



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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7 August 2023

Members of Parish Sacramental Teams and
School Staff involved in Sacramental Preparation

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The Sacraments of Initiation are at the centre of our Sacramental Life as Catholics. Many people, young and old, join our church through the Sacrament of Baptism, and the other Sacraments of Initiation draw them more deeply into communion with Jesus Christ and empower them for His mission. I would like to thank you for your important work in accompanying these people in preparation for these sacraments and for helping them to understand more deeply the mysteries of faith contained in them.

In February 2021, I released the policy document, [*The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton*](#); this was followed by some further guidelines in December 2022, intended to be read in the light of this policy. I would like to draw your attention to these documents and to ask you, if you have not already done so, to read them carefully as they contain important directives about the preparation for and celebration of these sacraments. I have attached them again for your reference.

In particular, I would like to highlight several elements mentioned in these documents and ask you to ensure that the practice in your own communities reflects our Diocesan policy.

- **Children of Catechetical Age Seeking Baptism or Reception into Full Communion**

These are children and young people over the age of reason (generally about 7 years old) who seek to be baptised or admitted to full communion with the Church. This is a marvellous opportunity for the parish to nurture the families and their children and provide strong catechesis for the children and their families. The initiation process and celebration of the Sacraments follows the RCIA program, i.e. all three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist, are conducted in the one ceremony, ideally at the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday during the Easter season. As the children are of catechetical age, all three sacraments happen at the one ceremony and are not to be broken up. While the catechetical formation may happen separately from that of adults (and may sometimes be offered by teachers in the child's school, in consultation with the pastor), the liturgical celebration of the sacraments, including the preparatory rites, should happen in the Sunday Eucharistic community, rather than separately (for example at a school Mass). Efforts should also be made, where appropriate, to connect these young people with the other adults in the RCIA process, so that there is no sense of a parallel RCIA program.

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Bishop Michael McCarthy

- **Young people seeking Confirmation and/or First Holy Communion**

At times Catholic young people seek to complete their initiation through the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion at a later age than usual. As the parish sacramental programs are generally aimed at children around the ages of 8 to 10, the formation material offered may not be appropriate for older children and adolescents. In these circumstances our Catholic secondary colleges may take on elements of their catechetical preparation for the sacraments in a manner more appropriate for their age. This should always be done in communication with the parish pastor and sacramental team, and the reception of these sacraments should normally occur together with the other children of the parish.

I would ask that parish pastors have a close involvement with these times of preparation for the sacraments, particularly to offer a warm and inviting welcome, especially to those who may not have had much involvement with the Church. These times of sacramental preparation can be a priceless opportunity to evangelise and to offer a path to greater involvement with the Church and a deeper encounter with the Lord, whose saving mysteries are made present in the sacraments. Thank you again for your dedication to this ministry, and may God bless your efforts.

Yours sincerely



Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton

Attachments:

- [The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton](#) – Feb 2021
- [Sacraments of Initiation letter – Dec 2022](#)