

This series includes practical suggestions for preparing children for the rites of Christian Initiation, including the involvement of parents and sponsors.

Children's Catechumenate (series includes Director's Guide, Catechist Guide, and booklets for primary, intermediate, and upper level children). Long, Thomas L. and Filippi, Emily. Orlando: Harcourt Religion Publishers, revised 1999.

A Child's Journey: The Christian Initiation of Children. Senseman, Rita Burns. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1997. Examines the challenges of adapting the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for children of catechetical age and offers solid, practical approaches for their initiation.

Christian Initiation of Children: Hope for the Future. Duggan, Robert and Kelly, Maureen. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991.

The Church Speaks About Sacraments with Children. Searle, Mark. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991.

Confirmed as Children, Affirmed as Teens. Wilde, James. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1989.

Exploring the Sunday Readings. Twenty-Third Publications, P. O. Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355. Yearly publication.

Foundations in Faith. Allen, TX. Resources for Christian Living, 1999. Various materials for the initiation of adults that can be adapted and used as a resource for catechists of children.

Issues in the Christian Initiation of Children. Brown, Kathy and Sokol, Frank. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1989. Articles by those involved in the initiation of children are helpful in determining parish policies and in preparing for effective catechesis and celebrations of the rites with children.

Lectionary Based Catechesis for Children: A Catechist's Guide. DeVillers, Sylvia. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Lectionary for Masses with Children. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1993.

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies. Primary, Intermediate, Jr. High. Peter Li, Inc. 2451 E. River Rd., Dayton, OH 45439, www.pflaum.com/familypages.

Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children. Tufano, Victoria, ed. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988. This is the official ritual of the Church, and it is essential that all parish leaders be familiar with this text. It is available from several publishers, including Liturgy Training Publications, Liturgical Press, and Catholic Book Publishing Company. The Spanish edition (*Rito de la Iniciacion Cristiana de Adultos*) is available from USCCB and LTP.

When Your Child Becomes Catholic. Senseman, Rita Burns. Cincinnati: St. Anthony's Messenger Press, 2000.

APPENDIX C - CONFIRMATION STUDY GUIDE

Seven Sacraments:

Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist

Sacraments of Healing : Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick

Sacraments of Vocations: Matrimony, Holy Orders

Two Great Commandments:

- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Four Marks of the Catholic Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

Twelve Apostles:

Peter, Bartholomew, Andrew, Matthew, James, James the Less, John, Jude, Philip, Simon, Thomas, Judas

Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.
4. Honor your father and mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Beatitudes:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Holy Days of Obligation:

- Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1)
- Ascension (40 days after Easter)
- Assumption of Mary (August 15)
- All Saints Day (November 1)
- Immaculate Conception (December 8)
- Christmas (December 25)

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Clothe the naked.
- Care for the sick.
- Help the imprisoned.
- Bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Share knowledge.
- Give advice to those who need it.
- Comfort those who suffer.
- Be patient with others.
- Forgive those who hurt you.
- Give correction to those who need it.
- Pray for the living and the dead.

Liturgical Year:

- Advent
- Christmas Time
- Ordinary Time
- Lent
- Triduum
- Easter Time
- Ordinary Time

The Rosary:

Joyful Mysteries (Mondays, and Sundays in Advent)

- The Annunciation (Lk 1:30-33)
- The Visitation (Lk 1:50-53)
- The Birth of Our Lord (Lk 2:10-11)
- Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:29-32)
- The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:48-52)

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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Sorrowful Mysteries (Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays in Lent)

- The Agony of Jesus in the Garden (Mt 26:38-39)
- The Scouring at the Pillar (Jn 19:1)
- The Crowning with Thorns (Mk 15:16-17)
- The Carrying of the Cross (Jn 19:17)
- The Crucifixion (Jn 19:28-30)

Glorious Mysteries (Wednesday, Saturdays, Sundays)

- Resurrection of Jesus (Mk 16:6-8)
- The Ascension of Jesus into heaven (Acts 1:10-11)
- The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles (Pentecost) (Acts 2:1-4)
- The Assumption of Mary into heaven
- The Crowning of Mary as queen of heaven

Luminous Mysteries (Thursdays)

- The Baptism of the Lord (Mk 1:9-11, Mt 3:13-17, Lk 3:21-22)
- The Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-12)
- The Proclamation of the Kingdom and Call to Repentance (Mk 1: 14-ff, Mt 4:12-ff, Lk 4:14-ff, Jn 2:13-ff)
- The Transfiguration (Mk 8:2-8, Mt 17:1-8, Lk 9:28-36)
- The Last Supper and Institution of the Eucharist (Mk 14:22-25, Mt 26:18, Lk 22:15-20)

Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, Love

Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance

Gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Rite of **Confirmation**

- Wisdom, Understanding, Right Judgment, Courage, Knowledge, Reverence, Wonder and Awe

-OR-

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Piety, Fear of the Lord

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

- Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Goodness, Kindness, Long Suffering, Humility, Faithfulness, Modesty, Contenance, Chastity

Capital Sins:

- Greed, Anger, Envy, Lust, Pride, Sloth, Gluttony

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Stations of the Cross

1. Jesus is condemned to death.
2. Jesus takes up His cross.
3. Jesus falls the first time.
4. Jesus meets His mother.
5. Simon helps Jesus carry the cross.
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.
7. Jesus falls the second time.
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.
9. Jesus falls the third time.
10. Jesus is stripped of His garments.
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross.
12. Jesus dies on the cross.
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross.
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

Precepts of the Church:

1. Assist at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, doing no unnecessary physical work on those days.
2. Confess serious sins at least once a year.
3. Receive Holy Communion frequently and, at a minimum, during the Easter season.
4. Fast and abstain on days appointed.
5. Contribute to the support of the Church.
6. Observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage and give religious training to one's children by word, example, and use of parish schools or catechetical programs.
7. Join in the missionary spirit and work of the Church.

Parts of the Mass:

Introductory Rites:

- Entrance Chant
- Greeting
- Penitential Act
- Gloria
- Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word:

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily
- Profession of Faith or Creed
- Prayer of the Faithful

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
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Liturgy of the Eucharist:

- Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
- Prayer over the Offerings
- Preface
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen
- Communion Rite: Lord's Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Breaking of the Bread
- Communion
- Silence/Song of Praise
- Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite:

- Prayer
- Blessing
- Dismissal

**POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

APPENDIX D
USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism

Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series

As of **June 10, 2018** the following link provides a list of texts and series have been found to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Please visit <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf> to view a list of the text and series.