

● Sacraments of Initiation for  
Children and Infants  
in the Catholic Church  
in the Archdiocese of Adelaide





## Foreword

One of the most important roles of Christian parents is to pass on to their children their own faith. It is in the home that faith is first nurtured. But parents are not alone in this task: with them stands the entire Christian community. The Second Vatican Council was very aware of this as it revised all the rites for the sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist – and set out *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* as the model for all initiation in the Church. The importance of being immersed in the worship life of the Church (the liturgy), being constantly nourished on the Word of God and being actively engaged in assisting the poor and needy are stressed in the RCIA. In other words, Christian initiation calls us to live good and holy lives.

In faithfully implementing the teachings and spirit of the Vatican Council, the Archdiocese of Adelaide some years ago developed a policy for the initiation of children. Over the past three years this has been carefully revised and now includes a section specifically dedicated to the baptism of infants and another that considers the celebration of sacraments with children who have intellectual disabilities. The Council of Priests has approved the work carried out by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, the Office for Worship and the Office for Family and Parish Based Catechesis, and recommends that I accept this policy.

The journey to full initiation in the Catholic Church usually begins with infant baptism. The parish community and the family work together to prepare for this celebration and to discover ways in which the new Christian can come to know the love of God, most especially in the person of Jesus.

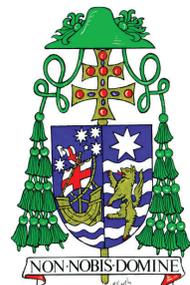
At the age of reason (understood by the Church to be around seven years old) the children begin formal preparation for the celebration of Confirmation and first Holy Communion. Having been nurtured by their parents and assisted by the parish community, the local Catholic school (or catechists if there is no school) now adds its resources. Together, parents, parish and school discern the readiness of children to celebrate Confirmation and first Holy Communion, and together they combine to provide a loving and welcoming environment that will enable the young people to grow in knowledge, understanding and goodness.

I assure all parents, children, priests, parish pastoral associates, catechists, RE Coordinators and teachers in our schools of my full support in putting into practice this policy for the Christian Initiation of Children and Infants in our archdiocese.

With every blessing for the success of this important enterprise, I remain your brother in Christ,

+ Philip Wilson.

Most Rev. Philip Wilson DD JCL  
Archbishop of Adelaide  
Feast of Pentecost  
June 8, 2014



# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	3
<b>● Initiation of Children and Infants into the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Adelaide</b>	
Our present experience	5
Initiation: an historical perspective	6
Towards the future	7
<b>● The Second Vatican Council calls us to Renewal</b>	
A new age for Liturgy	8
The Second Vatican Council	8
The Rite of Christian Initiation	8
Ministries for Christian Initiation	9
<b>● A Theology of Initiation</b>	
Initiation and the Sacraments of Initiation	10
Baptism	10
Confirmation	11
Eucharist	12
<b>● Our Children's Journey in the Faith Community</b>	13
<b>● Diocesan Policy for the Christian Initiation of Children and Infants</b>	14
<b>● Guidelines for implementation of the diocesan policy on the initiation of children and infants</b>	15
Baptism	15
Confirmation and First Holy Communion	15
Roles and Responsibilities	17
Appendix 1 – the Sacrament of Reconciliation	19
Appendix 2 – Preparation sessions for parents presenting their children for Baptism	20
Appendix 3 – Guidelines for the sacramental participation in the Eucharist of Children with Intellectual Disabilities	34
Appendix 4 – Celebrating the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion	37
Appendix 5 – Copyright for liturgical music and texts	40
Appendix 6 – Contacts and acknowledgements	41
Endnotes	42



## The Policy for the Initiation of Children and Infants into the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Adelaide

*The initiation of children into the life of the Church is of vital importance to the whole Church. For this reason the Second Vatican Council called for a thorough revision of all the sacramental rites. Our local Church, the Archdiocese of Adelaide, wishes to ensure that the reforms of the Council are fully adopted and has therefore formulated a clear, comprehensive policy according to which children will be initiated into the Catholic Church.*

### **Our present experience**

1. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, promulgated in 1972 as a result of the reforms of Vatican Council II, and introduced in this archdiocese in 1979, calls for all three sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, first Holy Communion – to be celebrated together in a unified rite. This pattern not only makes it clear that reconciliation is not a sacrament of initiation, but it emphasises the point that eucharistic communion is the culmination of initiation. That children around seven or eight years of age who are presented for Baptism are to be initiated in this way is stated plainly in the section within the Rite entitled, “Christian Initiation of Children who have reached Catechetical Age”.
2. This restored rite of Christian initiation was intended to bring Catholics to a deeper understanding of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and first Holy Communion. This has raised a number of questions about what had been the accepted practice in the Australian Church for nearly a century. The practice of accepting for Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion all who requested the sacraments, without the accompanying discernment as to readiness or adequate catechesis, ran the risk of turning these sacraments into “social rituals” rather than celebrating community commitment and the immersion of the initiate into Christ through the Church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, with its integrated process of stages and liturgical rites which take place in the midst of a faith community and culminate in the unified sacramental event of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, challenges the practice of Christian initiation of children of catechetical age.

3. From these experiences a number of questions emerge. Into what is the child being initiated? How do the sacraments of initiation relate to each other and to the sacrament of reconciliation? What are the roles and responsibilities of parents, godparents, parish priests, teachers, catechists, parish communities? Is there an optimum age for children to celebrate each of these sacraments? Given that Confirmation is celebrated before first Holy Communion, what implication does that have for the approach which treats Confirmation as a sacrament of maturity and adult commitment? What about children who were baptised as infants? Which pattern of sacramental practice will they follow?

### **Initiation: an historical perspective**

4. The baptism of children has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. There does not seem to be any evidence throughout the history of the Church that infants or young children were excluded from baptism when their families were either already members of the faith community or when their families became members of the faith community. From the *Apostolic Tradition* written in the first half of the third century we understand that a three-year catechumenate was common at that time. Here the emphasis was on ensuring that the candidate had begun to live his or her faith rather than on how much intellectual knowledge had been acquired. By the 17th century the catechumenate had virtually disappeared and baptism in infancy was the normal manner of becoming a Christian. The ancient, single rite of initiation that was meant to be used for adult and child alike, included catechumenal exorcisms and anointings along with the three sacraments of initiation. Over time, this was increasingly shortened, first in the case of infants and finally for everyone.
5. By the 20th century the chief focus of Christian initiation was baptism alone; with little trace of the catechumenal structure of earlier centuries, the ritual of baptism was reduced to its bare essentials. Often baptism was regarded more as a means of escaping the consequences of original sin than of being initiated into Christ through the Christian community. The connection between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist was no longer clearly made. After the 1910 decree of Pope Pius X that lowered the age for first Holy Communion to early childhood, Confirmation regularly came to be celebrated after first Holy Communion. Confirmation thus came to overshadow Eucharist as the summit of initiation and was regarded by many as the sign of entry into Christian adulthood.
6. A second element came into play in the twentieth century. For the first half of the century, the catechetical preparation of children was very much focused on learning questions and answers by rote. The "Penny Catechism" was the standard text book. The recommended way of living a Christian life revolved around fulfilling certain requirements and carrying out certain observances. While such practices resulted in a remarkable cohesion within the church community, the grave danger was that the faith of the individual would remain childish and immature. The second half of the century saw a revolution in catechetical methods, and while those that were scripturally and liturgically based were able to nourish the children in their faith, other methods were not as successful. Apart from this, society itself was changing at a great rate and families were experiencing many influences and pressures that were not always in keeping with Christian values. No longer could it be assumed that children would come to school already familiar with the stories of the Bible or having regular experience of Catholic worship. Having children of a certain age (or more particularly, at a certain year level at school) celebrate sacraments at the same time – after an identical course in church doctrine, regardless of their previous involvement in the life of the Church – might be a way of keeping "ecclesiastical administration" neat and tidy, but

"symmetry and conformity are not nearly so important as nurturing the seeds of grace, a ministry that cannot be rushed or over-ridden ... Graduating from some grade in school says no more about the quality of a child's faith and Christian identity than changing jobs says about the same factors for an adult ... Programmatic, ideological or educational regimentation cannot obtain or direct the curious ways in which grace often works. It is to grace in the initiate that the Church in its catechesis and sacraments must be appropriately obedient and faithful at whatever age."<sup>[1]</sup>

7. The Second Vatican Council was a time of rediscovery within the Church, and one of these rediscoveries was to once again name and affirm the sacrament of Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation. The Council reaffirmed the Eucharist as "the source and summit of our being" and directed that the sacraments be celebrated in the traditional order of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, an order maintained throughout the centuries in the Eastern Rites of the Church, even when this was not the practice in the Roman Rite.

### **Towards the future**

8. In the early history of the Church, members were incorporated into the Church in a unified ceremony that spoke of "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Spirit." Initiation was into the unified, Spirit-filled community that incorporated one into Christ. This unity is compromised when we try to take one part of it and associate it with a particular stage of life.
9. The Eastern Catholic Rites, along with the Orthodox Churches, have retained the unified approach to the sacraments of initiation, celebrating Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist in infancy, and then following with catechesis appropriate to the succeeding stages of development of the children. The 1983 Code of Canon Law (#891) calls for Confirmation and First Holy Communion to be celebrated round the age of discretion (normally accepted as 7 years of age).
10. Whatever the shape of the initiation process, what is being sought is an environment of example and faith sharing for our young. This means that parents and families as well as schools and parish communities will need to be drawn more deeply into the processes that we have for Baptism, Confirmation, first Holy Communion and Reconciliation.

The first step in renewing our pattern of initiation is to consider what it is that the Second Vatican Council calls us to, and then look to how we can best respond to this call.



## The Second Vatican Council calls us to Renewal

### A New Age for Liturgy

11. The Second Vatican Council (1962 – 65) was the culmination of more than a century of liturgical renewal in the Catholic Church. The Council in its turn heralded a new era of liturgical and spiritual life, leading the Church into the third millennium.
12. The liturgical reforms of Pope St Pius X promoted greater participation of the people in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, especially encouraging them in the frequent reception of Holy Communion during the Eucharist, and admitting children to share at the eucharistic table of the Lord. Pope Pius XII relaxed the laws of fasting governing the reception of Holy Communion.
13. The reforms of these popes flowed from the solid, consistent, and dedicated work of theologians, liturgists and Scripture scholars with whom they consulted. The power of the Holy Spirit continued to enlighten and guide the Church, even through times of misunderstanding and censure.

### The Second Vatican Council

14. The desire of the Council was that “all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations, which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy”. This aim was to “be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.”<sup>[12]</sup> In other words, it is by mindfully celebrating the Church’s liturgy that its members come to understand what it truly means to belong to the Body of Christ.
16. From that central principle, the Council set into motion a revision of all Catholic liturgy with special emphasis on:
  - using the languages of the people <sup>[3]</sup>
  - the increased use of the Scriptures <sup>[4]</sup>
  - the revision of the Eucharist and other sacraments <sup>[5]</sup>
  - a clearer understanding of the presence of Christ in sacramental action<sup>[6]</sup>
  - the expansion of liturgical roles to the laity <sup>[7]</sup>
  - the instruction of the people in the spirit of the liturgy<sup>[8]</sup>
  - the restoration of the eucharistic cup to the people <sup>[9]</sup>
  - the adaptation of rites to the needs of children <sup>[10]</sup>

### The Rite of Christian Initiation

16. The Second Vatican Council specifically asked that the revision of the rites of baptism for adults provide for a more solemn ritual, “taking into consideration the restored catechumenate.”<sup>[11]</sup> At the same time it called for a revision of the rite for the baptism of infants.<sup>[12]</sup> Furthermore, the revision of the rite of Confirmation was to be such that the “intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation may more clearly appear.”<sup>[13]</sup>
17. The revised *Rite of Baptism for Children* (i.e. infants) was published in English in 1971, with its emphasis on this sacrament being the first of the sacraments of initiation. In its General Introduction the document clearly named the order of sacraments as Baptism, Confirmation, and finally Eucharistic Communion. The three sacraments of initiation “closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.”<sup>[14]</sup> This ordering of the sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist – is reinforced in the chapter dealing with children of catechetical age in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.<sup>[15]</sup> This ordering is also given for baptised children who may be completing their Christian initiation with the same group.<sup>[16]</sup>
18. Pope Paul VI, when approving the new *Rite of Confirmation* in 1971, clearly defined the place of this sacrament within the sacraments of initiation.<sup>[17]</sup> That it is to be celebrated before coming to the table of the Lord in the Eucharist is understood also in the Introduction of the Rite of Confirmation (English translation published in 1973) which states that “in the Latin Church the administration of Confirmation is generally postponed until about the seventh year.”<sup>[18]</sup>

19. In 1973 the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy jointly reaffirmed the 1910 decree of Pope St. Pius X, admitting children to Eucharistic Communion "as soon as they had attained the age of reason."<sup>[19]</sup> It also required that the first reception of the sacrament of penance take place "before First Communion".
20. In 1987 the definitive English edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was published, after an interim text had been available since 1974. This document includes a chapter entitled "Christian Initiation of Children who have reached Catechetical Age". "Catechetical age" is described as including those children, not baptised as infants, who have attained the use of reason.<sup>[20]</sup>
21. When children of catechetical age are being initiated into the Church a "conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age" is required.<sup>[21]</sup> Their initiation is to be marked by the various liturgical rites of the RCIA, adapted to their understanding according to the options available.<sup>[22]</sup>

They are to have:

- the help of their companions
- the permission and influence of their parents (or sponsors in the absence of parents)
- the assistance of catechists
- godparents they choose for themselves.<sup>[23]</sup>

### Ministries for Christian Initiation

22. There are many ministries for Christian initiation.
  - (i) The **local community** has the important task of welcoming into the community those children preparing for Christian initiation, giving them the example of Christian living, and supporting them with prayer.
  - (ii) The **parents** are the primary faith educators of their children, by their good example, by their informal education, and by giving a high priority to Sunday Mass. They collaborate with the teachers in Catholic Schools or the catechists in the parish for the formal faith education of their children.<sup>[24]</sup>
  - (iii) In the case of children, the **sponsor** is the one who takes the place of parents or guardians if they cannot be present for the rites. They are to be active members of the Church who have themselves celebrated all three sacraments of initiation.<sup>[25]</sup>
  - (iv) The **godparents**, chosen by the child and approved by the priest, are people whose good qualities and friendship set good example.<sup>[26]</sup> They have an active role in the liturgical rites. When baptised children are part of the catechetical group completing their Christian initiation it is preferred that the godparents they had at baptism be their sponsors for Confirmation.<sup>[27]</sup> Godparents must be fully initiated Catholics.
  - (v) The **bishop**, or his delegate, oversees the "program of pastoral formation for catechumens and admits the candidates to their election and to the sacraments."<sup>[28]</sup> He celebrates the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, especially of those over 14 years of age.
  - (vi) The **priest** attends to "the pastoral and personal care of the catechumens."<sup>[29]</sup> He provides instruction and ensures worthy and appropriate celebration of the rites. If the bishop cannot be present to confer Confirmation, the bishop may give the priest the faculty to do this.
  - (vii) Any **deacons** within the diocese "should be ready to assist in the ministry to catechumens."<sup>[30]</sup>
  - (viii) **Catechists**, whose teaching role places upon them significant responsibility for the progress of the children preparing for initiation, should also take an active part in the rites of initiation according to the RCIA. When deputed by the bishop, they may perform the minor exorcisms and blessings contained in the ritual.
23. It is clear from all of the above that the Second Vatican Council is calling us to consider carefully the ways in which we initiate children into the Christian community. The documents reflect a shift not only in practicalities, but also a shift in the theology undergirding practice. It is to this undergirding theology that we now turn for guidance.

## A Theology of Initiation

### Initiation and the Sacraments of Initiation

24. Christian initiation is the process of being incorporated into the life of the Church and of living that life ever more deeply. Broadly understood, it is the total formation for Christian life, encompassing doctrinal and moral aspects as well as sacramental aspects. It is a lifelong process that situates us in relation to God and to each other and enables us to live in freedom as daughters and sons of God. As with any process, it goes beyond mere knowledge and "know-how" and involves the transmission of a whole way of being.
25. The sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist – mark the commitment of both the individual and the community to the lifelong process which will "bring them to the full stature of Christ and ... enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world."<sup>[31]</sup> The sacraments of initiation lay the foundations of every Christian life.<sup>[32]</sup> They situate us within the paschal mystery – the birth, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, his ascension and the sending of the Spirit. Jesus undertook his passage through death to resurrected and glorious life on behalf of us all; and his goal was to gather the whole world into his own passage to the fullness of life in God. Through the sacraments of initiation the passage of Jesus' dying and rising becomes our passage. Through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist our own humanity is caught up in the glorified humanity of Jesus: we share in God's life, we are nourished as the Body of Christ alive and we are moved by God's Holy Spirit.
26. In the revision of the sacramental rites, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was made the norm for all Christian initiation. Even though there are distinct rites for the baptism of infants, the rites for initiation of children of catechetical age (that is, from about the age of seven years) are to mirror those for the initiation of adults. When we come to reflect on the sacraments of initiation then, it is this model which provides our starting point. It is important that this is clearly understood, since the sacraments of initiation have sometimes been linked with particular stages in the life of the human person. One outcome of this is that the sacrament of Confirmation has sometimes come to be regarded as the sacrament of adult commitment, rather than as "the completion of baptismal grace",<sup>[33]</sup> and a celebration of gifts that collectively make a difference to our world as part of Jesus' saving mission. In the Roman Catholic tradition, Confirmation is not a rite of passage any more than Baptism is a ritual sanctification of the birth of a child. None of the sacraments of initiation can be considered as distinct from each other, since all three draw us into the paschal mystery of Christ and mark us as people moving with Christ towards resurrected life in God. As the document, *The General Introduction to Christian Initiation*, states: "...the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world." To link them, then, to stages of life is to distort their true meaning and significance; to link them with our passage through life and death to eternal glory with the risen Christ is to give them their true meaning and significance.

### Baptism

27. It is Baptism, the first of the sacraments of initiation, that makes us Christian. Baptism "is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, we are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission."<sup>[34]</sup> To be immersed in the baptismal font or pool and to be drawn forth from its waters is to die and rise in Christ. (cf Romans 6:1-5)
28. Baptism is not the ritual expression of a faith already existing; it is the starting point for growth in a faith that will be experienced within a Christian community. This is why *The General Instruction to Christian Initiation* recommends that "in the actual celebration, the people of God (represented not only by the parents, godparents, and relatives, but also, as far as possible, by friends, neighbours, and some members of the local Church) should take an active part. Thus they will show their common faith and express their joy as the newly baptised are received into the community of the Church."<sup>[35]</sup> It is also recommended that baptisms take place "during the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday, when the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection. Baptism on Sunday may be celebrated during Mass, so that the entire community is present and the relationship between Baptism and Eucharist is clearly seen."<sup>[36]</sup>

29. Infant baptism has been a tradition of the Church from the earliest times. It is linked strongly to the faith of the parents, who, during the baptismal ceremony name faith for their child as what they are seeking. The importance then, of an environment in which the faith of the child can be nurtured and sustained, cannot be overstressed. The role of parents and godparents is paramount, but it exists in the context of the "whole ecclesial community [that] bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism."<sup>1371</sup> It is only through adequate faith formation after baptism, that children can ultimately come to accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptised. The responsibility for this faith formation lies both with the parents of the child and with the faith community that is called to support them in an enduring way.

## Confirmation

30. As previously noted, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* asked for a revision of the rite of Confirmation "in order that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation may stand out more clearly." Through the sacrament of Confirmation, "those who have been born anew in Baptism receive the inexpressible Gift, the Holy Spirit, by whom they are endowed with special strength."<sup>1381</sup> While the primary symbol for Baptism is water, the primary symbol for Confirmation is oil. There is a long-standing connection between oil and water: the practice of anointing the body with oil after coming out of the bath is an ancient one. Moreover, in the religious tradition of Israel, perfumed oil was used to anoint priests, prophets and kings (cf Exodus 28:41; 1 Samuel 16:13). The oil was poured lavishly over their heads in order to 'seal' them in a new relationship with God. The fragrant oil was an outward sign of God's grace and favour, God's blessing and joy, God's gracious presence in their lives. Baptism and Confirmation together make a double sacramental sign that uses oil and water. In the waters of Baptism, we are made one with Jesus in his death and resurrection; in the anointing with holy oil, we are made one with the Spirit-filled Jesus in his ascension to lordship at the right hand of the Father, where he is the great High Priest, Prophet and King forever.
31. The link between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist is stressed more than once in the document by which Pope Paul VI approved the revised *Rite of Confirmation*. He writes: "Finally, Confirmation is so closely linked with the holy Eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by Baptism and Confirmation, are incorporated fully into the Body of Christ by participation in Holy Communion."<sup>1391</sup> Our full participation in the Church's Eucharist is the crowning point of Christian initiation. Joined to Jesus through Baptism and Confirmation in his passage to the life of glory, we celebrate with him the banquet feast of the kingdom. Clearly, the accepted order for the sacraments of initiation must be Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, so that the significance of Eucharist can be seen for what it is: the gracious invitation of God to rejoice in the communion of life forever. Eucharist is the culmination of initiation and remains the constant means of our ongoing Christian commitment.
32. The ritual associated with the conferral of the Spirit has varied throughout the history of the Church. In the Eastern Churches, from early times, a rite of chrismation or anointing has prevailed. In the West, while anointing has always been a feature, it has often been accompanied by a prior laying on of hands. Both these elements have been retained in the revised Roman rite of 1971. In actual fact there are two "laying on of hands" within the Confirmation rite – the first, a general laying on of hands by the bishop before the anointing as he says the prayer for the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit, the second – an individual laying on of hands by the bishop as he anoints each candidate. It is this second laying on of hands which is essential to the integrity of the sacrament. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that "the imposition of hands is rightly recognised by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church." (#1288) It also points to the Letter to the Hebrews which lists the doctrine concerning baptism and the laying on of hands as being among the first elements of Christian instruction.
33. The primary minister of Confirmation is the bishop – thereby highlighting the close bond between the one being confirmed and the whole Church. Besides the bishop, the vicar general of the diocese may also confirm. When an adult (or child of catechetical age) is baptised or received into full communion with the Church, the priest presiding at the ceremony confirms as well as baptises the person. Where it is not possible for the bishop to carry out all the confirmations in a diocese due to the number of persons being confirmed, the pastor of the place where the candidates belong, or a priest who has had a special part in the preparation of the candidates, may be delegated to administer the sacrament of Confirmation.<sup>1401</sup>

34. The first option given in the *Rite of Confirmation* is that it take place within the celebration of Eucharist so that the basic connection of this sacrament with the rest of Christian initiation clearly stands out. The newly-confirmed then take part in holy Communion, thus completing their Christian initiation. The connection between Confirmation and Eucharist is such that the Introduction to the Rite of Confirmation suggests that if children are not going to be admitted to First Communion at this celebration, then Confirmation should be celebrated outside of Mass. When practical considerations compel the celebration of Confirmation on a weekday, the celebration of first Holy Communion should take place on the following Sunday, during the parish Mass.
35. If Confirmation is to be celebrated concurrently with First Holy Communion, or at about the same time, then it is clear that catechesis concerning life in the Spirit needs to be ongoing as the child matures. The whole of Christian life needs to be seen as a life in the Spirit: Confirmation cannot bear this entire responsibility. The Liturgical Year itself offers many occasions to express this life in the Spirit, particularly the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday when the renewal of baptismal vows takes place. Every celebration of Eucharist or the sacrament of Penance, times of retreat, Lenten practices and other Catholic devotions offer opportunities to persevere in the life of grace and make concrete decisions about how this life is to be lived in relationship and in service.

## **Eucharist**

36. Full participation in the Mass, through sharing in holy Communion, completes Christian initiation. The documents of Vatican II refer to the Mass as the "source and summit of the Christian life"<sup>[41]</sup> and declare that "the other sacraments, like every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are linked with the holy Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For the Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ himself."<sup>[42]</sup> To share at the table of the Lord, then, is to acknowledge that the paschal mystery of Christ is at the heart of the life of the community and that it is the ongoing sharing in this mystery that will continue to give meaning to our lives.
37. In the Eucharist we are called to constant renewal of commitment to the Gospel, to membership of the Body of Christ [the Church], to covenant relationship with God through Christ, and to a life of service for the good of the whole world. Baptism and Confirmation can only be received once; their effect is for once and for ever. It is through Baptism that we are made Christian; it is through Confirmation that we are strengthened with the gift of the Spirit; but it is Eucharist, the sacrament which we celebrate over and over which makes us "Church" and draws us ever deeper and deeper into the mystery and mission of Christ.
38. In summary, then, the sacraments of initiation draw us into the saving mystery of Jesus' passage through life, death and resurrection to the right hand of God. The Church is the community of that passage. It proclaims a paschal faith and lives in paschal joy. The emphasis in Christian initiation is on the process for living a full Christian life and not just on the actual celebration of any particular sacrament. The catechesis that supports and guides the lives of Christians, then, cannot be just an immediate process of a few months or a year. It is a whole-of-life requirement. And it is not just given to individuals but to those who surround the candidate, family and friends. The more we hear the good news of Jesus Christ proclaimed by the Church, the more we recognise that God's plan for our salvation is to gather the world together in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit – to create a new household of God, centred on the table of the feast in the kingdom. Salvation does not lie in a private and individual relationship with God; rather it is found in our personal incorporation into the family of God and our sharing with the family in the life of God. Indeed, ongoing catechesis is both the task of and the need of the whole faith community. With that in mind, let us turn now to guidelines for the implementation of the process of initiation of children of catechetical age and infants within our own diocese.

# ● Our Children's Journey in the Faith Community



## Infant Baptism

The faith of parents seeks a life of faith for their child in Baptism.

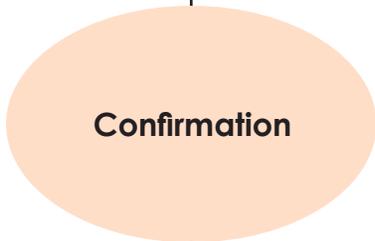
Prayer and sensitivity to spiritual things begin here, as family faith life introduces children to the story of Jesus and to prayer within the family.

When the child begins school, new friendships and relationships take place. A more formal process of faith education begins, enriched by the active faith life of the family.

## First Reconciliation

As the child matures, sensitivity to concepts of right and wrong, forgiveness and reconciliation develop.

Participation in the faith community, especially Sunday Eucharist intensifies.



## Confirmation

Formal preparation for the sacraments continues. Parents and teachers discern with the priest, the readiness of the child to celebrate Confirmation and First Holy Communion.



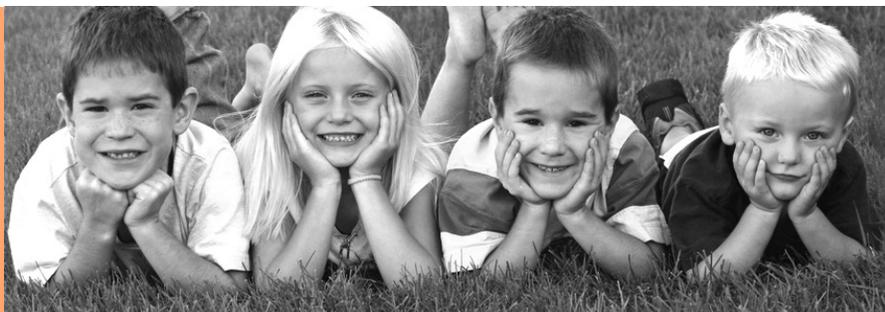
## First Holy Communion within Eucharist

Sharing in the Faith Community with the family at Sunday Eucharist brings with it a deeper sense of belonging to this community.

# Diocesan Policy for the Christian Initiation of Children

In the Archdiocese of Adelaide the policy for the Christian Initiation of Children and Infants is summarised as follows:

- The practice of the celebration of infant Baptism will continue.
- Children of catechetical age who were not baptised as infants are to be fully initiated with the three sacraments of initiation within the one ceremony in the parish to which they belong.
- For children baptised as infants, Confirmation will normally be conferred by the bishop in the parish to which the children belong. If the sacrament is celebrated during Sunday Eucharist, then first Holy Communion will normally be celebrated during that Eucharist. When Confirmation is celebrated on a weeknight, using the Rite of Confirmation outside Mass, first Holy Communion will be celebrated at the following Sunday Eucharist in the parish to which the children belong.
- The celebration of sacraments is not tied to any particular age or level of schooling, but is determined by the desire and readiness of the child. Since the Eucharist is the heart of Christian faith, it is expected that children will be familiar with the responses and prayers of the Mass and know how to participate in its celebration.
- The acceptance and inclusion of all children and young people, regardless of any disability, in the life of the worshipping community is a high priority in the Archdiocese of Adelaide. Consequently, parish sacramental celebrations are open to persons with disabilities and their full, active and conscious participation is encouraged according to their capacity. Families and teachers/catechists of children with an intellectual disability, together with the priest, are able to discern the indicators that demonstrate a child's desire for the Eucharist as the basis of determining the appropriate time for the child to be confirmed and receive Holy Communion. (See Appendix 3)
- Discernment of readiness is in all cases the joint responsibility of parents, teacher/catechist and priest.



## Guidelines for implementation of the diocesan policy on the initiation of children

### Baptism

1. Our traditional practice is to baptise children as infants. This takes place according to *The Rite of Baptism for Children* (i.e. infants).
2. Every parish is encouraged to form a baptism preparation team to assist parents and godparents to prepare for the baptism of their infants and to support them beyond the celebration of the baptism. Since preparation for infant baptism is a prime opportunity for faith formation of those presenting infants for baptism, parents are required to have a minimum of two preparation sessions following their initial contact with parish personnel. (See Appendix 2.)
3. Infants and children are normally baptised in the parish of residence, or the parish where the family regularly prays.
4. When two or more children are baptised in a parish on the same day, they are to be baptised at the same ceremony.<sup>[43]</sup> It is desirable that some baptisms be celebrated during a Sunday Eucharist, especially during Easter Time since the meaning of baptism is most fully expressed when celebrated in the midst of the faith community gathered for Sunday Eucharist.
5. Even when pastoral reasons deem it more appropriate to celebrate baptism outside the local parish, it is recommended that at least some of the preparation for baptism be undertaken within the local parish. In order for this to happen, the local parish is to be informed in writing well before the date of the baptism.
6. Parishes are encouraged to welcome and acknowledge the newly-baptised even when the baptism has taken place elsewhere, and to provide ongoing support for the parents.
7. Since baptism is initiation into the Christian community, the presence of members from the wider parish community at parish Baptisms is encouraged, even when not celebrated within the Eucharist. To make this possible, announcement of the baptism is to be made to the parish prior to the celebration.
8. It is appropriate to celebrate the first part of *The Rite of Baptism* (viz. the reception of the infant) prior to the actual baptism, especially if the baptism occurs outside of Mass. The Rite of Reception consists of naming the child, asking the parents and godparents if they understand what they are undertaking, welcoming the child into the community, and signing the child with the sign of the cross. This ceremony can take place during a parish Mass in the weeks prior to the baptism. It is a good introduction of the child and his/her family to the community.
9. When unbaptised children of catechetical age are presented for Christian initiation, parents, godparents, parish and school need to co-operate in the preparation of the child and of the baptismal liturgy. In this case, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Children of who have reached Catechetical Age*<sup>[44]</sup> is to be used and the three sacraments of initiation celebrated together. (See paragraphs 20 and 21 earlier in this document.) Normally, the celebration will take place in the parish to which the child belongs.

### Confirmation and first Holy Communion

10. Confirmation is more properly celebrated according to the traditional unified order of Christian initiation, namely, Baptism, Confirmation and first Holy Communion.
11. Parishes and schools work together to help parents in the faith formation of their children and in the immediate preparation of children for Confirmation and first holy Communion. As sacraments of the whole Church, Confirmation and first Holy Communion are to be celebrated within the parish context; confining the celebration(s) exclusively to a school community is strongly discouraged.

12. Ideally, Confirmation is celebrated in the same liturgy as first holy Communion, within a Sunday Eucharist, in the child's parish. Unless the number of candidates is very small, parishes will provide a number of occasions for these celebrations. This policy also applies for adolescents. However, since the Archbishop wishes personally to administer the sacrament, the normal practice in the archdiocese of Adelaide will be that when Confirmation cannot be celebrated by the bishop during Sunday Eucharist it will be celebrated on a weekday, using the *Rite of Confirmation Outside Mass*. Once confirmed, children should celebrate their first Holy Communion at the following Sunday Eucharist in their parish.
13. While the ordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation is the Archbishop, the Vicar General and other priests delegated by the Archbishop may also officiate at the sacrament. On all occasions it is good to remind those being confirmed of their special relationship with the Archbishop who is the Chief Shepherd of the diocese, and of their place and obligations within the diocesan family.
14. For children belonging to an Eastern Catholic Church, the guidelines in the booklet *Eastern Catholics in Australia* (published by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference) must be followed:

In the Eastern Catholic Churches, Chrismation is always received at the time of Baptism...As many Eastern Catholic children attend Catholic schools under the control of the Latin Church, it often happens that they are involved in sacramental preparation programs. It is at this time that the question of Chrismation arises. **As the Sacrament of Chrismation cannot be repeated any attempt to do so is strictly prohibited.**

If at the time of Confirmation for the class or group of children in the sacramental program, it is found that a child belonging to an Eastern Church has not yet received the sacrament of Chrismation, the child cannot be chrismated by a bishop of the Latin Church but must be presented for the sacrament to a member of the clergy of his or her own Church.

Any children from the Eastern Churches, and any children of the Latin Rite who have been confirmed in infancy or earlier childhood may be presented for a  **blessing**  at the end of the Confirmation ceremony, before the Final Blessing. However, it must be clear that they are  **not receiving the sacrament of Confirmation** . In the Archdiocese of Adelaide, Catholics from the following Rites are present in significant numbers: Maronites, Melchites, Chaldeans, Ukrainian, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara.

In order to emphasise the different situation for any children who have already been confirmed, their presentation is delayed until the Archbishop (or other celebrant) has had time to remove the oil of chrism from his hands.

A clear announcement is to be made to advise the congregation of the situation, with due sensitivity for the child and parents. The name of the child should not be listed with the candidates for Confirmation in the booklets, but noted separately, with a simple comment that the child, having already been confirmed, will be receiving a blessing from the Archbishop/Vicar General/Priest. The child does not receive a Confirmation certificate.

15. There are three main emphases to the theology and liturgy of Confirmation:
  - The **laying on of hands**
  - The **anointing with the oil of chrism**
  - **Eucharist** celebrated for the first time **with Holy Communion, as fully initiated Catholic Christians**.

The celebration of Confirmation needs to point very clearly to these three elements. For this reason, **the use of candles by the candidates** in the Confirmation ceremony is not appropriate.

16. The celebration of Confirmation/ First Communion between Easter and Pentecost is encouraged.

## Roles and responsibilities for initiating baptised children of catechetical age

### Parents

17. Parents are the primary or first educators of their children in the ways of faith, and are aided in this by the more formal education provided by parishes and schools.
18. Parents educate and form their children in the ways of faith by their example of Christian living, sharing of the faith, household prayer, and by providing their children with experiences of the faith community, particularly the Sunday Eucharist.
19. Parents have an essential role in discerning the readiness of their children for Confirmation and first Holy Communion.
20. The role of the parents in all sacraments of initiation is to present their children, not to act as their sponsors.

### Parishes and Schools

21. Parishes and schools provide formal programs for sacramental preparation which enable parents to be involved in the process with their children.
22. Parish and school communities collaborate in the preparation and celebration of sacraments of initiation.
23. Parishes and schools provide opportunities for families to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Christian initiation and the sacraments.
24. All members of the parish have a role in the initiation of children, through community and personal prayer support, hospitality, and witness to Christian living.
25. Particular attention needs to be given to resourcing families who assume the responsibility of the formal faith education of their children. This is especially so in rural parishes and for families with children in government schools.
26. Initiation is the responsibility of the **whole parish community**. Even when children are prepared for sacraments within a particular school or college, the actual celebration of the sacraments of Confirmation and first Holy Communion takes place in the parish church to which the child belongs, according to personal readiness. At all times, children from State and Catholic Schools should celebrate sacraments in the parish together.
27. The Catholic school is to provide on-going sacramental catechesis for all children at all primary year levels and as part of the secondary school Religious Education program. Catechesis on sacraments extends far beyond preparation for the celebration of a particular sacrament.



## Children with disabilities

28. The acceptance and inclusion of all children and young people, regardless of any disability, in the life of the worshipping community is a high priority in the Archdiocese of Adelaide. Consequently, parish sacramental celebrations are open to persons with disabilities and their full, active and conscious participation is encouraged according to their capacity. Families and teachers/catechists of children with an intellectual disability, together with the priest, are able to discern the indicators that demonstrate a child's desire for the Eucharist as the basis of determining the appropriate time for the child to be confirmed and receive Holy Communion. *(See Appendix 3 for the full diocesan policy on children with intellectual disabilities and their preparation for First Holy Communion.)*

## Other Diocesan Agencies

29. The parish and school communities are encouraged to collaborate with each other. Other diocesan agencies may be called upon to provide ongoing faith formation and resources for parents. *(See Appendix 6 for list of Agencies.)*
30. Diocesan resources are to be made available to ensure the implementation of appropriate education so that parents, parishes and schools can fulfil their particular roles and responsibilities.

## Godparents and Sponsors

31. Parents are to choose godparents with care. Godparents are to be baptised and confirmed Catholics of at least sixteen years of age who regularly participate in the Mass, so that they will be able to provide support in the faith formation of the child and give a good example of Christian living in the Catholic tradition.
32. While the godparent or sponsor must be a practising Catholic, a baptised person from another Christian tradition may be chosen as a Christian witness, together with the Catholic godparent or sponsor.
33. If a sponsor cannot be present for the celebration of Confirmation, a proxy should act on his or her behalf.
34. Please note the responsibility of parish priests, as per Canon 890.



### Penance – the Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. It is our understanding of being immersed into the paschal mystery that leads us to reclaim the unified approach to the sacraments of initiation. However, the emphasis on Baptism-Confirmation-Eucharist as a unified process brings with it the dilemma of what to do about Penance – the sacrament of Reconciliation – which is not a sacrament of initiation. The present practice of Reconciliation before first Holy Communion complies with Church legislation (Canon 914) but seems to interrupt the process of full initiation. Reconciliation is the sacrament of re-initiation and is strictly necessary only for those who have committed grave sin.
2. The preparation of young children to celebrate Reconciliation is best placed in the context of the child's ongoing conversion to Christ, which begins at Baptism and continues on throughout the whole of life. Such a preparation needs to be simple and in keeping with the age and development of the child. (The spirit of the *Directory for Masses with Children* needs to be taken into account here.) As with the other sacraments, it will be the joint responsibility of parents, teacher/catechist and priest to discern the readiness of the child to celebrate Reconciliation.
3. There are three forms of the *Rite of Reconciliation*, and it would seem that the Second Form is most appropriate for the child's first experience of this sacrament. This is so for a number of reasons:
  - a) The Scripture Reading(s), homily and guided examination of conscience allow the children to see how their actions and choices have affected and even hurt others, and to understand the need to ask forgiveness both from God and from those whom they have hurt.
  - b) By approaching the priest individually, and receiving the laying on of hands and the words of forgiveness, the children experience in a concrete way the healing and loving touch of God.
  - c) The communal preparation and thanksgiving help the children to understand that this sacrament is the action of the whole community.
4. Lent is an appropriate time for the initial experience of the sacrament of Reconciliation. It is suggested that the children have the opportunity to celebrate one of the forms of the *Rite of Reconciliation* regularly, or to participate in a Penitential Service as modelled in the *Rite of Penance*. (See Appendix D of the Rite.)
5. Even though celebration of Reconciliation is mandatory before first Holy Communion, the children should not be given the impression that first Reconciliation is simply a preparation for first Holy Communion. Rather, it is best regarded as part of the ongoing commitment to Christ, and a regular part of the life of a Catholic.

### Preparation sessions for parents presenting their infants for baptism

The following resource, *That they may have life*, prepared by the Adult Faith Education team, Brisbane © 2009, has been approved for use in the Archdiocese of Adelaide.

### Preparation for Infants' Baptism

Organisation and Environment	21
Session One:	
Welcome and Introductions	23
Symbol and Ritual	23
A Treasure of our faith: Baptism	24
What Name Have You Given Your Child?	25
What Do You Ask of God's Church?	25
Signing With the Cross	26
Celebration of the Word and Intercessions	27
Worksheet	28
Session Two:	
Purpose	29
Welcome and Re-group	29
Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism	30
Blessing of the Water	30
Professing our Faith	30
Baptism and Anointing with Chrism	31
White Garment	31
'I am the Light'	32
The Lord's Prayer and Final Blessing	32
Session after Baptism – Mystagogy	33

***Baptism is a birth into the Christian community.  
In every way it is as solemn and important as birth itself.  
It is an event for which the parents must be prepared.***

# Organisation and Environment

## Attending to the needs...

---

Given the needs and issues for this generation, organisation and environmental issues in preparing parents for the Baptism of their child are suggested below. If we want to engage this generation, there is no choice other than to give these suggestions serious consideration. Elements that are worth considering and are outlined below include:

- ❖ Relationships
- ❖ Hospitality
- ❖ Interactive sessions
- ❖ Flexibility and transparency
- ❖ Effective use of time
- ❖ Meaningful discussion
- ❖ Information
- ❖ Evangelisation
- ❖ Technology

### Relationship Centred

1. Provide name tags written in clear bold large print.
2. Call each person by name.
3. Take the time to find out who is with whom and their relationship.
4. Take the time to find out what the family situation is... is this first, second, third child etc.
5. Make sure you greet each person [or couple], introduce yourself and tell them what your role is. Ask them their names and where they are from. Introduce them to one other couple.
6. Introduce parents to one another and allow them time to connect.
7. Invite parishioners [Companions, baptism buddies, family sponsors] to attend the preparation sessions to welcome and be a face of the parish.

Relationships can be established and sustained through attention to hospitality, being flexible, keeping sessions well-paced, allowing time for questions, structuring sessions to engage adults in meaningful discussion, preparing informative sessions which contain information about the Rite of Baptism. Preparation sessions need to engage in evangelisation in order to empower young adults to re-connect with their faith.

### Hospitality

1. Set up the meeting space to create an atmosphere that is inviting and welcoming.

2. Have tea/coffee facilities at hand so you can offer it to parents as they arrive. Simple snacks can add to the welcome.
3. Have a toy box/children's books or other quiet activities ready in case parents need to bring children with them at the last minute.

### Interactive

1. Arrange chairs for the formal part of the evening in a circle. (Baptism Team members, facilitators, baptism buddies, family sponsors are seated as part of the group.) This allows good communication and an interactive process. A classroom style format has connotations of 'we are the knowledgeable ones' and does not assist discussion and openness.
2. Have a participant's booklet and any necessary handouts ready for each participant.
3. Have TV and Video or PowerPoint Screen set close to the group so parents can readily move to view without too much disruption.
4. Check the video is cued, or PowerPoint is set up ready to be viewed prior to the commencement of the session. (Group re-forms in a circle after the viewing.)
5. Provide 'space' in the preparation session for parents to ask questions, share ideas and wisdoms. (e.g. use small groups.)
6. Engage in a variety of processes and facilitation throughout each session.
7. Include children where possible.

### Flexible and Transparent

1. This is often a difficult stage of life for parents if there are new additions to families. It is a time of adjustment and balancing the needs of newborns and their family. Failure to meet parish requests and expectations is usually not deliberate. It often comes about through other things impacting on young people's lives. BE FLEXIBLE!
2. Build relationships in order to understand what the needs of individuals are. This assists you in being less judgemental.
3. Have a clear process that can be easily communicated to parents, allowing time for them to organise their lives around that.

4. Be prepared to adjust sessions to meet the needs of parents while maintaining the integrity of the parish process.

### **Effective use of time**

1. If parents have made the effort to arrange their lives to come to the preparation sessions, they want it to be worthwhile.
2. Parents genuinely want to be informed – especially partners who are not Catholic. Be conscious of creating a safe environment where questions and discussions are encouraged.
3. Use the wisdom of the group by inviting comments, discussion and sharing of life experiences.
4. Address the issue of the possibility of it being a long time since they have had any faith formation and it's okay not to 'know'.

### **Structured to engage in meaningful discussion**

1. Allow participants time for processing their thoughts. Be comfortable with silence. Try not to rush 'spaces' for sharing. Often it takes a few minutes for people to process what you have just said or asked.
2. Use the Think/Pair/Share strategy. Allow a few minutes for all to 'think'. After a short time invite them to 'pair' with the person beside them to discuss briefly their ideas. Finally, invite anyone to 'share' any insights, questions or reflection with the larger group.

### **Informative**

1. Facilitators need to be formed and informed. Ensure Baptism team members are well trained and understand the Rite of Baptism and the pastoral needs of parents.
2. Facilitators need to be prepared and have their handbooks ready prior to commencement of the session.
3. Facilitators working together need to organise their roles prior to the session.
4. Have short, informative and readable materials available for parents to take home and read.
5. Be conscious of your language. Often 'church' language is used and it is assumed that everyone knows what it means. This is not the case. Make sure you explain any ecclesial and liturgical language that you use.

6. Be careful not to make excuses for Church beliefs and practices. You are the face of the Church. You are performing an important ministry and need to be mindful of not causing scandal through flippant behaviour and/or comments. Be comfortable in your own 'Catholic skin'.
7. While Gen X and Gen Y want to learn, they don't want to be preached at. They want to know what you believe and why you believe it.

### **Baptism information**

1. Set up a focus space in the middle of the circle of chairs displaying a white cloth, an open Bible, cross, sand tray and small votive candles. For the second session add water, oil and the Paschal Candle.
2. Some parishes choose to provide a booklet to assist parents with understanding the Sacrament of Baptism and its importance to the infant's faith-life journey.

### **Evangelisation and empowerment**

1. The preparation for Baptism is a golden opportunity for those involved in this ministry to evangelise the parents.
2. For many parents this is the first contact with the Church since their own schooling.
3. Your own passion and enthusiasm will be infectious. This is the beginning of the faith journey for the infant and parents need it to be a faith experience for themselves as well.
4. Be genuine and don't rush prayer. Don't make excuses for using prayer. Parents expect that there will be prayer when attending these sessions.

### **Appropriate use of technology**

1. It is essential that appropriate technology be used for communication. This generation operates in a technological age. Email is the most effective means of communication and SMS reminders to mobile phones could also be used sometimes.
2. In sessions use multi-media and create sessions that are multi-modal, flexible and appropriate.
3. Don't just use technology for the sake of it. It has to be meaningful and add to the overall learning and formation experience.

# SESSION ONE

## Purpose

---

One purpose of this session is to create an environment of welcome and inclusion, to set the tone so that parents feel comfortable and not threatened. It is in this environment that parents are led through a process of deepening their understanding of what it means to live their own Baptismal call and lead their infants into a loving relationship with God who sustains and gifts each of us.

Baptism is called the gateway to life with God. The Archdiocese of Adelaide tries to express this in the vision of Jesus, Communion and Mission – to be Catholic in the reality of daily life.

Baptism is a call to embrace the person and vision of Jesus, to build communion with God and others and to engage in Jesus' mission in our world.

In this first session, parents are invited to reflect on their own journey in faith. They will be invited to discuss what the implications are for their infants as they grow and develop. How will they support them to live out this Baptismal call to discipleship as they advance through each of the stages of their lives? This is a beginning ...

## Welcome and Introductions

---

The Baptism team and companions or sponsors welcome parents at the door and have ready a simple morning tea, afternoon tea or supper. Provide name tags and any handouts necessary for the session.

Allow time and space for parents to meet each other. Hospitality underpins evangelisation and welcome. Be particularly mindful of who is Catholic, who belongs to another church and who may not be Christian and is there solely to support his/her spouse.

Once everyone has arrived and met others present the facilitator invites all into the formal space for the evening and again welcomes them and introduces him/herself. (Say a little about yourself and your role in the group.)

The facilitator then invites parents to briefly introduce themselves and their children e.g. Name, spouse's/partner's name, number of children, and the baby's name.

Congratulate the parents on their new arrival, where appropriate, and on their decision to seek Baptism for their child. Say that the Church shares their joy and is ready to help them as they begin their journey in faith.

Spend a little time explaining briefly the process of the two preparation sessions: parish expectations, administration etc.

Use the participants' booklets, handouts or PowerPoint to explain what topics this session will cover.

## Symbol and Ritual

---

Invite parents to think of what signs they see every day of their lives, e.g. road signs, shop names, advertising boards. If you have a white board or flip chart available it may be helpful to write these up.

Ask parents their understanding of symbols. Symbols are also part of the secular world e.g. married couples see their wedding ring as a symbol of their love and commitment.

Explain the difference between signs and symbols: signs give direction and notify; Christian symbols give meaning to a God-given reality and express the deepest mysteries of our faith.

We experience these mysteries through our senses of hearing, seeing, smelling and touching during the ritual of Baptism.

Invite the parents to think of any rituals they might experience in everyday life, e.g. getting up in the morning, dinner, bath and bedtime, Anzac Day, Australia Day, football match.

Make the link to the church ritual which is called the Rite of Baptism. This is key – an important link to be made.

# A Treasure of our Faith: Baptism

## A Word for Facilitators

---

The following points may be used to give a brief input and context for parents. More importantly it is essential for facilitators and members of the Baptism Team to have a clear understanding of the theology of Baptism.

### 1. It is a Rite of Initiation: being brought into a 'community'

Baptism is not a private ceremony. It is initiation into the Church community and all that that entails. It is the beginning of fostering a sense of belonging. It is about participating in the many things that parish communities do. It is about bringing the child into relationship with the many people who make up that community.

Any relationship needs presence. It needs active participation and mutual giving and receiving to assist in the growth and development of that relationship. This is true in individual families and in the family of the parish community.

Baptism forever changes the one baptised and the family he/she belongs to. It cannot be reversed. It is a key celebration in the life of the child, the family and the parish community.

All sacraments are communal and Baptism is celebrated in the Christian community as a visible sign of the Body of Christ. It is instituted by Christ and it is to give grace in order to foster a greater relationship with God. Sacraments acknowledge the relationship between us and the Father, Son and Spirit – the blessed Trinity and they enhance our relationships with one another.

### 2. Original Sin and Actual Sin

All of us inherit sinful tendencies (original sin). It is a tendency to wrongdoing. Through Baptism we share Christ's victory over sin. We are set free from original sin.

As infants reach the age of reason, they are then capable of committing sin (deliberately choosing to do wrong), as we all are. It is through the grace of Baptism that we are able to turn back to God's grace and receive forgiveness for this sin.

### 3. So, IS There Really A God?

It is important not to put parents on the spot and embarrass them. These questions may be too challenging, particularly if you have not given time to establishing relationships in the group.

It is always important in any group sharing that participants are given the option to share and to gauge how much is shared. You may prefer to leave this discussion for the second session.

Invite the parents to spend some time thinking about the following questions:

- ❖ *What do you think of God?*
- ❖ *What image do you have of God?*
- ❖ *What role does God play for you in your life?*
- ❖ *When did you feel closest to God?*

After a few moments, invite parents to discuss the questions in pairs.

Once there has been adequate time to discuss with a partner, facilitate a whole group discussion on the topic.

Invite discussion around the need for a relationship with God.

- ❖ *How might one maintain this relationship?*
- ❖ *What assistance do you think you might need?*
- ❖ *How can the parish assist you?*

## What name have you given your child?

---

Invite parents to spend a few minutes thinking about how/why they gave their child his/her name – is there a story?

You may like to share one story of how you or one of your own children's names was chosen.

Invite each couple (if attending together) or individuals to share this with the large group.

**Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 32-37**

### Ritual Action

**Leader:** Invite the participants to join in the following simple ritual. Open the ritual by reading the text from Isaiah.

### Scripture: A reading from the prophet Isaiah

But now thus says the Lord,  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.  
Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you,  
nations in exchange for your life.  
Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you.

Invite each set of parents to light a small candle for their child from the large candle and place it on a sand tray. As they do this they will say their child's name for all to hear.

After having done this, each family then enters their child's name into the Baptism Enrolment Book. [Date, Name of Child, Date of Birth, Parent's signature]

**Leader:** Let us pray:

Loving God we hold up to you these little ones who will be presented for Baptism in the coming weeks. You have called each by name. We ask your loving protection as we prepare for their welcome into our Catholic community. We make this prayer through Jesus your Son. AMEN.

You may wish to conclude using [teaching] the refrain which may be used in the Baptism ritual:

C: Blessed be God! O blessed be God!  
All: Blessed be God! O blessed be God!  
C: Who calls you by name!  
All: Who calls you by name!  
C: Holy and chosen one!  
All: Holy and chosen one!

*[Gather Australia 161, David Haas © 1988]*

Another suggested song is: *You Are Mine, As One Voice*, Vol II, No. 2, David Haas.

## What do you ask of God's Church for your child?

---

Invite parents to share their experience of attending a Baptism. Be mindful that some may not have had this experience. Take note of the references to atmosphere, symbols used, words or actions.

What were the positives or negatives of this experience? **Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 37-38**

Invite discussion on what they imagine their child's Baptism may be like. What will it look like, sound like; what will the atmosphere be like? Ask them what they want for their child from the Church.

Following the sharing, introduce the next statement and question that will be asked of the parents.

**Read slowly the Rite of Baptism Nos. 39-42** to give participants time to 'hear' what it says.

In this session it is important not to "test" the parents but rather pose questions for them to think about and to help the group to enter into discussion. Research shows that parents may know in their hearts what they want but find it difficult to articulate in Church language.

- ❖ *What types of things happen in your home that 'train children in the practice of their faith'?*
- ❖ *What family rules/practices do you have that help children to understand about 'loving God and neighbour'?*
- ❖ *What activities can you participate in within the Parish community that will assist your children in learning about their faith?*

Allow time for discussion, and be comfortable with silences that may be needed. Invite the Baptism Companion to join with the parents in the discussion.

After a few minutes invite questions or points of clarification.

**Godparents:** Explain to the parents that the godparents will be addressed during the Liturgy

and asked questions pertaining to their own faith and their willingness to support the parents.

#### **Read aloud Rite of Baptism Nos. 40-42**

Ask the parents: How might the Godparents you have chosen respond to this question? Will they be able to support you in your duty as Christian parents?

Inform the parents that it is a requirement that they have at least one Godparent who has been fully initiated in the Catholic Church [i.e. Baptised, Confirmed and received First Eucharist] and over the age of 16.

The godparents' role is a supportive one that assists parents in forming their child in the Christian faith. They model Christian values and attitudes.

Invite any questions/clarifications from the parents.

## Signing with the Cross

Recall the discussion between a sign and a symbol. [Signs point to something or name a product or place. Symbols indicate a greater reality expressing a mystery that uses the senses rather than words to express meaning.]

#### **Read aloud the Rite of Baptism Nos. 41**

Invite participants to share their understanding or use of the cross. When/where do we see this cross in society?

Explain that the sign of the cross is a symbol for Christians around the world. It is a mark every Christian wears either visibly or invisibly. It is a reminder of the love God has for each of by giving us Jesus who suffered and died for us.

In Jesus' time the cross was a mark of shame, but the early Christians turned it around and used it as a sign of God's gift of great love, of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

#### **Ritual of signing**

Explain the ritual of making the Sign of the Cross.

Discuss ways the Sign of the Cross can be used in their homes during the child's formative years.

Invite parents to sign their child each night as they put him/her to bed.

As the child starts school, sign him/her each morning before leaving the house.

Invite other ideas from the parents.

*The Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his cross.*



## Celebration of God's Word

---

Invite parents to name any stories they remember from Scripture. Allow time for them to think.

Are there any stories from Scripture that you particularly remember about water, oil, white garments or light? Use worksheet: 'Water, Oil, White, Light' [included at the end of session one] and invite participants to form small groups and brainstorm ideas.

Invite each group to add to the white board replica or flip chart of the same handout.

Once everyone has added their suggestions continue with the discussion.

What are the qualities that we can name from these stories and that you would like your children to learn as they grow in their Christian faith?

Write these up as they are suggested. These are the hopes and desires and indeed prayers of the parents.

Explain the sacredness of the Holy Scriptures. For us we believe it is the inspired Word of God.

Explain how each of us has a story and that story is also very much part of God's Story.

We use the Scriptures to guide and assist us in living our daily lives in a Christian manner.

### **Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 44-46**

Explain or have a simple handout to show the structure of the Liturgy of the Word.

Explain that there is a choice of Readings for the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism.

## Intercessions (Prayers of the Faithful)

---

Invite parents to think about some of their hopes, wishes or prayers that they have for their child/ children for the future.

Invite them to share a couple of these things. Baptism team members could also share here.

How might we express these hopes and wishes in prayer?

Have samples of the Prayers of the Faithful for Baptism. Invite the parents to form small groups to write a prayer of intercession to be prayed during the Liturgy.

These prayers may be used as part of the closing ritual of this session.

Remind parents that each prayer finishes with:  
*Lord hear us.*  
And all respond: *Lord hear our prayer.*

### **Closing Prayer Ritual:**

**Leader:** Gracious God,  
You have called each of us by name  
and signed us with your cross. We thank  
you for these gifts and place our needs  
before you.

**Parents:** We pray for .....  
Lord hear us.

**All:** Lord hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We gather all our prayers and praise  
into one in the words Jesus taught us:

**All:** Our Father .... etc

**Leader:** The blessing of the God of Sarah and  
Abraham,  
the blessing of Jesus Christ, born of Mary,  
the blessing of the Holy Spirit  
who cares for us as a mother for her  
children,  
be with us now and forever.  
Amen.

***Do not fear, for I have  
redeemed you;  
I have called you by name,  
you are mine.***

– Isaiah 43:2

**Baptism preparation: Water | Oil | White | Small Groups Task**

Symbols	Everyday Use	Scripture	Action in the Rite	Words
Water				
Oil				
White				
Light				

# SESSION TWO

## Purpose

---

The purpose of this session is to unwrap some of the church language that is encountered at the Baptism of infants.

- ❖ *Why do we say what we say in the Rite?*
- ❖ *Why do we do what we do in the Rite?*

It is also an opportunity for parents to deeper understand the symbols used in the Rite of Baptism.

Research about Gen X and Gen Y indicates the importance of the need to spend time getting to know personally each member of the group.

Towards the end of the session parents will be given an opportunity to ask any practical questions about venue, date, time and process of the Baptism day and ritual.

The facilitator welcomes everyone back to the second session. Make sure any new members are welcomed and introduced.

## Welcome and regroup

---

Spend a few minutes doing a 'catch-up': a short time for people to say briefly how the last two weeks have been. This situates the group in the lives of the participants rather than making it an isolated event and a program to run. It gives context to their sharing and participation in the group.

Invite parents to share any insights, thoughts or questions that they have had after the last session.

- ❖ *What stands out most for them?*
- ❖ *What aspect challenged them the most in the last session?*
- ❖ *What questions do they have?*

Spend some time outlining the topics that will be covered in this session.

Explain that Baptism is a Sacrament of Initiation, along with Confirmation and Eucharist and is a beginning of living life in Jesus, Communion and Mission.

The Sacraments of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage and Ordination are celebrated as part of the ongoing Catholic way of life.

## Prayer of exorcism and anointing before Baptism

---

The next few moments may be used to give input on the following parts of the Liturgy: namely, Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism.

### Refer to the Rite of Baptism No. 49

Explain to the parents that there is a prayer for Exorcism during the Liturgy. For parents this may conjure up all kinds of thoughts.

Allow time for a short explanation or questions to be asked. The reading of Prayers A and B may assist understanding.

### Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 50-53

Discuss the use of oil in everyday life. Invite parents to think of the many ways oil is used in our daily life. e.g. cooking, motor vehicles, massage therapy, to name a few. Allow time for a brainstorm perhaps putting answers on butcher's paper or a white board.

Oil is a symbol that is used in the celebration of several sacraments.

Briefly explain that the newly baptised are anointed and confirmed with aromatic chrisms consecrated by the bishop. It is used also in the *Sacrament of Ordination* and in the *Dedication of Churches*.

The oil of catechumens is used to anoint people who are preparing for baptism and commissions them to continue their faith journey. Those who are ill are anointed with the oil of the sick.

The Holy Oils symbolise strength and healing and are blessed by the Bishop at the Cathedral during the Chrism Mass prior to Easter. They are used in the following situations:

Oil of Catechumens (before Baptism),  
Chrism, (Baptism, Confirmation),  
Ordination and Dedication of a Church),  
Oil of The Sick (Anointing of the Sick)

Incidentally, Chrism is used at the coronation of kings and queens and anointing of Prophets.

## Blessing of the water

---

### Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 53-55

Initiate a brief discussion about water – its uses, how we use or abuse it, drought, floods, deserts and oceans.

Invite discussion around its usefulness around the home, in the community, in industry and current water restrictions.

Discuss the healing and strengthening nature of water as it gives new life. In summer, we are advised to drink plenty of water. Parents are

advised to make sure their infants have water more readily than in the past.

Invite them to think back over the first session. What were the incidents in the Bible when water was used as a symbol? E.g. The Woman at the well, Baptism in the Jordan.

❖ *What lessons might we take from these stories?*

Explain that during the child's Baptism there is a response: usually, **Blessed be God**.

## Professing our faith

---

Research indicates that while the words of the Creed were familiar to parents, their memory of exact wording and their understanding, in most cases, were minimal. Parents requested that 'parishes don't take for granted that we know about these things'.

### Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 56-59

Allow parents time to hear these words and then invite them to turn to the person beside them and share how they feel about answering these questions.

- ❖ *What is difficult?*
- ❖ *What is easy to answer?*
- ❖ *What are you not sure about?*

Explain that it is essential for the parents and godparents to be able to answer these questions without reservation.

Invite parents to ask for any clarification or questions that they may have.

Be conscious that there may be parents present who are attending the sessions to support their spouses or partners. They may not be Catholic or Christian. Sensitivity to the parents is essential. DON'T ASSUME anything. It is important that facilitators and team members KNOW to whom they are ministering.

## Baptism

---

Explain that the next part of the Liturgy is the Celebration of Baptism.

### **Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 60-61**

The parents, child and godparents are now invited to process to the baptismal font for baptism.

The mother or father of the child should hold the child at this stage.

Godparents should have contact with the child during the baptism. Touching or holding a foot or hand indicates being part of the community.

Explain to the parents that Baptism is celebrated by the pouring of water and using the words:

*I baptise you in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Recall with the parents discussions held in the first session around the signing with the Cross using the same words as for Baptism.

## Anointing with Chrism

---

Explain that the celebrant anoints each child with the sign of the cross on the crown of the head with the oil of Chrism.

This symbolises the child's participation in the life of Jesus, in the life of the community, and in their role of sharing their faith as prophets of the Kingdom.

### **Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 62-63**

Discussion points:

*Anointing with the oil of chrism symbolises:*

- ❖ *Our sharing in the priesthood of Christ*
- ❖ *Our sharing in the Kingship of Christ as members of the community who serve and minister to our church community*
- ❖ *In the prophetic role of Christ, our ministry of continued learning and sharing our faith with others.*

These statements are very wordy. Invite participants to ask for any clarification or questions that they may have.

## White garment

---

### **Refer to the Rite of Baptism No. 63**

Now is a good opportunity to discuss acquiring or being provided with a white garment. Some parishes ask parents to bring their child in a coloured outfit and change the baby into white after the baptism with water.

Others provide a white shawl or bib to place over the child's head after the Baptism. Some parishes have a lady or group of ladies in the parish who create the Baptism bibs and decorate candles for the newly baptised.

A word on stoles: The stole is a symbol of ordination to the diaconate and priesthood. It is not a symbol of Baptism. The symbol for Baptism is a white 'garment'. Incidentally the white garment worn by priests and deacons during liturgical celebrations is a symbol of their baptism – not their priesthood.

Whatever is the custom in your parish have an example at the session to show parents what it might look like.

Parents may provide a suitable white garment specific to the ceremony i.e. a white baptismal robe or shawl. It may be embroidered with name and date.

*I have come that  
you may have life  
And have it  
abundantly.*  
*John 10:10*



## 'I am the Light'

---

It is also a good time to talk about the candles as well. Parents are welcome to provide their own baptismal candle or in some cases the parish will provide a decorated candle. Show a sample of the candle you provide. Baptismal candles can be purchased from most good religious stores.

**Refer to the Rite of Baptism No. 64**

Explain that the Godparents are to light the candle from the Paschal candle and then stand beside their Godchild with the candle.

If time is getting away you may choose to omit these last two sections.

## The Lord's Prayer

---

This may need very little introduction other than to inform the parents that before closing we can now pray the Prayer that Jesus taught us and encourage them to all join in.

Be aware that non-Christian parents may not know the Lord's Prayer. If this is the case it may be helpful to have a copy for all participants.

**Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 68-69**

## Final Blessing

---

Again this section needs very little introduction other than to inform parents that the Liturgy closes with a blessing.

Indicate that the response to each blessing is Amen. There are normally three blessings to which all answer AMEN followed by the final blessing.

*May Almighty God bless you, the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

**All:** Amen

**Refer to the Rite of Baptism Nos. 70**

Allow time in this session to finalise details and practical issues that may arise. Give parents time to ask questions and clarify anything they need.

# Session after Baptism – Mystagogy

## Experience of the Rite of Baptism

---

### Welcome

This time is as critical as the preparatory sessions – if not more important. This time can also be messy.

It is a time of reconnecting and strengthening relationships among the parents and between the parents and the parish community. It is a time of chatting about the when, where and how of their child's Baptism...comparing notes. Be as hospitable as possible.

Allow time and space for people to arrive, settle children and enjoy a chat over a cup of tea or coffee and some slices or snacks in a welcoming environment. Name tags help this process and avoid embarrassment about not remembering names from the last time parents were together.

Remember to be careful about assumptions, especially assuming that everyone present is a believing Christian. Some participants may be there to support their spouse.

### Prayer

- ◆ Gathering Song: Emmaus Song (Monica Brown)
- ◆ Scripture: Luke 24:13-35 (The Road to Emmaus)
- ◆ Breaking open the Word:
  - Imagine yourself on that road – the confusion, the sadness at losing a friend, feeling lost without a leader; have you had a similar experience in your life?
  - Feel the presence of the wise person – imaging how he told that whole story and explained everything to the disciples, imagine their amazement. Have you had a similar experience?
  - Imagine how they felt being invited to join Jesus in breaking the bread. Have you experienced hospitality in a similar way? How did that feel?
  - Were you able to see Jesus in the people in that situation?
- ◆ Close with a simple prayer asking the Holy Spirit to be with you in this gathering.

### Sharing of experience of Rite of Baptism

Invite parents to share what it was like to have their child baptised.

- ◆ What feelings and emotions were aroused in you? Do you know why?
- ◆ What were the high points?
- ◆ What were the low points?
- ◆ What special memory stays with you the most?

### Support in my role as parent of a new baby (issues and needs)

Once parents have shared, invite them to think about the responsibility put to them during the Rite of Baptism.

- ◆ What was the promise you made?  
Do you remember?
- ◆ How do you feel about that promise now?
- ◆ What questions does it raise for you?
- ◆ How would you like to be supported in this role?

Allow time for discussion. It might be helpful to allow a few minutes for individuals to chat with the person beside them, before turning to the larger group.

### Where to from here?

- ◆ Provide the parents with an outline of the Parish Sacramental Policy, if there is one.
- ◆ Explain the journey through the Sacraments that parents, parish and often school community make together.
- ◆ If your parish has a small booklet listing all the parish groups and ministries, distribute this now and invite parents to make use of these parish services at any time.

### Final Prayer of Blessing on parents and children.

### **Guidelines for the Sacramental Participation in Confirmation and the Eucharist of Children with Intellectual Disabilities**

We need look no further than the Gospels to find clear examples of the love and acceptance that Jesus had for children and for those who are marginalised. Mark 12:13-16 portrays him putting his arms around little children and blessing them. The local Church models itself on the example of Jesus as it seeks to express unqualified love, acceptance and inclusion of all people.

This document addresses some of the pastoral issues related to the reception of Holy Communion, as well as the sacraments of Reconciliation and Confirmation, by children with a diagnosis of intellectual disability (referred to in this document as 'Children with Intellectual Disability'). It offers pastoral advice based on key related understandings from the Tradition and contemporary understandings of the nature of disability.

#### **1. Disability and preparation to celebrate sacraments**

- ◆ The acceptance and inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities in the life of the worshipping community are important to their family's faith and sense of belonging.
- ◆ Children with intellectual disabilities can often demonstrate a sense of sacred place, ritual and symbol. Coming to the altar at Communion time nourishes the 'desire' to be included. The vestments, sacred space, the music and texts of the liturgy all speak to them of the special nature of the time, the sacredness of the moment.
- ◆ Religious thinking and activities can be observed very early in children's lives, but the way children think about faith – and live it – changes as they mature. Parents, carers, priests and religious educators, like all educators, recognise the gradual emergence of religious understanding, belief and practice. Readiness does not emphasise intellectual knowledge but embraces also the spirit, attitude and experience of the child. Religious understanding and meaning emerges as children grow and are able to celebrate and participate in the Sunday Eucharist as members of their families and faith communities.
- ◆ Teachers and leaders in Catholic Special Schools and Units understand and are committed to the needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Catholic Special schools and Units bring their knowledge and energy in partnership with families to the task of preparing students for the reception of the sacraments.
- ◆ Along with parents and teachers in mainstream schools of students with an intellectual disability, Catholic Special Schools and Units and the Catholic Education Office<sup>[45]</sup> can support and assist parishes to meet the needs of these children and can provide excellent resources for parishes who may be preparing children who are not enrolled in a Catholic Special School.

#### **2. Initiation and Sacrament**

- ◆ Initiation is a lifelong process of being gradually incorporated into the life of the Church, and of engaging more deeply in that life. Children are initiated especially by learning 'how to live' as a Catholic: in their home, by socialisation at school and at Sunday Eucharist and other worship.

- ◆ Jesus is a Sacrament of God and the Church itself is a Sacrament of Jesus' love, and the seven Sacraments are doors into these two Sacraments. Initiation into the Sacrament which is the Church is open to all through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. As the Sacrament of God, Jesus shows us how God wants us to live. We come to know this through our telling the stories of Scripture, especially the Gospels, in our home life, in schools and in the liturgy.
- ◆ All are invited into the embrace of Christ. The love of Jesus for children and for those who are marginalised and his unqualified acceptance of them is what we are called to express in our local Church.
- ◆ Sacraments are about transformation and – especially for children – this involves being embraced by the community, which is the body of Christ.
- ◆ Regardless of disability, every person has the right to access the pathway to full participation in the life and sacraments of the Church. <sup>[46]</sup>
- ◆ As baptised members of the Church, children with an intellectual disability have access to full initiation in the Catholic Church if it is the desire of the child and their family, who can call on the support of the broader Catholic community, that is, parish and school.
- ◆ Parish sacramental celebrations are to be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active and conscious participation, according to their capacity. <sup>[47]</sup>

### 3. First Holy Communion

- ◆ Key criteria for reception of Holy Communion are the same for persons with an intellectual disability as for all baptised persons – namely, that the person *desires* it and is able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture or reverential silence rather than verbally.<sup>[48]</sup> This ability is what determines the “age of reason” at which a child is able to receive Holy Communion and a fuller ability to reason is not required.<sup>[49]</sup>
- ◆ The desire for the Eucharist is an important aspect of determining a person's readiness to celebrate this sacrament.<sup>[50]</sup> Families and teachers of children with an intellectual disability are to discern the indicators that demonstrate the child's desire for the Eucharist through their intimate knowledge of the child. The “education of desire” is a crucial part of the whole initiation process – first in the formative years of family life in which, hopefully, prayer is an element, then in school life and more formal religious formation, and in the evangelisation that takes place through attending Sunday Mass and other prayer and worship experiences.
- ◆ Eucharist is not just a sacrament for the individual, but is celebrated within a community of the faithful. The reception of Holy Communion by a child with intellectual disability is an expression of the desire of both the family and the community, just as it is in the case of infant baptism.
- ◆ Society's understanding of intellectual disability continues to evolve and, with this knowledge and their intimate knowledge of their child's needs, desires and capacities, parents and teachers are equipped to discern the child's readiness to receive Holy Communion.

### 4. Confirmation and Reconciliation

- ◆ The principles articulated above about a child's readiness for first Holy Communion provide a basis for discerning a child's readiness to participate in the sacraments of Reconciliation and Confirmation. The desire to receive the Eucharist, with a devotional and elementary awareness of it being different to ordinary food, would also normally signal readiness to also celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Confirmation.
- ◆ Reconciliation is a sacrament in which a person is called to own his or her Baptism. It becomes available when a child comes to the ‘age of reason’, whose onset can be indicated by the desire for the sacraments and an ability to be taught and encouraged towards making right choices. Beyond this, a fuller knowledge of Catholic doctrine is not required for a child to participate in this sacrament, and the child is then invited to learn about Faith “according to [the child's] ability”.<sup>[51]</sup>

- ◆ The sacrament of Confirmation, with which “those who have been born anew in Baptism receive the inexpressible Gift, the Holy Spirit”<sup>[52]</sup>, is a “completion of baptismal grace”<sup>[53]</sup>, and so the faithful are called to receive this sacrament.<sup>[54]</sup> While normally the ability to renew baptismal promises is a criterion of the Roman Catholic tradition in order that a baptised person may receive this sacrament<sup>[55]</sup>, some children with an intellectual disability may not have the capacity for this. In this instance, the child’s right to access the pathway to full participation in the life and sacraments of the Church presents a serious pastoral reason which would allow their reception of this sacrament not to be hindered by their disability.<sup>[56]</sup> This approach focuses on God’s action in the child through participation in the sacramental rite: the rite can be trusted to enter the child’s consciousness by the context of the Church, the use of gesture, the laying on of hands and the anointing with Chrism.

## 5. Pastoral Implications

- ◆ The Special School community will often be the context for the preparation for first Holy Communion for its students, using programs devised to be appropriate for each child’s needs.
- ◆ Parishes need to accommodate in their sacramental preparation programs the needs of children with an intellectual disability who are not students in Catholic Special Schools. “When advertising a parish sacramental program or encouraging people to become part of the RCIA, children or adults with disabilities are to be specifically invited and welcomed, with the reassurance that they and their families will receive the support they need to fully participate.”<sup>[57]</sup>
- ◆ It is desirable that children with disabilities should celebrate the sacraments of initiation in the midst of the parish community at the same time and age as other children; however, the circumstances of students in Catholic Special Schools may be better served by the current practice of families having the option of celebrating first Holy Communion as a Catholic Special School group.
- ◆ If families opt to celebrate first Holy Communion as a Catholic Special School group, the *Directory for Masses with Children* and the *Right of Confirmation: Introduction* provide the basis for any adaptations to be considered. *Rite of Confirmation: Introduction* suggests adapting texts of the rite (e.g. the renewal of baptismal promises) and dialogue especially with children and in view of the capacity of the candidates.<sup>[58]</sup> While the second of the *Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children* might well be used, one of the adult Eucharistic Prayers would also be suitable, since they can be a symbol of the special nature of this event even in the minds of the children living with disabilities.
- ◆ The action of the ‘doing’ of the sacraments needs to be designed so that the children feel and know that they are participating in a very special sacred moment.

## References and further reading

Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1992 (rev.), *Guidelines for the Reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist and Penance by people who have an intellectual disability*.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2011, *I Have a Story: People with disability and their families participating fully in parish life*.

Diocese of Richmond, 2008, *Called to Faith, Diocesan Guidelines for Sacramental Preparation: Sacraments of Initiation and First Reconciliation*, Richmond, Virginia, USA.

Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1910, *Quam Singulari* (Decree of the Sacred Congregation on First Communion).

The Liturgical Commission, 1997, *Children and the Sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist and Penance: Archdiocese of Brisbane Sacramental Policy*

US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995, *Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*.

### Celebrating the Sacraments of Confirmation and first Holy Communion

1. In the Archdiocese of Adelaide, Confirmation will normally take place on a weeknight, according to the *Rite of Confirmation outside of Mass*. First Holy Communion will normally be celebrated on the Sunday following Confirmation, at one or more of the parish Masses.
2. All Masses that include the celebration of Confirmation and first Holy Communion are to be in accordance with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. Also, please refer to the Ordo – for feast days on which special Prayers of the Mass and specific Scripture Readings must be used. Simplicity is the key to a good liturgical celebration. Do not 'clutter' the ceremony with non-liturgical extras.

### 3. Entrance Rites

The Archbishop (if he is present) and ministers will come in procession through the church in the usual manner: that is, the cross-bearer, altar server(s) with candle(s), extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, readers (if there is no deacon, one of the readers carries the Book of the Gospels), parish priest, deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels, Archbishop.

#### **Penitential Act**

Since Confirmation and First Holy Communion are generally celebrated during Easter Time or in Ordinary Time, the third form of the Penitential Act is most appropriate. The phrases of this form of the rite fix the attention of the assembly on the attributes of Christ, and in them the assembly discovers both its own sinfulness and the possibility of reconciliation. Thus, the Penitential Act is not addressed to the Father, nor does it focus attention on personal sinfulness by saying, "For the times....". Rather, it follows the model of the Roman Missal: "Lord Jesus, you are mighty God and Prince of Peace..."

### 4. Liturgy of the Word

If the celebration is during **Easter Time**, the Scripture readings for the day are used. If the celebration is on a **Sunday in Ordinary Time**, the readings may be either those for the day or a combination of those for the day and those from the Confirmation Rite. If the celebration is on a **weekday during Ordinary Time**, the readings are chosen from those set out for Confirmation in the Lectionary. Either two (a First Reading and a Gospel) or three (First and Second Readings and a Gospel) may be chosen. When there is just one reading before the Gospel, it may be chosen from either the Old or the New Testament. When there are two readings before the Gospel, one is from the Old Testament and one is from the New Testament.

Readers are to read the Scripture readings from the Lectionary and not from sheets of paper carried to the lectern. Nor should the reader proclaim the theme of the reading. The introduction, for example, is simply, "A reading from the Book of Genesis" or "A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians". A pause of at least 10 seconds' silence is to be observed after each reading, to give those present time to reflect on the word of God which has just been proclaimed.

The **Responsorial Psalm** should be sung (if possible, the set psalm). It may not be replaced with a hymn or song.

The **Alleluia Verse** should be sung by the whole congregation, even if it is first intoned by a cantor or choir.

In celebrations at which the Archbishop is presiding, the deacon or priest who reads the Gospel should ask the Archbishop for a blessing and bring the Gospel Book back to the Archbishop so that he may kiss it at the end of the reading.

## 5. The Rite of Confirmation

**Presentation of the candidates.** This takes place after the Gospel. As the candidates are called by name, they stand in their places. When all have been presented, the candidates are asked to sit. The Archbishop (or other presider when the Archbishop is not present) then gives a brief **homily**.

This is followed by the **Renewal of Baptismal Promises**. The candidates are asked to respond in a firm, clear voice to each of the questions.

The **Laying on of hands**. The Archbishop faces the people, prays the introductory prayer and then extends his hands over all the candidates. There is no individual laying on of hands at this point. The prayer calling down the gifts of the Holy Spirit follows.

**Anointing with chrism.** Each candidate and sponsor approaches the Archbishop (or other presider, in the absence of the Archbishop). The sponsor places his/her right hand on the candidate's shoulder and says aloud the candidate's confirmation name. The bishop (or priest) then anoints and at the same time lays hands on the candidate. The candidate is to respond firmly and clearly with the "Amen" and the "And with your spirit".

*N.B. See No. 9 below, concerning Confirmation names.*

Any **music** or **singing** during the actual Confirmation is to be *soft enough* that the candidates may hear the Archbishop and he may hear their responses.

There is not to be any hymn or activity between the *Rite of Confirmation* and the *General Intercessions*, which are to follow immediately.

The **General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)** are to include a petition for the Church, and in particular for the Archbishop. It is also recommended that a petition for vocations to the priesthood and religious life be included. Readers of the intercessions are to remain at the lectern for the concluding prayer.

The introduction to the General Intercessions is not a prayer; it is simply an invitation to the assembly to join in prayer.

The intentions are not prayers either. They are not addressed to any of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but rather to the assembly, inviting them to pray for specific concerns. They are not made in thanksgiving, but in need. They should be short and precise: e.g. "For the leaders of the Church... that they may be loving and compassionate shepherds of those entrusted to their care. Lord, hear us."

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* specifies some intentions: for the Church, for public authorities, for the salvation of the world, for the oppressed, the local community (and in the case of Confirmation and first Holy Communion) the candidates and families celebrating these sacraments.

## 6. Liturgy of the Eucharist

Some of the newly-confirmed may join those who bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar.

The use of **Eucharistic Prayer III** is recommended.

The **Holy, holy, Memorial Acclamation** and **Great Amen** are to be sung.  
*(When the Archbishop is presiding, the use of any setting other than Paul Taylor's "Mass of St Francis" is to be indicated on the Liturgy Outline that is returned to Church Office.)*

The **Blessing** at the end of Mass is taken from the *Rite of Confirmation*.

## 7. The Communion Rite

There is a risk, when Confirmation and first Holy Communion are celebrated at the same Eucharist, that insufficient focus is given to full participation in the Eucharist by sharing in holy Communion. To avoid this, it is recommended that an announcement is made by the commentator, just before Communion, noting that this full participation is the crowning of Christian initiation.

Also, hymns sung during the Communion procession are to have the Eucharist and not the Holy Spirit as their theme. They should be hymns or refrains that the whole assembly can join in singing.

## 8. Certificates and photographs

The Archbishop will not sign certificates. His name should be printed on the certificates which are then signed by the parish priest. Whenever he has presided at a Confirmation ceremony, the Archbishop is happy to hand out certificates after the Mass, preferably at a venue outside the church.

Photographs are not permitted in the church during Mass. The Archbishop is happy to be photographed with the newly-confirmed after Mass – for individual, family and group photographs.

Should it happen that there are large groups of children celebrating sacraments at the same time, the Archbishop's preference is for photographs to be taken at a place adjacent to or away from the church, in order to maintain a sense of reverence and decorum in the church.

## 9. Confirmation names

Formerly, Confirmation imitated Baptism by asking candidates for a new name. This is absent in the new rite. The name that was given to the child in Baptism is used again, as Baptism is completed with Confirmation. However, candidates are encouraged to add the name of a saint to their own baptismal name, with both names being printed on the Confirmation card.

It is important that candidates have the opportunity to research the lives of the saints, gaining inspiration from the example of their lives.



### Copyright for Liturgical Music and Texts

#### **It is very important that copyright responsibilities are met in preparing for celebrations of Confirmation and first Holy Communion.**

The school copyright licence does not cover parish celebrations, and since Confirmation and first Holy Communion are always parish celebrations, it is necessary to ensure that you are complying with copyright law.

As from August 1, 2014, the Archdiocese of Adelaide has a whole-of-diocese copyright licence with LicenSing.

It is essential that the following things are taken into account:

- a) Reprinting may take the form of typewritten words that are duplicated mechanically, reproductions from published music editions, overhead transparencies and slide projections, but **no guitar chords, choir parts or other type of accompaniment may be reproduced**. The printing of the melody line is not permitted by the LicenSing licence.
- b) With each hymn, the **full title** needs to be included. Also, directly beneath each hymn the following copyright details must appear: Composer and publisher name, copyright licence details.  
For example, if you are using the hymn "*Holy, Sacred Spirit*" by Monica Brown, you would write the following: © 1991 Monica Brown, Emmaus Productions. Used with permission, LicenSing licence No: \_\_\_\_\_ (*insert your parish licence number here*).
- c) Copies may only be made from **original works**, not previously photocopied reproductions. The parish must own at least one original published edition of the work copied.

Any copyright queries can be addressed by contacting:

#### **LicenSing – Copyright Cleared Music for Churches**

Address: PO Box 288, Brookvale NSW 2100  
Website: [www.licensingonline.org.au](http://www.licensingonline.org.au)  
Phone: (02) 9948 3957  
Fax: (02) 9948 8153  
Email: [monicao@licensingonline.org.au](mailto:monicao@licensingonline.org.au)

### Copyright for Mass texts

Any texts from the Mass or the *Rite of Confirmation* need to be acknowledged. This can go right at the end of the booklet, and should read like this:

"Excerpts from the English translation of the Rite of Confirmation © 1972, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Inc. (ICEL); excerpts from the English translation and chants of the Roman Missal © 2010, ICEL. All rights reserved.

## Appendix 6

The following Diocesan Agencies may be of use in providing parishes and schools with some of the resources needed to implement the diocesan policy regarding the Christian initiation of children.

### **Catholic Resource and Information Centre**

Kilmara,  
112 Kintore St, Thebarton SA 5031  
PO Box 179 Torrensville Plaza SA 5031  
Phone: 8301 6600  
Email: [cris@cesa.catholic.edu.au](mailto:cris@cesa.catholic.edu.au)

### **Catholic Education South Australia**

116 George Street, Thebarton 5031  
PO Box 179 Torrensville Plaza SA 5031  
Phone: 8301 6600  
Email: [religiouseducation@cesa.catholic.edu.au](mailto:religiouseducation@cesa.catholic.edu.au)

### **Office for Worship**

127 South Road, Thebarton SA 5031  
PO Box 270, Torrensville Plaza SA 5031  
Phone: 8152 7806 or 8152 7805  
Email: [worship@ow.adelaide.catholic.org.au](mailto:worship@ow.adelaide.catholic.org.au)  
Website: [www.adelaide.catholic.org.au/our-faith/office-for/worship](http://www.adelaide.catholic.org.au/our-faith/office-for/worship)

---

### **Acknowledgements:**

Mrs Jenny O'Brien – Executive Officer, Diocesan Liturgical Commission  
Fr Anthony Kain – Facilitator, Office for Worship  
Fr Maurice Shinnick – Parish Priest, Croydon Park Parish  
Sr Ilsa Neicinieks RSM – Liturgy Educator, Office for Worship  
Ms Kathy Horan – APRIM, St Joseph's School, Hindmarsh  
Michael Vial – Team Leader, Religious Education Team, Catholic Education South Australia  
Ms Chris Lemon – Principal, St Patrick's Special School, Dulwich  
Members of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission

## ENDNOTES

- [1] Kavanagh, Aidan. "Initiating Children: Historical Sketch and Contemporary Reflections". In *Issues in the Christian Initiation of Children*, edited by Kathy Brown and Frank C. Sokol. (Chicago, Liturgy Training Publications, 1989) 41.
- [2] The Second Vatican Council, 1963, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), article 14.
- [3] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 35 (2).
- [4] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 51.
- [5] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, articles 62 and 63.
- [6] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 7.
- [7] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, articles 28-30.
- [8] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, articles 19 and 21.
- [9] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 55.
- [10] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1973, *Directory for Masses with Children*
- [11] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 66
- [12] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 67
- [13] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 71
- [14] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1971, *The Rite of Baptism for Children*, paragraph 2
- [15] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1972, *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 281
- [16] *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 284
- [17] Paul VI, 1971, *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation*
- [18] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1971, *The Rite of Confirmation*, paragraph 11
- [19] Sacred Congregation for the Clergy and Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1973, *Declaration on First Confession and First Holy Communion*
- [20] Congregation for Divine Worship, 1987, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 242
- [21] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 243
- [22] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, articles 243 and 248
- [23] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, articles 244 and 283
- [24] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 244
- [25] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 250. See also articles 10 and 11
- [26] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, articles 283 and 11
- [27] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 284
- [28] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, article 12
- [29] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, articles 13 and 14, 251 and 284.
- [30] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Article 15.
- [31] Sacred Congregation of Divine Worship, *Christian Initiation, General Introduction*, 2nd editio typica: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1973. Par.2.
- [32] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994. Article 1212.
- [33] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Article 1285.
- [34] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Article 1213.
- [35] *Christian Initiation*, 2nd edition. Par. 7
- [36] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Rite of Baptism for Children, Introduction*, 2nd editio typica: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1973. Par.9
- [37] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Article 1255.
- [38] Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution, Divinae consortium naturae*, approving the new rite of Confirmation, 15 August, 1971.
- [39] *Ibid.*
- [40] See *Introduction to Rite of Confirmation*, Articles 7 and 8.
- [41] Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen gentium*. Nov. 1964 Article 47
- [42] Vatican Council II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*. Dec. 1965. Article 5.
- [43] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Christian Initiation, General Introduction*, 2nd editio typica: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1973. Article 27 reads: "As far as possible, all recently born babies should be baptised at a common celebration on the same day. Except for a good reason, baptism should not be celebrated more than once on the same day in the same church."
- [44] There is no separate order called *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age*. The actual rite used is from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for unbaptised children of catechetical age.
- [45] The CEO's Office for Family and Parish Based Catechesis and the Special Education Team can be approached for assistance and advice.
- [46] US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 1995, *Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, n.2 and Canon 213.
- [47] USCCB, 1995, n.3
- [48] USCCB, 1995, n.20
- [49] Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1910, *Quam Singulari* (Decree of the Sacred Congregation on First Communion)
- [50] *Quam Singulari*, op.cit.
- [51] *Quam Singulari*, op.cit.
- [52] Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution, Divinae consortium naturae*, approving the new rite of Confirmation, 15 August, 1971
- [53] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Article 1285.
- [54] Canon 890.
- [55] Canon 889
- [56] Canon 891.
- [57] Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2011, *I Have a Story: People with disability and their families participating fully in parish life*.
- [58] *Rite of Confirmation Introduction*, 1971, articles 16-18.



