



DIOCESE OF
LONDON

Mission-Oriented Sacramental Preparation



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Table of Contents

General Information

Page 1	Introduction to the Document
Page 1	Parents as First Teachers
Page 2	Families are Busy
Page 3	Learning Styles
Page 4	Choosing a Sacramental Preparation Program
Page 5	Diocesan Guidelines for Ministry to Children
Page 7	Parish Centric Sacramental Preparation

Baptism

Page 8	Who can receive Baptism?
Page 8	Arrangements and Preparation
Page 9	Responsibility of Parents
Page 9	Godparents
Page 10	When Should a Baptism Take Place?
Page 11	Programs

First Reconciliation and First Communion

Page 16	Who Can Receive Penance and First Eucharist?
Page 16	Arrangements and Preparation
Page 17	When and How should First Reconciliation take Place?
Page 17	When and How should First Communion take Place?
Page 18	Developmental Norms
Page 19	Programs

Confirmation

Page 25	Who Can Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?
Page 25	Arrangements and Preparation
Page 25	Sponsors
Page 26	When and How should Confirmation take Place?
Page 26	Developmental Norms
Page 27	Programs

Mission-Oriented Sacramental Preparation

A sacrament is an encounter with the Risen Lord in the community of the Church. Proper preparation forms the heart and mind of the person to more fully understand and be disposed to that encounter.

For sacramental preparation to be effective in our current culture and within the context of Families of Parishes, there are some key things to keep in mind. The models of preparation we have been accustomed to using may not be as effective as they once were, and so we must adjust our programs and processes to effectively prepare our children and families to encounter the Risen Lord in the sacraments.

In this section we will explore some of the realities you must consider to create a sacramental program that meets the needs of the families we serve.

Parents as First Teachers of the Faith

Involving parents in the process of sacramental preparation is integral to the process; however, all too often the involvement of parents is limited to instructions about the logistical details for the preparation period and celebration of the sacrament.

The sacramental preparation process can be a graced time to journey with the parents as well as their children.

Response

Here are some suggestions to truly engage parents in sacramental programs:

- Parents are the first teachers of the faith; therefore, our job should be to support them in this process in a non-judgmental way. To build trust with the parents, we must allow them time to converse with us and with each other.
- Organizing at least one meeting where parents are engaged is important. This means that for every ten minutes the priest, deacon or lay minister speaks, we should allow parents 20 minutes to chat with each other and with the facilitator.
- We should be cautious not to reject criticism: we are not expected to like it, but there is often no progress without it.
- On a similar note, we need to assess if we are showing genuine care for the families or if we are seeing them as objects to receive what we have to say; to be “set straight” by the truth.
- Invite parents to connect with the parish, inform them of opportunities for their own faith development in the parish and give them tools for bringing their family to mass.
- No matter how you prepare children for the sacraments, you should always be providing some supplementary information for the parents to do at home. These can include:
 - Prayers,
 - Discussion questions,
 - Games,
 - Video suggestions.

Families are Busy

There is no doubt that one of the realities is that our families are very busy. They have many responsibilities and obligations that are normal and healthy when raising a young family. We often view these commitments to sports, lessons and activities in opposition to our efforts to catechize the children and their families. Let's take a look at this from family's perspective.

- Often these sports and lessons are planned months in advance and are well underway when families are informed of expectations.
- Typically, there is significant financial sacrifice for the family when they sign their children up for classes, teams or hobbies.
- Parents see these activities as opportunities to teach their children responsibility, perseverance and commitment.
- When there is a conflict between sacramental preparation and the child's other commitments, families are put in a difficult position.

Response

It is important that we put things in perspective and avoid thinking that families are choosing worldly attachments over godly pursuits when they approach us with their conflicted schedules. Be flexible.

- Provide plenty of notice for gatherings or meetings that parents and/or children are expected to attend. Many of us would not be able to adjust our schedule to attend a series of meetings without a couple of weeks (or more) notice. We need to afford busy families the same consideration.
- Provide opportunities throughout the year to accommodate more families.
- Provide options and alternatives for all preparation expectations. This could be alternative nights and/or locations for in-person sessions, or packages that can be completed at home.



Learning Styles

The typical order of learning for children and early teens goes from their body to their heart to their mind. If we engage the body and heart in the learning process there is a greater chance of learning occurring. Very often our programs start with the mind and see the body and heart as secondary.

Every human being learns in different ways. In the same way that the sacraments themselves engage our various senses, programs must also appeal to the various learning styles of the people we serve. It is important to include facets in every preparation program that will satisfy several different learning styles.

Response

The following are suggestions that will help you engage all types of learners to foster more comprehensive and effective learning experiences.

- Logical-mathematical learners will do well with puzzles, and brainteasers.
- Linguistic learners will flourish with writing, speaking, storytelling and poetry: let them write plays from Scripture.
- Musical-rhythmic intelligence is drawn to the beauty of songs, music, and instruments: invite them to join prayer to music.
- Visual-spatial learners prefer visual arts, drawing, graphs and diagrams: they may enjoy sacred art and visual aids.
- Bodily-kinesthetic learners need to move: they learn through hands-on activities and manipulatives.
- Naturalist learners are sensitive to the natural world; they appreciate and learn through nature: go for a prayer-walk or do an outdoor scavenger hunt.
- Interpersonal learners work well in groups and enjoy interacting with others: give clearly defined roles in small group situations.
- Intrapersonal learners will gain insight from looking within: they will do well with contemplation and journaling.

While it may not be possible to provide tailored lessons to meet the individual needs and learning styles of each student, there are some things you can do to create the best learning experience possible.

- Create learning stations that integrate various learning styles.
- Give students options such as writing or drawing a response to a question.
- Give both verbal and written instructions for tasks.
- When asking students to respond to questions consider using the Think-Pair-Share strategy:
 - Start by asking students to think about a given topic or question.
 - Next, pair students together to discuss their findings.
 - Finally, have each pair share their ideas with the group.

Choosing a Sacramental Preparation Program

There are many considerations you must take into account when choosing a program. There are things like cost, the number of young people preparing for the sacrament, the amount of help needed to support the program, the length of the program and the content. Here are a few things to also keep in mind:

- It is important to note that catechesis cannot be our only goal in the sacramental preparation process. Many of the families we are working with are at the very early stages of discipleship and require some evangelization as well. Keep in mind that even the best teaching will fall on deaf ears if they are not in a place to hear it.
- Have a plan for those individuals who contact you after your program has started that will allow them to work independently with their families to prepare for the sacrament. While this can be very frustrating, it is important to remember that sacraments are God's gift to His people and we must not stand in the way of the grace He has planned for them.
- Give yourself permission to adapt a program to suit your needs. Creating a hybrid that takes the best pieces from various programs might be exactly what you need.
- Current, updated programs are vital in keeping the interest of the students, particularly those of confirmation age. It will help form their vision of the Church. If the material we provide is outdated or unappealing, that impression will carry over to the Church also being old and outdated.



Diocesan Guidelines for Ministry to Children

All ministry to children and families is subject to the policies laid out by the Diocese of London. Particular attention should be paid to “A Safe Environment Policy for the Diocese of London” and “Called, Gifted & Sent”. The following expectations and guidelines are highlights from those policies that are particularly relevant to sacramental programs.

Supervision for Gatherings

Adequate supervision must be maintained for any event where children are present.

The Diocese of London follows the ‘two-deep’ rule that ensures that two responsible adults are present when ministering to minor children. Here are ways to help adhere to this rule:

Work as a team: A ministry leader should always have another screened adult (parent or volunteer) present when interacting with young people. Train your volunteers to be aware of situations where someone might be at risk of being alone with a minor and plan how you can support one another.

Do parents need to be screened?

When you are hosting a parent/child or family gathering, there is no need to screen parents. However, if parents are acting in a supportive or supervisory role, they will need to follow the screening protocols as set out in the Called, Gifted and Sent Policy.

Remain open to the public: When interacting with a minor ensure that all situations are open, observable and justifiable. If you need to have a personal conversation with a young person it should be in a quiet place, away from the group but within the visual field of others.

Plan transportation: Have at least two adults present when travelling with a minor.

Transparent communication: Only initiate contact with minors using parish or diocesan social-networking sites and email (not personal accounts) or through mobile phones using software or apps that record your interactions.

Be sensible: First-aid or emotional comfort should be given by someone of the same gender as the youth requiring attention.

Plan well: On overnight trips or retreats the following guidelines should be implemented.

- Depending on the ages of the children, but always in the case of teenagers or vulnerable adults, males and females must sleep in separate rooms
- If supervising adults have to sleep in the same room, more than one adult should always be present.

Adult-Child Ratios

Appropriate adult to youth ratios for all activities and age groups must be maintained, keeping in mind that at no time should there be less than two adults present.

Age Group	Adult to Child Ratio	Minimum Adults	Additional Adults
Children aged 3-5	1:6	2 for up to 12 children	1 for every additional 1-5 children
Children aged 6-8	1:10	2 for up to 20 children	1 for every additional 1-9 children
Children aged 9-11	1:15	2 for up to 30 children	1 for every additional 1-14 children
Youth Aged 12-18	1:20	2 for up to 40 youth	1 for every additional 1-19 youth
Overnight any age*	1:10	2 for up to 20 children	1 for every additional 1- 9 children

*In overnight situations please ensure that there are enough adults of each gender to properly supervise.

Parental Consent Forms

Whenever you are gathering young people without their parents it is protocol to have the “Diocesan Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Liability Waiver” completed and on file. This form has been created to ensure that the diocese, parish, staff and family are well protected and should be used in the format that can be found on the website under Family and Youth.

Best Practices for Meetings

When it comes to preparing parents and children for sacraments, creating a welcoming and inviting experience is paramount for fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging continued participation. The following are some best practices to help set things up well for your gatherings:

- Prepare well, ensuring families have all the information needed for the meeting. If they will need to choose dates for sacraments, let them know in advance, so they can come prepared. If there are forms to fill out, send them out prior to the event, but have extras available on site.
- Establish a warm atmosphere where families feel valued and included, which will set the tone for positive engagement. This can be achieved through personalized welcomes, open communication channels, and the provision of comfortable spaces conducive to interaction and reflection.
- Incorporate interactive elements such as group discussions, activities, and multimedia presentations that can enhance understanding and make the learning process enjoyable for both parents and children.
- Leave space for parents to chat with each other. For every ten minutes you speak, parents should have 20 minutes to chat with each other.
- To encourage participants to share, you might try to have them begin by writing down their answers or using the “pair, square, share” technique, which starts by having people share with one person (pair), then combining two pairs (square) and then inviting them to share with the larger group. It is also helpful to start with questions that do not require people to be vulnerable to get them comfortable.

Parish-Centric Sacramental Preparation

In the Diocese of London, sacramental preparation is a pivotal aspect of nurturing the faith-journey of our young people and their families. We are blessed to have Catholic Schools and Catholic teachers who give witness to the faith in word and deed. There is a symbiotic relationship, communion among our Families of Parishes, Catholic schools and parents in the faith-formation of our young people.

Sacramental preparation in the Diocese of London is guided by four foundational principles as outlined in our document on the Pastoral Care of Our Catholic Schools:

- Firstly, it emphasizes that all sacraments are parish celebrations.
- Secondly, it acknowledges parents as the primary educators of their children in matters of faith, particularly in the sacraments of initiation.
- Thirdly, it recognizes the integral role of Catholic schools in the ongoing religious education of children, particularly in laying the groundwork for sacraments post-Baptism.
- Lastly, it underscores that sacramental preparation stems from the grace conferred in Baptism, acknowledging the sacraments' interconnectedness.

Sacramental preparation is primarily conducted in the parish rather than the local Catholic school due to the distinct roles each institution plays in the formation of children in the Catholic faith. The primary mission of Catholic schools is to provide academic excellence while imparting Catholic values and teachings and supporting the ongoing sacramental preparation of the child by teaching the approved religious education program. They are entrusted with the task of fostering a comprehensive understanding of various subjects, including religious education.

The parish takes the lead in the immediate preparation, which involves catechetical and practical training in the weeks and months leading up to the reception of a particular sacrament. Since sacraments are celebrated within the parish, it is appropriate that preparation takes place there. However, this does not mean that home, school, and parish operate independently; rather, cooperation among these entities is essential for the best results in sacramental formation.

Parental involvement in sacramental preparation not only enriches the faith-journey of the children but also strengthens the bonds of community within the parish. It allows for meaningful engagement with the sacramental life of the Church and fosters a deeper understanding of our Catholic identity.

Our diocesan approach to sacramental preparation underscores the collaborative efforts of Catholic schools, parishes and parents in nurturing the faith of our youth. While schools excel in academic instruction, parishes offer a nurturing environment for spiritual growth and sacramental readiness. Together, all partners accompany our children on their journey of faith, embracing the sacramental life of the Church.

Baptism

For more comprehensive guidance on baptismal preparation, please consult pages 12 - 13 in "Criteria for the Administration of the Sacraments of Initiation, First Penance, and Marriage," which outlines the official diocesan guidelines in greater detail.

Who Can Receive Baptism?

An infant or child who has not reached catechetical age (7 years old) who meets the following requirements:

- The parents, or at least one of them, or the person who lawfully holds their place, give their consent; and
- There is a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Church. If such a hope is truly lacking, the Baptism is to be deferred and the parents advised of the reason for this.

Children Over 7 Years Old

Children who have reached the age of 7 not yet baptized need to attend RCIA adapted for children. This is best done within the context of the family. They will celebrate all the sacraments of initiation in one celebration.

Arrangements and Preparation

Arrangements for Baptism are always made by the parents or legal guardians in a meeting with the pastor, or a member of the pastoral team.

Each parish will determine what sacramental preparation will be required prior to the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism.

Whatever process of sacramental preparation is determined, it should not be excessive or overly demanding, providing simply the sacramental catechesis needed for those presenting a child for baptism.

Parents of Multiple Children

Allowance should be made in terms of participation in sacramental preparation for parents presenting a second or third child for Baptism.

Baptism Outside of Your Home Parish

Canon Law (857, §2) states that an individual is to be baptized in his or her local parish. For this reason, if someone who is not a registered parishioner or does not live in your parish boundaries comes to you to request Baptism for themselves or their child, it is required to get written permission from the pastor of their home parish before proceeding with the Baptism.

Responsibility of the Parents

If they are not already doing so, parents or legal guardians are to be invited and urged to return to a regular participation in the Sunday Eucharist and to attend whatever sacramental preparation program the parish may have determined. Depending on their availability, godparents may also be invited to join the parents or legal guardians in the program.

Under no circumstances is the marital status of the parents to preclude the Baptism of their child, provided that they are receptive to the invitation to attend the preparation program and have a firm intention to raise their child in the Catholic Church to the best of their ability. When parents are not married, or are in an irregular marital situation, or not practicing their faith, it is advisable to encourage them to take the first steps in reestablishing a relationship with their parish community.

Clothing Guidelines

A white garment is part of the rite and so those baptized as babies will wear a white gown or suit. Older children might want to find a way to incorporate white into their attire.

This is also a good time to invite parents to participate in programs in the parish that will offer them opportunities for encountering Jesus such as Alpha or a small group.

Godparents

Godparents for infant Baptism must be:

- Appointed by the parents or whomever stands in their place;
- Not be less than 16 years of age, unless the pastor or the minister of the sacrament considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made, eg., at least one sponsor is over 16;
- A Catholic who has been confirmed, received the Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
- Neither the father nor the mother of the child to be baptized.

Based on these criteria, parents select the godparents for their child. A baptized person who belongs to another Christian denomination may be admitted as a Christian witness, together with a Catholic godparent.

Number of Godparents

Ordinarily a child will have two godparents, one male and one female. However, only one godparent is actually required and they can be either male or female. If one of the godparents is not Catholic, they will be listed as a Christian witness in the official records.

When should a Baptism take place?

- Baptism is normally celebrated at a Sunday Liturgy. It is strongly recommended that it be celebrated during Mass; however, for pastoral reasons, it may be celebrated at another suitable time.
- Deacons preside at Baptism outside of Mass only.
- As Lent is a season of penance and purification, the celebration of infant Baptism is actively discouraged during this time; however, once again, particular circumstances may require or recommend that it take place during this season.
- Baptism should be provided immediately if the infant is in danger of death.



Reborn

Augustine Institute (available on Formed for those who have a subscription)

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: The REBORN program is divided into three sessions:

- A New Creation - traces the theme of Baptism through the Scriptures and demonstrates how Baptism is an essential part of God's plan for salvation.
 - Entering the Mystery: The Rite Explained - answers the question, "Why does the Church baptize infants?" and explores the prayers and symbolism of the rite of Baptism.
 - Nurturing the Life of Grace - examines the call of the baptized to participate in Christ's mission as Priest, Prophet, and King and the responsibilities of the parents and godparents in helping the baptized to answer that call.
-

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Current and up-to-date
- Meetings can take place online if needed
- It is well done and goes into great depth

Cons

- The program in its entirety is too long
 - There are no accompanying handouts
 - Videos are too long and need to be broken up
-

Materials & Cost:

Leader Guide - \$25 US

Participant guide - \$30 US for 5 pack (may be a sale price)

DVD Set - \$100 US

Website:

augustineinstitute.org/program-categories/baptism-reborn



Belonging

Ascension Press

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview:

“Belonging: Baptism in the Family of God” is a flexible program designed to provide parents with an encounter with Jesus and with the Church. This happens in 2 steps:

- Parents are directed to the online course to be completed on their schedule
 - A follow-up meeting, with someone from the Baptism team and the parents
-

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Fr. Mike Schmitz does a great job
- Focuses on forming the parents and provides good catechesis
- Videos are good and lead to fruitful discussions

Cons

- Good for first-time parents but not for those who are repeating the process
-

Materials & Cost:

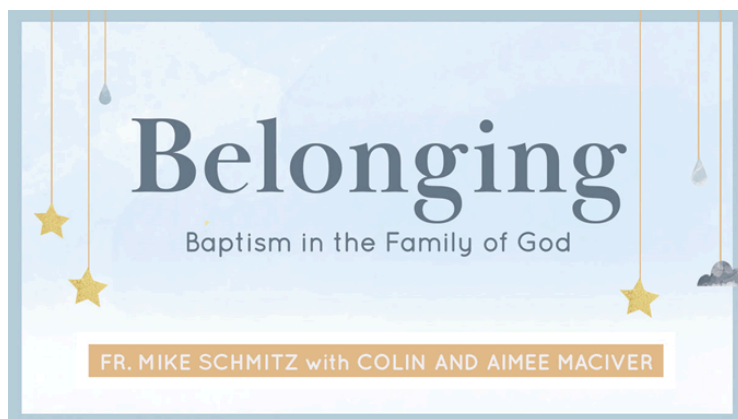
6 videos (online or DVD), Leader guide, Parent’s guide, Godparent Video, Online Quizzes

Online Course: \$10 US

Parent’s Set – Physical Copy: \$12 US

Starter Pack with DVD: \$50 US

Website: ascensionpress.com/collections/belonging-baptism-in-the-family-of-god



Starting Point

Dynamic Catholic

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview The suggested format is one 60-minute session with the parents where they will watch videos, discuss topics and ask questions. However, the program is flexible and can be adapted to fit your particular parish or diocesan needs.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- The videos are easy to understand
- the program can be used in a modified format
- It appeals to families who may not be attending Mass regularly
- It is helpful to engage families in conversation with one another

Cons

- Can be a little heavy on the message of “becoming the best version of yourself”
 - The material can be overwhelming
 - It is very basic
 - There is no part of the program that encourages weekly Mass attendance or a deepening of the parents’ faith
 - It does not include any catechesis on the sacrament itself
-

Materials & Cost: 3 Videos (online or DVD), Leader Guide, Parent’s Workbook
\$14 US for shipping

Website: dynamiccatholic.com/baptism.html



Springs of Faith

Loyola Press

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: The Springs of Faith process links traditional baptismal preparation with the lessons learned from the best RCIA processes.

Parents prepare for the Baptism of their child as they carefully and prayerfully consider each element in the rite of Baptism. Through two 3-hour sessions, parents explore the rite of Baptism, including the Scripture and Tradition behind each step of the rite and their own personal responses to each step.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Spanish option is available
- Involves the whole family in the formation period

Cons

- It is very long and will need to be modified

Materials & Cost: Program Coordinator Guide, Discover Leader Guide, Encounter & Share Leader Guide, Videos – Online, Activity Journal for Parents and Godparents, My Photo Bible for Babies keepsake

Full Program - \$300 US

Website: loyolapress.com/faitH-formation/sacramental-preparation/springs-of-faith/



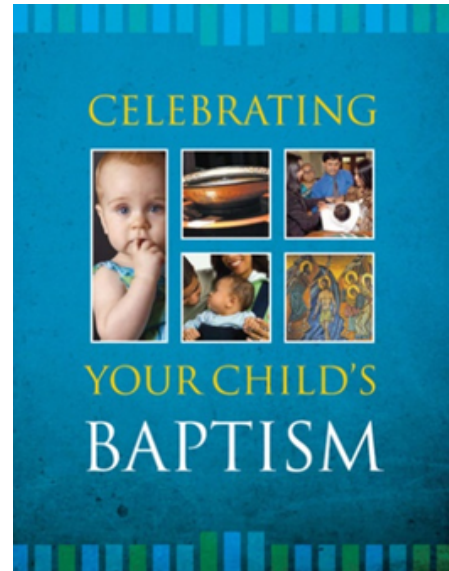
Additional Resources

Celebrating Your Child's Baptism

A Resource for Parents

Written by Deborah McCann

Published by Twenty-Third Publications



Your Baby's Baptism

Published by Liguori Press

Includes: Leader Guide, DVD,

Parent Book, Guide to Godparenting



First Reconciliation & First Communion

For more comprehensive guidance on preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion, please consult pages 17-19 in "Criteria for the Administration of the Sacraments of Initiation, First Penance, and Marriage," which outlines the official diocesan guidelines in greater detail.

Who Can Receive Penance and First Eucharist?

A child who has reached the age of reason (7 years old) and who is baptized in the Catholic Church may receive these sacraments.

*Children who have been validly baptized in another Christian Church must first be received into the faith. Please refer to page 15 in the "Criteria for the Administration of the Sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage".

Baptismal Certificates

It is important to collect the baptismal certificates of all candidates for the sacraments prior to the celebration.

You may want to keep those copies in a file that you can revisit when they present their children for Confirmation in the future.

Arrangements and Preparation

- First Reconciliation is celebrated prior to First Communion, and preparation for each sacrament should be separate to avoid confusing the two sacraments in the mind of the children.
- It belongs to each parish to determine the suitable sacramental preparation required prior to the celebration of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion.
- The decision concerning the individual child's readiness to receive these sacraments rests with the child's parents or legal guardians in consultation with the pastor.
- In the case of children who are developmentally challenged, the requirement for their reception should be no more onerous than that required of other children, namely, the ability to differentiate between ordinary bread and eucharistic bread, or even their capacity to receive the Eucharist reverently.
- If you are working with the local school, it is advisable to allow all students to participate in the preparation. Those who are not receiving their sacraments will still benefit from the experience.

Adaptive Preparation

The Diocese of London has copies of "Adaptive First Communion Preparation Kits" that parishes can access by contacting the Family and Youth Ministry Specialist.

When and how should First Reconciliation take place?

- Reconciliation should always take place in the parish church.
- The Rite of Penance provides a variety of options for the celebration of the sacrament. Wherever possible provisions should be made to include the parents and family members to celebrate the sacrament at the same time as the child.
- It is strongly recommended that several priests should be made available for these celebrations.
- We do not keep records of who has received the sacrament of Reconciliation, so attendance is taken only to be able to complete the yearly diocesan report regarding the number of children who reconciliations celebrated First Reconciliation each year.

Clothing Guidelines

While it has been traditional for girls to wear a white dress or boys a white suit or armband for First Communion, it is absolutely not a requirement. It is good to remind parents that clothing should be appropriate to the celebration taking place, but does not need to be all white.

When and how should First Communion take place?

- It is preferable to celebrate First Communion at a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass during the Easter season. However, the celebrations may take place over the course of several Sundays.
- Children can receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue as they desire.
- Children can also receive Communion under both forms but should never be forced to receive from the Cup. Attention should be given to preparation for those who will receive from the Cup.

Understanding Communion Elements for Children

Children should be taught they are not receiving wine at Communion, but the Blood of Christ.

Care should be taken that the children do not think they are drinking human blood in the biological sense but that it is truly the sacramental presence of Christ.

Children should be given a small taste of unconsecrated wine and an unconsecrated altar bread prior to the celebration, so that they are familiar with the taste prior to receiving them in the consecrated form.

Developmental Norms

Key points of development for children who are typically preparing for First Reconciliation and First Communion (approximately 7 years old):

- Children in this stage are developing their “reasoning mind”, where they are beginning to understand “the big picture”. They have moved from asking “what” questions to asking “why” things are the way they are and “where” they come from. [1]
- They need to see the “big picture” before they can move into the details.
- They should be allowed to put ideas together for themselves so they can see the relationship between them. It is a mistake to “tell them the answers” to such questions.[2]
- Their learning will be much deeper if they are given sufficient support to be able to see obvious connections, but allowed to discover these connections for themselves. [3]
- Giving the children cards that link together or puzzles are effective tools for learning.
- They should be given opportunities to do things for themselves.
- Do not answer every question they have, but rather engage them in conversation.
- Crafts and games are a good way to integrate learning.
- Do not do for a child that which they can do for themselves.
- Children at this age need to engage their imagination.
- Concrete materials are a valuable starting point for all learning.
- Stories are a valuable way to engage their imagination.
- Engage them in a simplified “Lectio Divina” or “Visio Divina” with Scripture stories or religious pictures.
- It is developmentally normal for children of this age to be messy! Give them opportunities to create a mess.
- This is the age when children become aware of their need for mercy and forgiveness.
- Parables are a great tool for an Examination of Conscience for this stage.
- They are at a stage where they can easily approach those they love for forgiveness.

Those things which we learn for ourselves are far more valuable than those which someone else tells us. The parables are a good example of that. Jesus took concrete images and allowed his followers to discover their meaning in their own time and in their own way.

[1] Gerard O'Shea, *Educating in Christ* (Angelico Press, 2018), 40.

[2] O'Shea, *Educating in Christ*, 40.

[3] O'Shea, *Educating in Christ*, 40.

God's Gift

Loyola Press

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: This is a book-based program with supplementary videos for parents and learners.
The material is available in both print and digital formats

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Spanish option is available
- Includes many activities
- There is an option for older students who have missed the sacraments in Grade 2

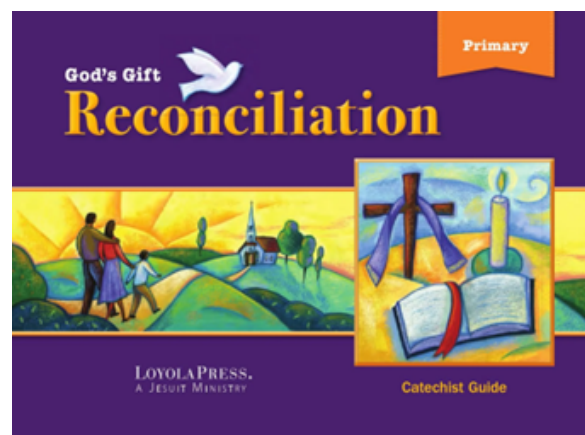
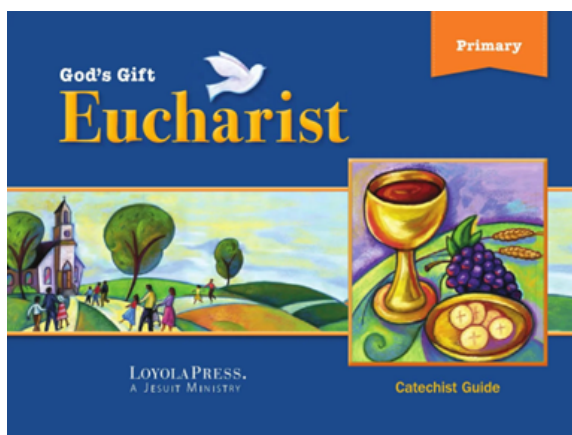
Cons

- It is very long and will need to be modified
- The videos are not very engaging

Materials & Cost:

Child's book with stickers - \$16.50 US
Catechist Guide with CDs - \$38 US
Director's Resources and DVD - \$47.25 US
Video Series - \$77 US
God's Gift Together magazine for at-home preparation - \$9.25 US
Keepsake Mass booklets - \$5.25 US

Website: loyolapress.com/faith-formation/sacramental-preparation/gods-gift-2016



Blessed

Dynamic Catholic

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: Each program offers six sessions for students and includes a student book and videos.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Spanish option is available
- Involves the whole family in the formation period
- Videos are well made and nicely animated
- Workbook is good to get resources

Cons

- It is very long and will need to be modified
 - The reading level is beyond the comprehension of most and requires a very 'school-like' approach.
 - Huge textbook which can seem overwhelming
 - While the program is free, shipping can be expensive
-

Materials & Cost: Leader Guide, Children's workbook, Video Series – 10 'seasons' of seven 3-4 minute videos – online or DVD

Varied rates for shipping

Website: dynamiccatholic.com/blessed.html



Go Seek Find

St. Mary's Press

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: Instead of using a traditional textbook or workbook, children interact with and explore *The Catholic Children's Bible*, seeing how Scripture relates to the themes they are learning about. Children track their journey through Scripture to their destination of celebrating the sacraments using colorful treasure maps and stickers.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- This program can be done online or in person
- It works very well for parent-led formation or when you do one lesson in person and parents do the next session at home
- Catechists have said this is the best program they have seen
- Parents learn with the kids

Cons

- None noted

Materials & Cost:

Teacher guide, Reconciliation and Communion folders (with map, stickers, activity books), digital e-learning lessons that coordinate with every chapter, backpack, *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

The teaching guide can be downloaded from the website for free
\$43.95 US for backpack, folder, and Bible
\$42 per Teacher Guide

Website: pages.smp.org/parish/gsf



Renewed and Received

Ascension Press

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: This program offers 12 student sessions and can be adjusted to be 45-, 60-, 90-, or 120-minute sessions. There are also four parent sessions that can be done at home.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Follows a family on the journey of preparation
- Videos work well for the age group we serve but also challenge them and lead to good questions.
- This is a comprehensive program

Cons

- Parent track is somewhat lacking
 - Parent track focuses on practicalities rather than catechesis
-

Materials & Cost:

Online Course - \$16 US
Student Pack - \$26 US
Guide to the Mass - \$15 US
Prayer Cards - \$6 US
Leader Guides - \$30 US
Online Parent Certification - \$10 US
Family Crates - \$35 US

Website: ascensionpress.com/collections/renewed-and-received



Signs of Grace:

You are Loved and You are Forgiven

Augustine Institute

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: The curriculum includes eight sessions. Activities, Scripture, videos, and stories are provided to engage the children. A family take-home page is provided with each session in English and Spanish to engage parents and the entire family in this journey of Faith.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- The videos are wonderful
- The program is thoughtful and well done for this age level

Cons

- A little long and complicated
- May need to be modified

Materials & Cost:

Online course - \$30
Teacher Guide - \$45
Student Guide - \$8
Student Activity Book - \$8
Confession Cards for Children (packs of 20) - \$15
Saint Prayer Cards (packs of 20) - \$40
*All in USD and volume discounts available

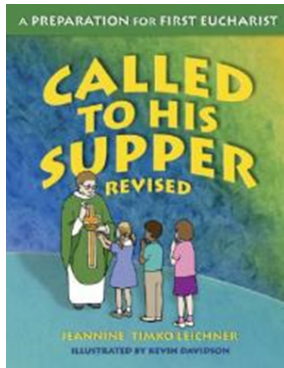
Website: thesignsofgrace.org



Additional Resources

Making Things Right and Called to His Supper

By: Jeannine Timko Lechner
Published by Our Sunday Visitor



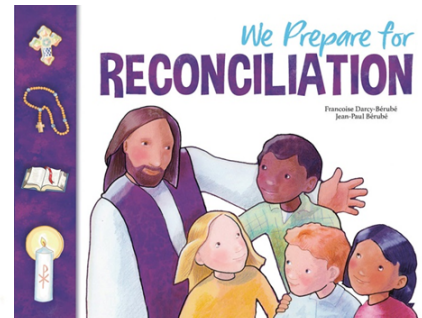
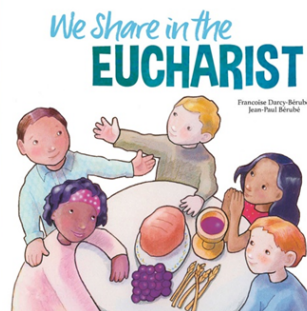
My Little Catechism

By Guillaume De Menthieri
Published by Ignatius Press
ALSO AVAILABLE IN FRENCH



We Prepare for Reconciliation and We Share in the Eucharist

By Francoise Darcy-Berube and
John-Paul Berube
Published by Novalis



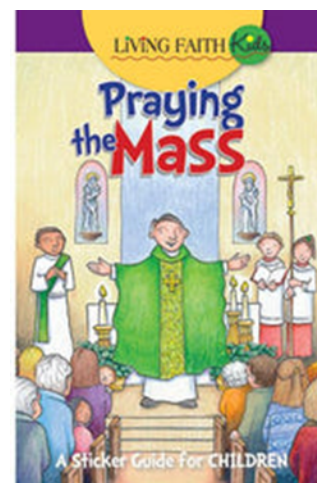
Learning Centers for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and the Whole Community

By Doris Murphy
Published by Twenty-Third Publications



Living Faith Kids: Praying the Mass

Published by Creative
Communications for the Parish



Confirmation

For more comprehensive guidance on preparation for confirmation, please consult page 16 in "Criteria for the Administration of the Sacraments of Initiation, First Penance, and Marriage," which outlines the official diocesan guidelines in greater detail.

Who can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

- Confirmation is celebrated with young people in grades 7 or 8 in the Diocese of London.
- Candidates for Confirmation should have already celebrated their First Reconciliation and First Communion.

Baptismal Certificates

As with the other sacraments, it is important to collect the baptismal certificates of all candidates for the sacrament prior to the celebration.

Confirmation Names

Confirmation marks the culmination of the sacraments of initiation; therefore the Diocese of London observes the practice wherein candidates are to use their baptismal names for the rite. This is a noteworthy shift away from the practice of using a saint's name which is no longer needed.

Preparation

The purpose of preparing for Confirmation is to lay the groundwork for the candidates to receive the grace of the sacrament and to participate fully in the liturgy of Confirmation. It is not intended to test their religious knowledge.

Historically Confirmation candidates have been given a list of expectations such as community service hours or homework assignments as part of the preparation. These are no longer acceptable practices as it adds to the perception that they must jump through hoops to be confirmed. Any expectation of service should encourage candidates to participate in the missionary work of the Church, and there should be no homework assignments unless they are doing preparation at home.

If you are working with the local school, it is advisable to allow all students to participate in the preparation. Those who are not being confirmed will still receive the benefit of the experience.

Sponsors

- Sponsors must be active, practicing and fully initiated Catholics (baptized and confirmed).
- They must be at least 16 years old.
- Ideally it would be one of the candidate's godparents.
- They do not have to be the same gender as the candidate.
- The candidate's parent cannot be the sponsor.

When and how should Confirmation take place?

- Is it customary for a bishop to celebrate Confirmation, however, in the Diocese of London the local pastor has been granted permission to confer the sacrament.
- The sacrament of Confirmation is usually celebrated during Mass.
- It is customary to provide an opportunity for candidates to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation prior to their Confirmation.
- Name tags are the best way to present the candidate by name.

Clothing Guidelines

Candidates are not to wear anything that resembles a stole, as this is reserved for ordained clergy.

Gowns are optional but not necessary for Confirmation celebrations and are best reserved for graduation. Clothing should be appropriate for the occasion.

Developmental Norms

Key points of development for children who are typically preparing for confirmation (approximately 12-13 years old):

- Adolescence is a social age
 - They discover who they are by seeing themselves in relation to others
 - They look beyond their own families to see how they fit in the world
- Social relationships are the lens through which they are going to judge everything
 - Help them encounter one another
 - Have them gather in groups for conversation
- This is a time for critical thinking
 - They understand that every person has freedom of will
 - They need to decide things for themselves
- They are confronting the dilemmas of life and finding their place in the world
 - They need freedom to make their own choices
 - There should be accountability for their actions
- They want to make a difference in the world
 - They prefer to do a social justice project over creating a poster about it
 - Service projects are valuable, especially in groups
- They need to feel someone thinks they are GOOD
- They need to develop a personal vision and will reject a vision placed on them by others
- They have boundless energy and a spirit of adventure
 - Adventure brings challenge
 - The purpose of challenge is self-discovery and the discovery of the plan of God

Learn the “fall back” strategy

- After listening to them, “fall back” into respectful silence instead of immediately reacting
- Acknowledge that they are making interesting facts
- Insistent demands usually result in rejection

Signs of Grace – You are Sent

Augustine Institute

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: This curriculum includes five sessions. Activities, Scripture, videos, and stories are provided to engage both the mind and the heart so that the child can come to fully understand the gift of grace and mercy offered through the sacrament. Parent sessions presented by world-acclaimed theologian and teacher Dr. Brant Pitre will help the entire family learn about the powerful and life-changing sacrament of confirmation. A family take-home page is provided with each session in English and Spanish to engage parents and the entire family in this journey of faith.

There are currently no reviews for this program

Materials & Cost: Student Guide - \$15 US
Student Activity Book - \$8 US
Teacher Guide - \$45 US
DVD for Students and DVD for Parents (available in the kit)
Kit - \$150 US

Website: thesignsofgrace.org/you-are-sent/



Chosen

Ascension Press

Available Languages: English and Spanish

Overview: The “Chosen” sessions provide 24 lessons with video presentations (each approximately 15 to 20 minutes) by 14 of the most inspiring youth leaders in the Church today. It is appropriate for middle school and high school students. This program has had a recent upgrade with more interaction and new guides for parents and instructors. The original (2014) version is available in Spanish.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- One of the BEST programs we have used
- it has been positive to use it as a youth group program
- Videos are good and can be used with other programs
- Current, contemporary and relevant

Cons

- A little long
- It is costly

Materials & Cost:

3 options

Online - online videos, digital workbook, online quizzes, online reflection questions is \$19 US

Student Workbook - all of the above plus a physical student workbook is \$21 US

Student pack - all of the above plus a Digital Parent Guide and a Digital Sponsor Guide is \$28 US

Website:

ascensionpress.com/collections/chosen-your-journey-to-confirmation



Decision Point

Dynamic Catholic

Available Languages: English

Overview: “Decision Point” consists of 72 short films, a student workbook, and a leader guide.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Comprehensive
- Can be used as an independent study program for families unable to attend preparation classes

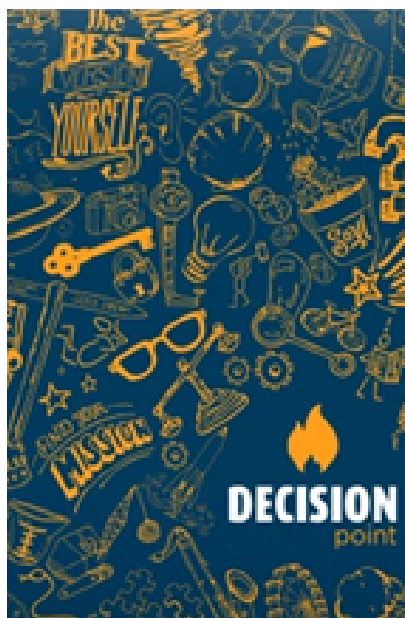
Cons

- Each session is long
 - The entire program is long and will need to be modified
 - Videos are getting dated
 - Matthew Kelly has very little appeal to the target audience
-

Materials & Cost:

Leader Guide
DVD Set
Student Workbook
The cost is \$41 US for shipping

Website: dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation.html



Never Alone: Life with the Holy Spirit

YDisciple (available on Formed for those who have a subscription)

Available Languages: English

Overview: Combining personal testimony with catechesis, this series was created to bring about fruitful discussions with students who are preparing to be confirmed as well as those whose Confirmation has already been celebrated. As with all of the YDisciple series, it is designed specifically with small groups in mind.

Comments from individuals who have used the program

Pros

- Only 4 to 5 sessions long
- Videos are relevant and well produced
- Self-reflective
- All handouts are online and easily accessible

Cons

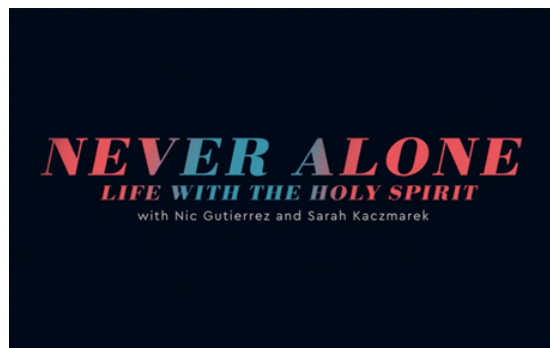
- Group discussions are a challenge

Materials & Cost:

Four video sessions (approximately 15 minutes each)
Leader Guide with carefully crafted discussion questions, suggested activities, and prayers - Separate guides for middle school (ages 11-13) and high school (ages 14-18)
Parent sheets in English & Spanish
Participant guides
Special training for adult leaders

Digital Download \$69 US
Other options available, please check website

Website: ydisciple.com/neveralone/



Additional Resources

Alpha Youth Refresh - New in 2023

In this refresh, Alpha showcasing new voices, conversations, and ideas from Gen Z.
alphacanada.org/alpha-youth-series-refresh



Confirmed in the Spirit

Published by Loyola Press