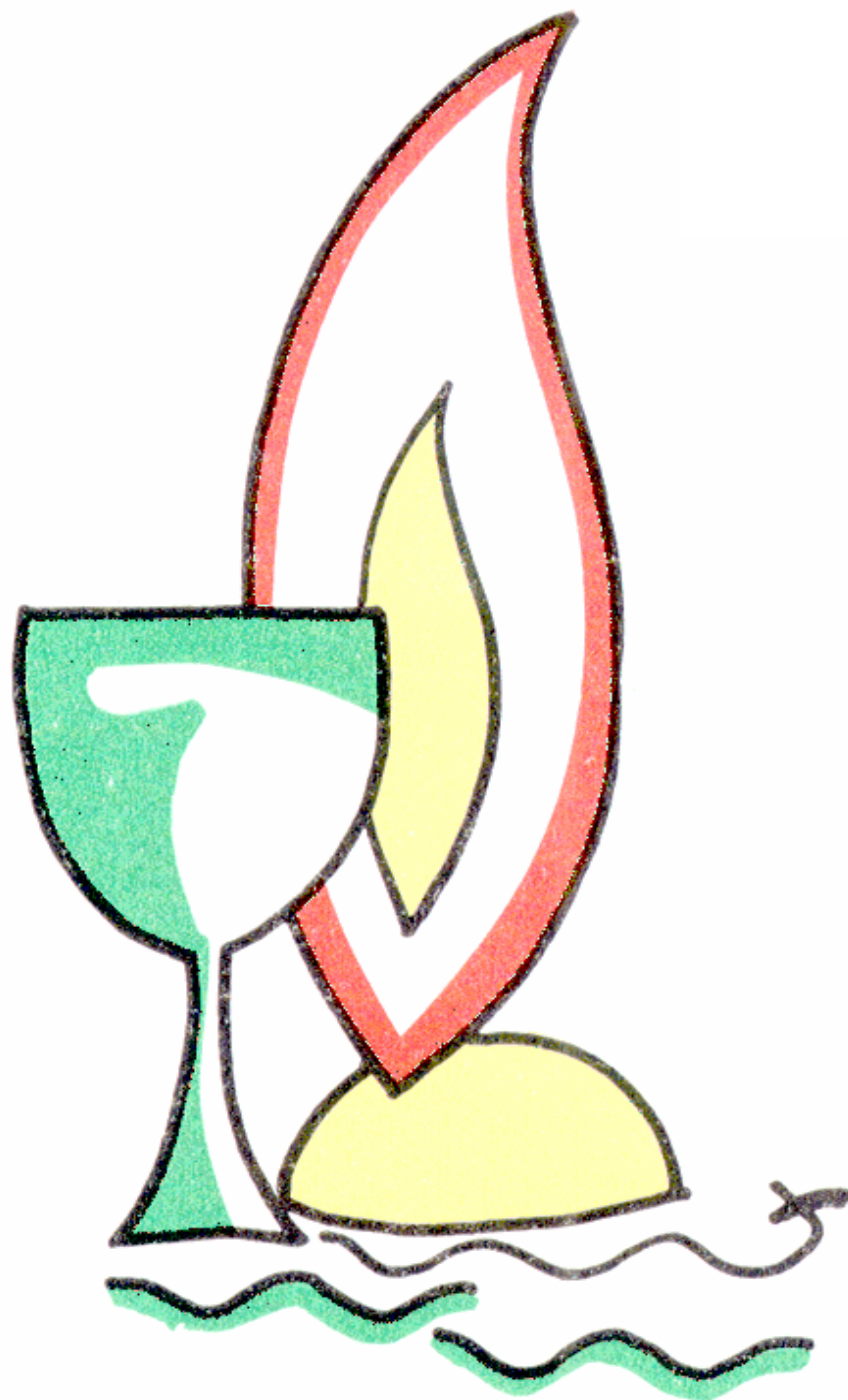


Children Celebrating Sacraments



DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON, 2000



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DIOCESAN VISION

The renewal of the Church proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council called for a profoundly new sense of purpose in the Church's life. This Council, drawing from the life of the Spirit, dynamically active in the lives and events of people throughout time, affirmed the need for a renewal of our understanding and approach to our relationship with God and the role of the Church in our world.

The Diocese of Rockhampton, in keeping with the vision of the Second Vatican Council, articulates a vision of pastoral sensitivity. This vision seeks the revitalisation of a culture which reclaims the Kingdom identity established through a trusting relationship with God.

Vision Statement of the Diocese of Rockhampton

*As a community of believers
we live out the call of Baptism
through personal faith in Jesus,
witnessing together
to the Good News of the Kingdom.*

This prophetic stance places emphasis on the quality of relationships which exist between all people. It inspires a call to active participation and responsibility of sharing in Christ's mission and ministry to the broader community. It opens all to the possibilities of service, of being disciples of Christ and co-creators with God. It reflects the reign of God as a social reality.

Through reflection, examination, dialogue and decision-making, all in the community are constantly challenged to explore their values, their beliefs and their practices, so as to bring about authentic action.

This unity of vision and action embraces leading our children to establish their own relationship with God. The task of nurturing children's growth in faith and leading them to join in the liturgical celebrations of their faith rightly belongs to parents. Introduction to the Church's sacramental life is the means through which one enters more fully into the life of the faith community. Because sacramental initiation is parish oriented, it is proper that the faith community, expressed in the parish, be also responsible for and intimately involved in the sacramental preparation of children.



BISHOP'S CHALLENGE

The process of Christian Initiation is subject to the universal law of the Church and discipline of each particular diocese. As Bishop, I have taken account of both the general law and the particular circumstances of our local Church to establish appropriate guidelines for preparation and celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and Penance for children.

In 1995 a sacraments taskforce was established in our diocese. Members of this taskforce worked with me to consult widely throughout the diocese and beyond. This process has been long and rich, involving the education and formation of the whole Church community, including sacrament teams, pastoral ministers, priests, families, catechists and schools.



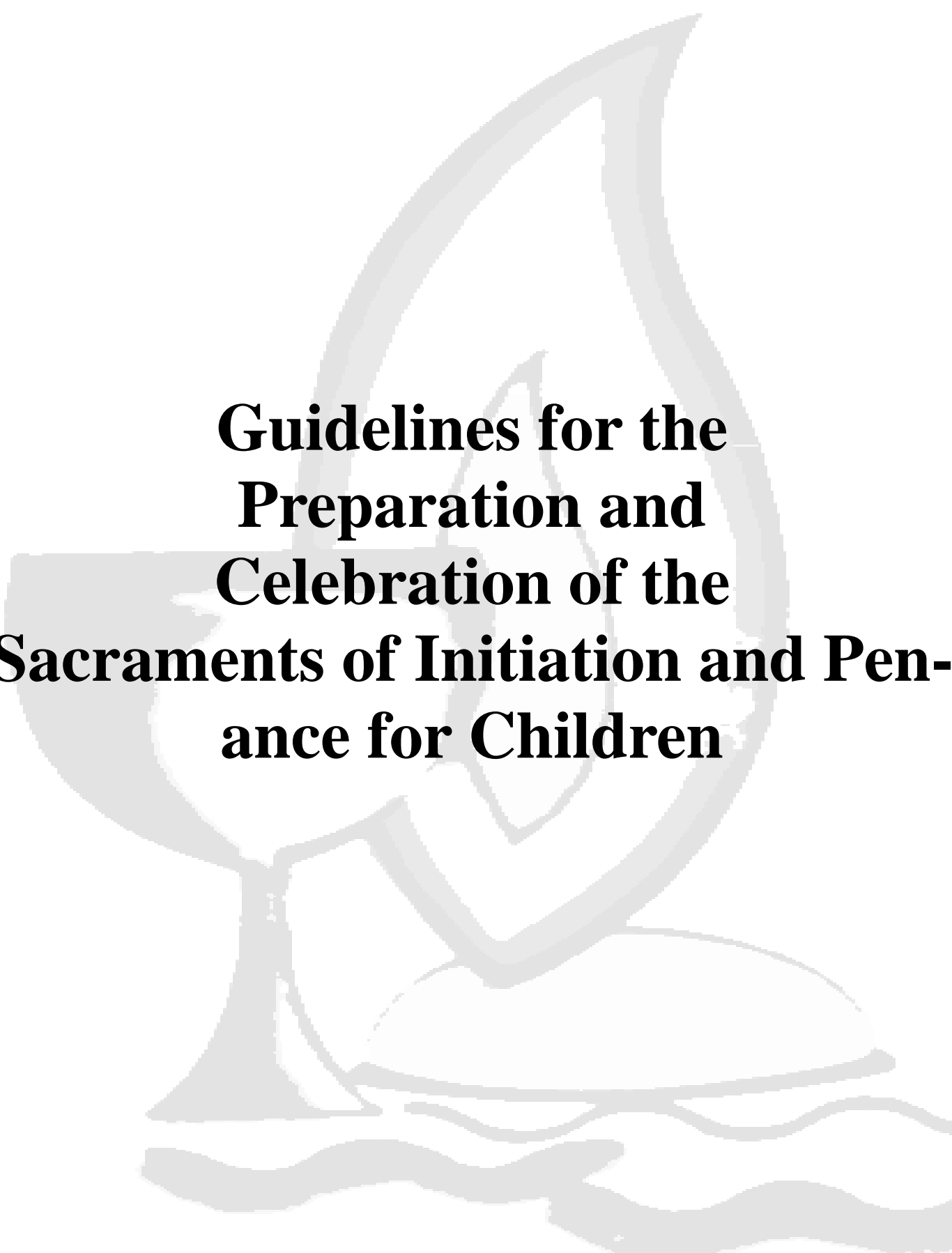
As draft guidelines emerged, they were trialled, discussed widely and revised. Each of these guidelines has been approved by the Diocesan Education Council.

In our diocese, as in many dioceses throughout the world, we have asked:

- ☐ In what order should the Sacraments of Initiation be received?**
- ☐ At what age should they be received?**
- ☐ Who should prepare children to receive them?**

These guidelines are the outcome of this process. I commend them to you for use in local church communities throughout the Diocese of Rockhampton. May they enrich the sacramental and spiritual life of your families and your local Church community.

Brian Heenan
Bishop of Rockhampton

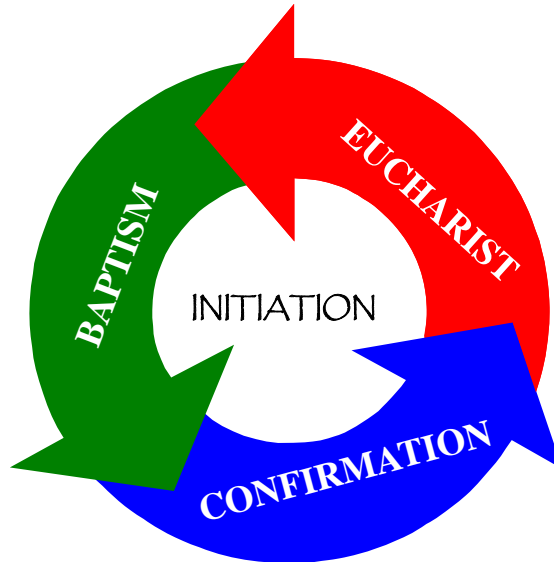


**Guidelines for the
Preparation and
Celebration of the
Sacraments of Initiation and Pen-
ance for Children**



INITIATION

Initiation into the community of the faithful is a single process celebrated in three sacramental moments:



This relationship is seen very clearly in the initiation of adults during the Easter Vigil. In the Western Church, however, the practice evolved for the initiation of children to be extended over a number of years and for the order of reception to vary. Appropriate catechesis and pastoral formation for both children and parents gradually developed.

The proper sequence for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation for both children and adults is:

- 1. Baptism**
- 2. Confirmation**
- 3. Eucharist**

This order, in the ancient tradition of the Church, best expresses the theology of the sacraments and their close relationship to each other.

Confirmation completes our Baptism and opens us to the table of the Eucharist.

Therefore in the Diocese of Rockhampton the following policy on the Sacraments of Initiation for children has been established.



While Baptism remains in infancy
Confirmation is celebrated prior to or together
with the first reception of Eucharist

BAPTISM:

The age of Baptism remains in infancy according to tradition.

CONFIRMATION AND EUCHARIST:

The age for Confirmation and Eucharist will be determined by the parent in consultation with the parish priest and/or a member of the Sacraments Team. Usually it would be expected to be about the age of discretion – this is considered to begin at around 7 or 8 years of age.

LITURGICAL SEASONS, COMMUNITY LIFE:

The Sacraments should be celebrated in accord with the liturgical season of the Church Year and the life of the local Church community.

Role of the Family in the Faith Community

- ☐ Parents have the right and the responsibility to be the primary educators in faith of their children and are the first ones to form their children in the ways of faith.
- ☐ Parents, supported by the local Church community and guided by the Bishop's vision and the Diocesan Program, will prepare their children to receive these sacraments.
- ☐ The Church welcomes all of its families into this process. The local Church community will offer support suited to each family's needs.
- ☐ Parents will be able to turn to other members of the faith community for advice and assistance, without handing over to others their role as primary educators of their children in the faith. Adequate resource material will be available.
- ☐ The needs of parents for formation, encouragement and assistance will be met.
- ☐ Catholic Schools, through their culture and through their religious education curriculum, will continue to support families in deepening their children's knowledge and understanding of the sacraments and other areas of religious education.



PENANCE

The Church obliges the use of the Sacrament of Penance for those who are conscious of grave sin. It recommends the use of the sacrament to all of the faithful also for the forgiveness of venial sin.

Baptised children who have reached the age of discretion have a right to this sacrament.

READINESS

Children learn to celebrate this sacrament as soon as they can benefit from the experience of acknowledging responsibility for their wrongdoing, and from knowing they are forgiven and accepted by God.

PREPARATION

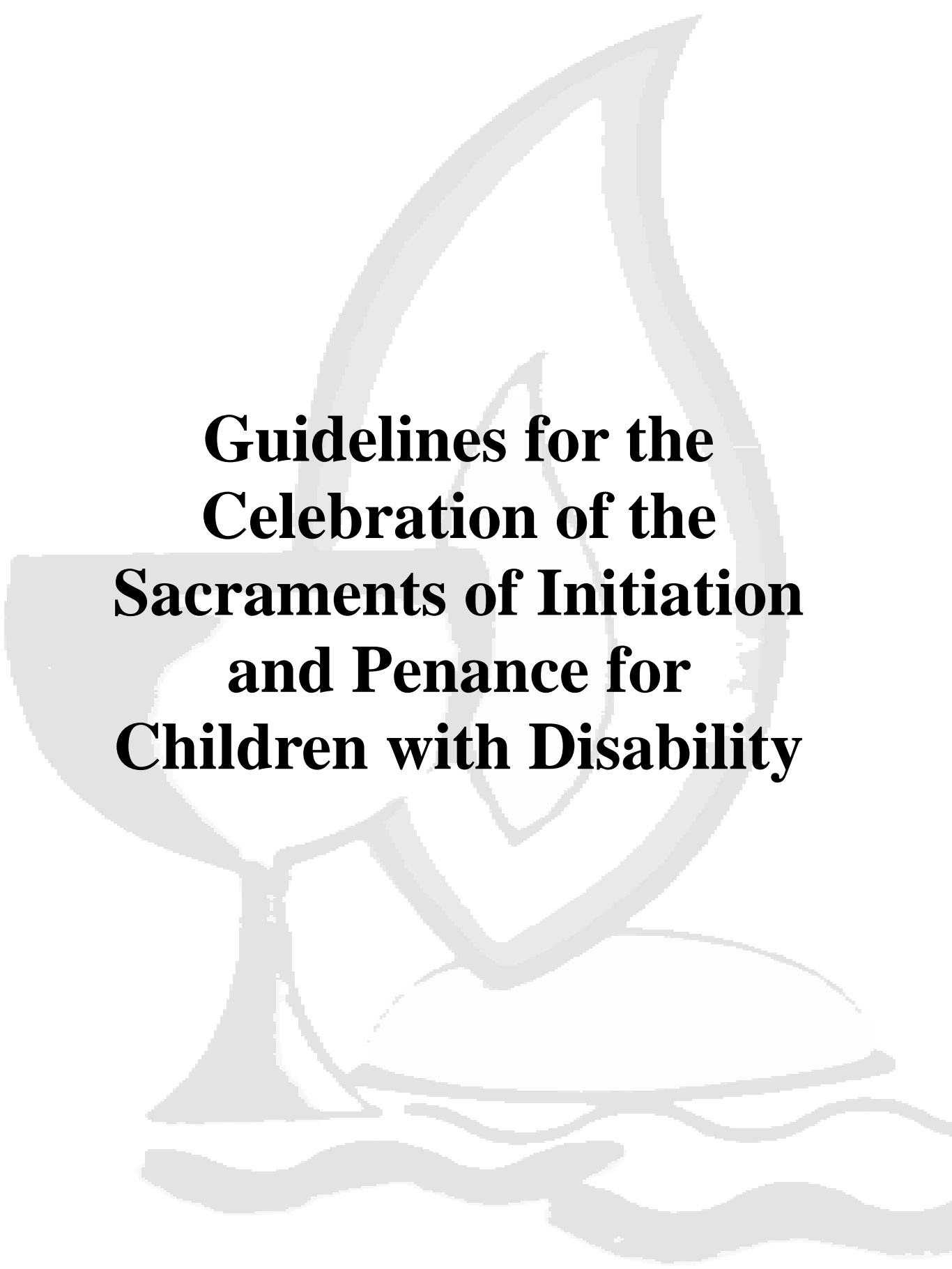
Before children receive First Eucharist they should also be prepared with suitable instruction for celebrating the Sacrament of Penance.

CELEBRATION

At the age when First Penance is celebrated, the liturgy and structure of Rite II may be more appropriate to the child's stage of development and learning than Rite I.

Approved by Diocesan Education Council, 7 NOVEMBER 1997





**Guidelines for the
Celebration of the
Sacraments of Initiation
and Penance for
Children with Disability**



INTRODUCTION

"No one born into this world is free from human frailty whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual. Each of us must personally come to terms with this frailty ...

... in the providence of God a different life does not mean a less important life.

It does not mean a life with less potential for holiness or for contributing to the well-being of the world."

(Pope John Paul II, Brisbane 1986:
Address to people with disability or sickness)

All people have the right, through their baptism, to complete their initiation into the Christian community by celebrating the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, and by also having the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance.

As a local church community, these pastoral guidelines have been compiled to enable people with disability and their families to be welcomed and supported for the sacraments in and by their own parish community.

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with "Guidelines for the Preparation and Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and Penance for Children."

PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

- ☐ Families and candidates with disability are invited and welcomed to the family based sacramental programs together with all other families.
- ☐ A person on the Parish Sacramental Team will be responsible for ensuring effective communication with families with a child who has a disability.
- ☐ Parents of children with disability need to be offered the opportunities to talk with, and be supported by, their parish community.
- ☐ The appropriateness of the Parish preparation programs needs to be discussed with parents and adapted as appropriate.
(e.g. Families might like to pray with their child in a special way once a week – lighting a candle, placing hands on the child and saying a prayer or creating art work.)



LITURGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- ☐ After discussion with the pastor, parents and children, each celebration needs to be developed in accordance with local circumstances.
- ☐ The specific needs of candidates with disability are to be considered when planning the Liturgy.
- ☐ Every effort should be made to enable all candidates to be part of the celebrating community.
- ☐ The Eucharistic Ministers should be made aware of the presence and specific needs of children with disability regarding the reception of the Eucharist.

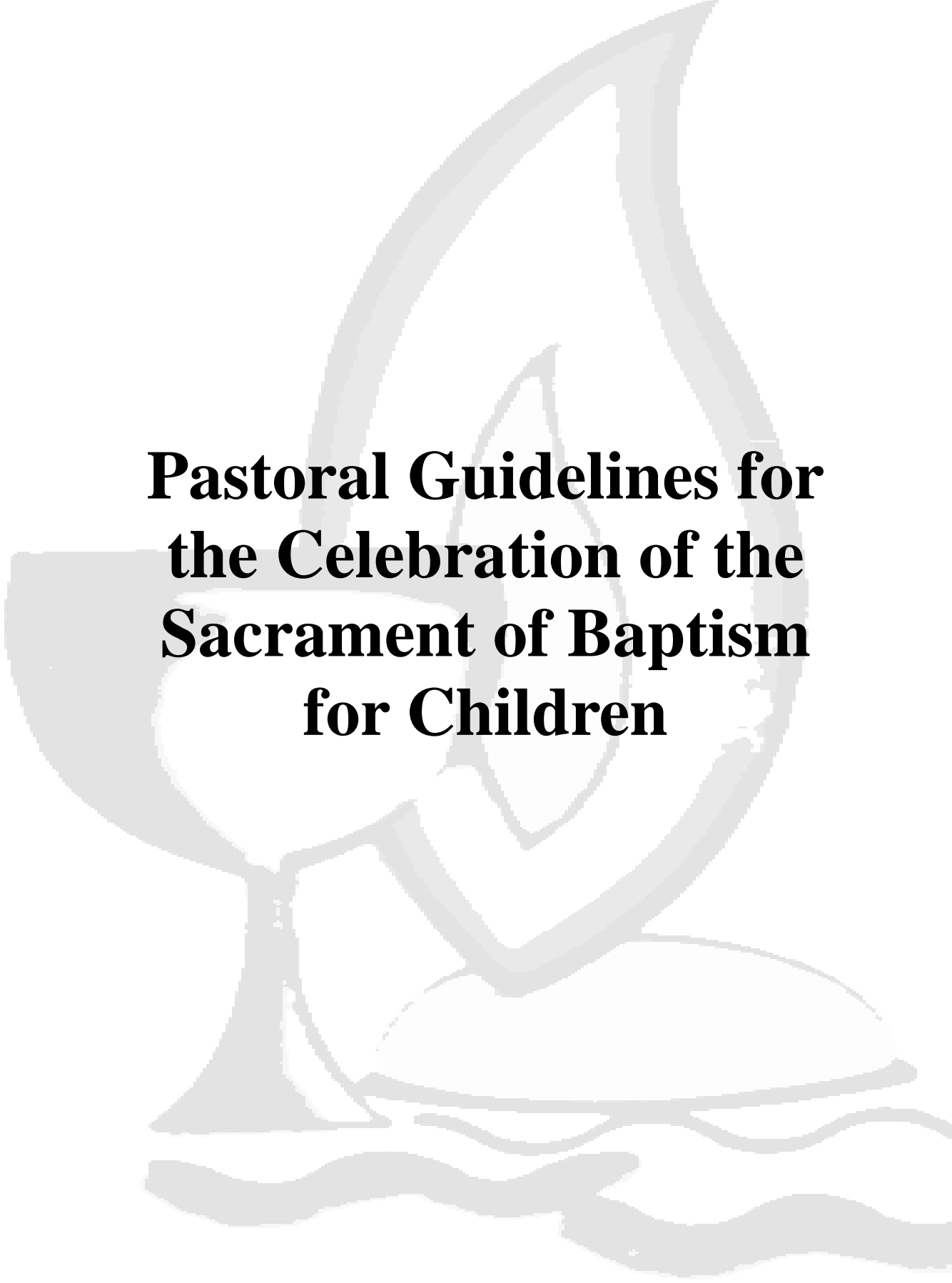
(eg. The candidate may receive only a small piece of consecrated bread; a parent may administer the consecrated bread and consecrated wine; candidates may receive only consecrated wine; some candidates may need a glass of water with the consecrated bread.)

PENANCE

The celebration of the Sacrament of Penance for a child with a disability may be delayed until the child reaches appropriate maturity. Parents will usually decide when to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance based on their child's development.

Approved by the Diocesan Education Council, 4 SEPTEMBER 1998





Pastoral Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism for Children



As a community of believers
we live out the call of Baptism
through personal faith in Jesus,
witnessing together
to the Good News of the Kingdom.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Church has always been faithful to her mission to -

*Go therefore, make disciples of all nations;
baptise them in the name of the Father, and
of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

Matt 28:14

From apostolic times the sequence of first making disciples then baptising has been apparent; it is seen most clearly in the initiation of adults where the process of the catechumenate fosters the faith development of the catechumen, leading up to the celebration of the Easter Sacraments.

In the case of infant baptism, the reverse procedure occurs; baptising is taken as the starting point of the faith journey, with discipleship following.

This has been a practice of immemorial tradition. In both cases, as in all the sacraments, faith is the common ground.

With adults, it is a personal commitment of faith, which has matured over a period of time, and is then celebrated in the sacrament. With infants, it is a faith response-ability of the whole Church.

*The faith is proclaimed for the child by his/her parents and
godparents who represent both the local Church and the
whole society of saints and believers.*

Rite of Baptism of Children #2 (1969)

*To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must
later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptised.*

Rite of Baptism of Children #3 (1969)

Thus the faith of the parents and godparents is of crucial pastoral importance and must also be set in the context of the community's faith.

*Before and after the celebration of the sacraments, the child
has a right to the love and help of the community... the faith
in which the children are baptised is not the private possession
of the individual family, but it is the common treasure of the
whole Church of Christ.*

Rite of Baptism of Children #4 (1969)



B. MINISTRIES

The role of those involved:

1. The Community

The ministry of the community is important in every sacrament. So it is here:

The preparation for Baptism and Christian instruction are both of vital concern to God's people, the Church, which hands on and nourishes the faith received from the Apostles. Through the ministry of the Church, adults are called to the Gospel by the Holy Spirit and infants are baptised in the faith of the Church and brought up in that faith.

General Instruction on Christian Initiation #7 (1969)

It is the responsibility of the parish community:

- to extend their love and help to the family, both before and after the celebration of the sacrament
- to work together in making preparations for baptism
- to celebrate their joy as the newly-baptised are received into the community of the Church.

2. Parents

Parents have the primary responsibility for the baptism and Christian formation of their children.

They exercise their ministry when:

- before the celebration of the sacrament, moved by their own faith, or with the help of friends or other members of the community, they prepare to take part in the rite with understanding;
- during the celebration, they have special parts to play (Signing the child with the sign of the cross, making the profession of faith, etc.);
- after baptism, they enable the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive confirmation, and to participate in the holy Eucharist.

Rite of Baptism of Children #5 (1969)

In each of these roles they are helped and supported by members of the



3. Godparents/Family Sponsors

In the baptism of children, the godparents should be present to be added spiritually to the immediate family of the one to be baptised and to represent Mother Church. As occasion offers, they will be ready to help the parents bring up their child to profess the faith and to show this by living it.

General Instruction on Christian Initiation #8

(1969)

Their ministry then, involves:

- representing the church community at the baptism;
- supporting the parents in faith education of the children;
- participating with the parents in the preparation for baptism, in so far as this is possible.

Thus, though their role is secondary to that of parents, it is still important. They should be chosen carefully by the parents.

A Godparent should be invited by the parents and be:

- a member of the Catholic Church. It is permissible for a baptised and believing Christian from another denomination to partner a Catholic godparent;
- at least 16 years of age and mature enough to undertake his/her responsibility;
- fully initiated (have received baptism, confirmation and eucharist) and live a life of faith, enabling them to undertake the role of the godparent.

(see Code of Canon Law #874 for full text)

4. Pastor and Team

Each parish is strongly urged to set up, with appropriate initial formation, a baptismal team.

The pastor, assisted by a baptismal team where this is possible, is responsible for:

- the preparation for baptism;
- the celebration of baptism;
- contact and support for the parents after baptism.



C. PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION

Responsibilities of the pastor/team:

1. Interview

The purpose of this initial interview is to help parents come to an awareness of the significance of baptism in their family's faith life.

They will be asked to give assurances that the gifts thus granted (through baptism) can grow by an authentic education in the faith and Christian life, in order to fulfil the true meaning of the sacrament.

Instruction on Infant Baptism #27 (1980)

It sometimes happens that parents have some difficulties concerning the assurances to be given. It must always be borne in mind that their request for the sacrament is, in itself an indication of some faith on their part. In this circumstance, an **outright refusal** to baptise is usually unacceptable, pastorally and theologically. However, the baptism celebration may be **deferred** (cf. Code of Canon Law# 868) while the parents are helped to a fuller understanding of their own faith life in the Church, and their responsibilities concerning the faith life of their child.

The nature of this help should be quite clearly spelled out – the support available to them through various ministries, the catechesis that will be offered, the communal nature of the celebration itself, etc. It may also be helpful if a simple rite of blessing for the child be offered to them in the interim.

(cf. "Rite for Celebrating Birth", "That You May Have Life", Brisbane)

In all of this, the pastor/team needs to be sensitive to the particular situation of each family, and not make unrealistic demands of them.

It must be clear that the refusal of baptism is not a means of exercising pressure. Nor can one speak of refusal, still less of discrimination, but rather of educational delay, according to individual cases, aimed at helping the family to grow in faith or to become more aware of its responsibilities.

Instruction on Infant Baptism #32(1980)



2. Formation for Parents

This will be part of a continuous process of help and support for the parents, commencing, if possible, during pregnancy, and continuing after the baptismal celebration.

Where appropriate, the parents should be helped to give expression to the great events of pregnancy and birth in ritual.

This preparation should be carried out in small groups, family groups, etc., with the leadership of Catholic parents. Therefore, it is most important that catechists and other lay people should work with priests and deacons in making preparations for baptism.

General Instruction on Christian Initiation #7

If possible, the godparents are part of this preparation.

The parents of a child who is to be baptised and those who undertake the office of godparents are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The parish priest is to see to it that either he or others duly prepare the parents, by means of pastoral advice or prayer together; a number of families might be brought together for this purpose.

Code of Canon Law #851

3. Preparation for the Celebration

If there is to be full, conscious and active participation in the celebration, then care must be taken to ensure that the parents:

- ☐ understand the various parts of the rite;
- ☐ are aware of the significance of its symbols and gestures; (Those involved in preparation need to be sensitive to the use of diverse cultural symbols.)
- ☐ Are involved in selecting the most appropriate options – in the readings, the prayers etc. – and in choosing people to minister within this rite – as readers, etc.

Where several baptisms are celebrated together, even more care should be taken to secure their involvement in this preparation even though this may be difficult because of numbers. All this is of great importance, so they can take part in this rite with understanding.

Rite of Baptism of Children #5(1969)



4. Celebration

It is the duty of the priest to arrange that baptism is always celebrated with proper dignity and, as far as possible, adapted to the circumstances and wishes of the families concerned. Rite of Baptism of Children #7(1969)

The Code of Canon Law states that:

"Baptism is to be conferred either by immersion or by pouring, in accordance with the provisions of the Episcopal Conference." Code of Canon Law #854

Wherever possible, families should be combined so that the communal nature of the sacrament is more evident.

"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." General Instruction on Christian Initiation #7 (1969)

*"It is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil **or** on Sunday, when the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection."*

General Instruction on Christian Initiation # 9 (1969)

It is further recommended that Baptism be celebrated during Sunday Eucharist so that the Church community may welcome the child and family and the relationship between Baptism and Eucharist be clearly seen.

"Furthermore, except for a good reason, baptism should not be celebrated more than once on the same day in the same Church."

General Instruction to Christian Initiation#27 (1969)

The Church has a simple rite of Baptism for situations of emergency or danger of death (cf. Rite of Baptism of Children #21/22). At a later date the child may be introduced to and welcomed by the local Church community during Sunday Eucharist.



D. ON-GOING SUPPORT

The Parish Community has the responsibility of ensuring that the baptised child is enabled to come to a mature personal faith. This involves a long-term process of religious education and/or catechesis.

The pastor/team will establish structures of support for the parents of the baptised, so that they (the parents)

... in gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, will enable the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive confirmation, and to participate in the holy eucharist.

Rite of Baptism of Children #5 (1969)

This support may take various forms, according to circumstances, for example:

- introducing the parents to an existing network of parents within the parish;
- providing courses or resources for further learning;
- or remembering them on the anniversary of baptism.

Approved by Diocesan Education Council, 4 JUNE 1999



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