

Approved Sacramental Guidelines

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Baptism

Confirmation

Eucharist

Penance

Anointing

Marriage

Holy Orders

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacraments of Initiation
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

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<p style="text-align:center">GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (WITH ADAPTATIONS FOR CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE); WITH GLOSSARY</p>

I. Doctrinal Overview

N.B. Because the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is oriented primarily to the initiation of those who are unbaptized, this doctrinal overview focuses upon the catechumenate.

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

1. Summary

- a. The Church's initiation procedure was loosely organized, much like the rites of early Jewish sects.
- b. It included a period of preparation for instruction and repentance, then reception into the community through a bath of water and sometimes a laying on of hands.

2. Second Century through Fifth Century

- a. Candidates for Baptism have a long period of preparation including instruction, prayer, and doing good works.
- b. When ready for Baptism, candidates were vouched for by their sponsor, and bathed, fasted, and prayed before receiving the sacrament.
- c. For the ceremony the candidates were exorcised and anointed. After disrobing, they went into the water to profess their faith and be baptized.
- d. Clothed in white garments, they received a final anointing by the bishop to confirm their new life in Christ.
- e. When bishops found it impossible to attend all baptisms, the Western Church separated this final anointing from the baptism itself to be administered later in the ceremony of Confirmation by the bishop.

3. Sixth Century to Twentieth Century

- a. In the Middle Ages, Christianity became the common belief, and infant Baptisms, the general rule.
- b. The long preparation for Baptism was no longer needed.
- c. In some areas, the child was confirmed at the time of Baptism, but as time went on, this ceremony was postponed until a later age.

- d. The Council of Trent in 1565 stated the “age of reason” as right for Confirmation
- e. Confirmation was no longer seen as simply a sealing of Baptism but rather as a sacrament of growth, confirming the Christian person’s faith.
- f. The Bishop’s Kiss of Peace became a blow on the cheek to signify that one must be ready to suffer for Christ.

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4. Vatican II to the present

- a. The first document of Vatican II, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963), mandated restoration of the ancient order of initiation of adults known as the catechumenate:
 - The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be brought into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 64)
- b. In 1972, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), as mandated by Vatican II, was published. A provisional English version of the text was made available in 1974.
- c. For the next ten years, parishes in the United States (and the Diocese of Fort Worth) began implementing the catechumenal process of initiation.
- d. In 1983, several minor changes were made in the RCIA to bring it into conformity with the new Code of Canon Law.
- e. National statutes for the catechumenate for the United States were approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1986 and confirmed by the Holy See in 1987. The final English version of the ritual text was published and its implementation mandated in 1988.
- f. The Christian initiation of adults includes not only a period of well-suited instruction and a time sanctified by liturgical rites to be celebrated at successive intervals, but also a gradual integration into the full, conscious and active life of the Catholic community.
- g. While current practice, both worldwide and locally, remains varied, the trend is moving away from a school year model of implementation to an approach that is more flexible. Such flexibility is better suited to the individual needs of those seeking full communion with the Church and to the process of conversion which is continually turning one’s life toward the Gospel.

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION, CORRELATION WITH THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE RITE FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PREPARATION FOR FULL INITIATION INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

1. Participation in the Paschal Mystery through membership in the Church is a gift God gives through preparation for and celebration of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

- Baptism brings forgiveness of all sin and the beginning of new life in Christ.
- Confirmation strengthens and seals the baptismal mission of the faithful.
- Eucharist, sacrifice and meal, nourishes the faithful with Christ's Body and Blood.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1229: From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

RCIA, Christian Initiation, General Introduction 1: In the sacraments of Christian initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire people of God in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.

CCC 1263: By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.

RCIA, General Introduction 2a: Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God's people. This first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence we are called and are indeed the children of God.

CCC 1296: Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal. Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total

belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.

RCIA, General Introduction 2b: *By signing us with the gift of the Spirit, confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord and fills us with the Holy Spirit, so that we may bear witness to him before all the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness as soon as possible.*

RCIA 215: *In accord with the ancient practice followed in the Roman Liturgy adults are not to be baptized without receiving confirmation immediately afterward, unless some serious reason stands in the way. The conjunction of the two sacraments signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized.*

CCC 1322: *The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.*

RCIA, General Introduction 2c: *Finally, coming to the table of the eucharist, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that we may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering ourselves with Christ we share in the universal sacrifice, that is, the entire community of the redeemed offered to God by their High Priest, and we pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family.*

Implications:

<p>Christ's Paschal Mystery, his death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, is the foundation of the Church and the Church's sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist initiate one into this Mystery. RCIA teams help those to be initiated to recognize how the Holy Spirit reveals the dying and rising pattern of the Paschal Mystery in their lives. Though human expertise, planning, and work are needed for the preparation of these sacraments, the sacraments themselves are a gift from God and not from human initiative. Therefore the process of initiation is not governed by human conventions such as an academic year or membership in a particular year's class.</p>

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1212: *The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – lay the foundation of every Christian life.*

2. Together forming the core of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), these three sacraments are the foundation of Christian life, both for individuals seeking conversion to Christ in the Church, and for the Church herself.

RCIA, General Instruction, 2d: Thus the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.

Implications:

- All activities related to catechumenate should be inspired by the ritual text.
- While retaining their distinct characteristics and proper ends, the sacraments of initiation form a unity and are combined in one liturgical celebration.
- Those responsible for preparation of catechumens and candidates for full communion and for the corresponding liturgical celebrations should themselves be thoroughly familiar with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and adequately prepared for whatever ministries they undertake.
- In order to acknowledge and honor the valid baptism of those seeking full communion with the Church, care must be taken to maintain all legitimate distinctions between catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (baptized Christian but uncatechized in the Catholic faith).

3. The goal of Christian initiation is conversion to Christ in a life of discipleship.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1692: The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God," [Jn 1:12 ; 1Jn 3:1 .] "partakers of the divine nature" [2Pet 1:4.] Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ." [Phil 1:27 .] They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer.

RCIA 1: The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after having the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully.

Implications:

- Catechumens and candidates need to be taught explicitly that the goal of the process is not membership in a merely human institution, but a new way of living in Christ, expressed through active participation in the mission of the Church, in which the Spirit of God resides.

- The challenges and blessings of discipleship as a way of life should be made clear throughout the entire process.

4. Conversion to Christ is a journey, marked by a series of initiatory stages and affirmed by ritual celebrations, as quoted below (Part 1, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*; no paragraph number given, see p. 14)

PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ.

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens' faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.

Second Step: Election or Enrollment of Names

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

This is the time immediately preceding the elects' initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist.

PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

This is the time, usually the Easter season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday eucharistic celebration.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1229: *From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be*

covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

RCIA 2: *This rite includes not simply the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, but also all the rites belonging to the catechumenate.*

RCIA 5: *The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.*

Implications:

- Dialogue with the biblical stories of journey and the lived tradition of the Church is a primary source for the process of initiation.
- Each one of the periods and rituals is integral to the process of initiation of catechumens and deserves careful attention.
- Since the RCIA is the norm for all initiation, the journey of baptized candidates—even those whose preparation requires less time—also follows the pattern of initiatory stages and ritual celebrations.
- In the initiation process, the role of the bishop as pastor of the local Church is always honored.

5. Preparation for the new life of discipleship, because it involves the whole person, has the character of an apprenticeship in Christian life. It requires a balance of doctrinal, liturgical and spiritual formation, in the context of a community of faith, flowing from the proclamation of the Word of God.

- Nurturing an initial call to faith and repentance
- Discerning God’s presence through reflection on daily life in light of Scripture and prayer
- Fostering inclusion in the community of faith
- Developing the habit and practice of prayer and regular reading of Scripture.
- Encouraging a life of active witness through justice and charity

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1248: *The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with an ecclesial community. The catechumenate is to be “a formation in the whole Christian life . . . during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher. The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by*

successive sacred rites.” [AG 14; cf. RCIA 19; 98.]

RCIA 75: *The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. In this way the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity.*

CCC 1431: *Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one’s life, with hope in God’s mercy and trust in the help of his grace. This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart). [Cf. Council Of Trent (1551) DS 1676-1678; 1705; Cf. Roman Catechism, II, V, 4.] “*

RCIA 37: *From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love. . . .*

CCC 2688: *The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on The Word of God in personal prayer, practicing it in liturgical prayer, and internalizing it at all times in order to bear fruit in a new life. Catechesis is also a time for the discernment and education of popular piety. [Cf. CT 54.] The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning.*

RCIA 75, 2: *As they become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to set their hopes on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self renunciation. . . .*

CCC 6: *While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness. [CT 18.]*

RCIA 9,1: *. . . the faithful should . . . show themselves ready to give the candidates evidence of the spirit of the Christian community and to welcome them into their homes, into personal conversion, and into community gatherings.*

CCC 2662: The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer.

CCC 2720: The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year.

CCC 2725: Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. . . .

RCIA 142: Because they are asking for the three sacraments of initiation, the elect must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church, and they are expected particularly to progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.

CCC 1072: “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”: [SC 9.] it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity.

RCIA 75, 4: Since the Church’s life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.

Implications:

- In the process of preparing people for the sacraments of initiation, Scripture is primary.
- Care must be taken to devise a program of preparation and celebration which addresses the personal experience of participants.
- Sufficient formation will require significant time.
- The example of team members, sponsors, and parishioners will be crucial in incorporating new people into the life of the Church.
- Clear and frequent communication regarding opportunities for participation in parish events will be important for those seeking initiation.
- Information concerning resources for assisting those with special needs (e.g., marriage cases, moral dilemmas, counseling) should be available from the very beginning of the Inquiry process.

6. After experiencing the Paschal Mystery through the sacramental celebration of initiation, both the newly initiated and the rest of the faithful are enriched through post initiation catechesis, also known as mystagogy.

- Clarifying understanding of faith
- Deepening a sense of belonging
- Strengthening commitment to discipleship

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1212: *The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – lay the foundations of every Christian life.*

RCIA 9, 5: *During the period immediately after baptism, the faithful should take part in the Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season (see no. 25), to welcome the neophytes with open arms in charity, and to help them feel more at home in the community of the baptized.*

CCC 1234: *By following the gestures and words of this celebration with attentive participation, the faithful are initiated into the riches this sacrament signifies and actually brings about in each newly baptized person.*

RCIA 244: *. . . mystagogy. . . is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel . . .*

RCIA 245: *The neophytes are, as the term “mystagogy” suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through the experience of the sacraments they have received.*

CCC 6: *. . . catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission . . . [including] integration into the ecclesial community.*

RCIA 9, 5: *During the period immediately after baptism, the faithful should . . . help them feel more at home in the community of the baptized.*

CCC 6: *catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission . . . [including] apostolic and missionary witness.[[CT 18.](#)]*

CCC 1698: *The first and last point of reference of this catechesis will always be Jesus Christ himself, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life.” [[Jn 14:6.](#)] It is by looking to him in faith that Christ’s faithful can hope that he himself fulfills his promises in them, and that, by loving him with the same love with which he has loved them, they may perform works in keeping with their dignity . . .*

RCIA 7, 4: *The final period extends through the whole Easter Season and is devoted to the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. It is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.*

RCIA 245: . . . *Out of this experience [i.e., everything surrounding mystagogy], which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.*

Implications:

- Intentional, extended, post-initiation catechesis is a necessary element of the Rite.
- A prime catechetical goal of this period is helping the neophytes and the entire community to explore and understand the meaning of the sacraments celebrated at the Vigil, through reflection upon the seasonal lectionary readings.
- Catechesis on the sacraments and liturgy during the period of mystagogy makes the connection between liturgy and daily life and leads to deeper maturity in faith.
- The whole catechumenal process makes clear the developmental character of Christian life which is ongoing after the Easter Vigil. Life in Christ has the nature of a journey and therefore needs continued spiritual guidance.

7. The RCIA takes place in a parish which takes seriously its mission to evangelize. The parish proclaims the Good News of God’s love through word and deed in a way which invites and nourishes a response of faith.

- Celebration of RCIA and the parish mission to evangelize are always intertwined.
- Responsibility for the Christian initiation of adults lies with the entire parish community, as active participants in its ritual elements and in the many ministries it requires.
- The continual preparation for and celebration of the RCIA is central to the ongoing conversion and discipleship of the local community.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 2179: . . . *The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ’s saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love . . .*

CCC 1428: *Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, “clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” [LG 8 # 3.] This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a “contrite heart,” drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first. [Ps 51:17 ; cf. Jn 6:44 ; Jn 12:32 ; 1Jn 4:10 .]”*

RCIA 9: *In light of what is said in Christian Initiation, General Instruction (no. 7), the people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and*

show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. Therefore the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ. In the various circumstances of daily life, even as in the apostolate, all the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities. Hence, the entire community must help the candidates and the catechumens throughout the process of initiation: during the period of precatechumenate, the period of the catechumenate, the period of purification and enlightenment, and the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy.

Implications:

- Successful implementation of RCIA requires active support and vision from clergy, lay leadership, and the community.
- Continuing personal conversion, the constant work of every Catholic, needs to be nourished in all aspects of parish life.
- Active, on-going outreach of invitation, hospitality, and prayer is crucial to the evangelizing mission of the parish.
- Communities need to be catechized continually regarding their role in the initiation of new members through invitation, hospitality, and prayer.
- The communitarian nature of the initiation process presupposes wide parish participation by clergy and laity as team members, catechists, and sponsors.

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II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, age and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes life long learning and participation in the sacramental life

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION IN THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

1. The Church's apostolic mission to make all people sharers in the communion of the Trinity is the guiding principle of the RCIA.
2. The RCIA process presumes a communal dimension for both preparation and celebration.
3. The on-going education of the parish community about the meaning of the various elements of the RCIA is an integral part of implementing the rite. (See, e.g., RCIA, General Instruction, 7; RCIA 4, 9, 80, 506.)
4. Implementation of the RCIA embodies the virtue of hospitality for individuals and families seeking initiation. (RCIA 9 [1, 5], 45, 49.)
5. The very act of seeking information about the Church and/or pursuing a deeper relationship with Christ in the Church is a manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit.
6. All those seeking communion with the Church are accompanied by a sponsor.
7. Once inquirers have become catechumens they are a part of "the household of Christ" (RCIA 47).
8. The Catechumenate is an apprenticeship in the whole of Christian life.

9. The Church honors the baptism of other Christian faiths as long as it is done with water and the Trinitarian formula.
10. The conversion which RCIA fosters and celebrates is an on-going way of life.

III. Policies

N.B. Because the RCIA focuses primarily on the initiation of those who are unbaptized, these policies are directed chiefly to catechumens. When the group seeking initiation has only candidates (i.e., baptized but uncatechized in the Catholic faith), implementation of the process may be more simple and perhaps shorter.

A. THE PERSON TO BE INITIATED

1. A clear distinction between catechumens and candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church must be kept at all times. (See Glossary for proper terminology.)
2. Due consideration to individual circumstances, background, and spiritual and personal development must be given to all people approaching the Church for initiation
 - a. Catechumens: the norm for the length of preparation, including both the catechumenate *per se* and the period of Purification and Enlightenment is at least one year, from Easter of one year to Easter of the next (see National Statutes, 6).
 - b. Uncatechized Adult Catholics and Baptized Christians Seeking Full Catholic Communion: greater flexibility must be exercised for these persons, so that the duration of preparation may vary depending on the level of experience in a Christian community and appropriate catechesis. This preparation includes catechesis for and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, as well as catechesis for confirmation and eucharist (see *RCIA* 408, 482; National Statutes, 27).
3. A means for identifying and addressing possible obstacles to full initiation (e.g., invalid marriage, other circumstances and/or public stances contrary to church teaching) must be in place from the beginning of the Inquiry period of the initiation process

Individuals seeking initiation, who are in need of declaration of invalidity in order to celebrate the sacraments, must have a protocol number from the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal prior to participation in the Call to the Easter Sacraments (Rite of Election for catechumens; Call to Continuing Conversion for candidates).

4. The normative time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation for catechumens is the Easter Vigil (see *RCIA* 207). For serious pastoral reasons, however, initiation may be completed at other times during the liturgical year.
5. Anyone aged 7 or older is considered to have reached “catechetical age” (*RCIA* 252) and is to be initiated through the full implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, appropriately adapted for age and circumstances (see *RCIA*, Part II, 1: Christian Initiation of Children Who have Reached Catechetical Age, 252- 259).
 - a. Unbaptized children who have attained the age of reason (i.e., 7 years old) are initiated by the same rite as adults, in accord with the National Statutes for the

Catechumenate, 18-21, with the proper adjustments given in the ritual, *RCIA* 252ff.

- b. Children who have been baptized as Catholic but are uncatechized are to complete their initiation through the RCIA as candidates.
 - c. Children who have been baptized and catechized in another Christian tradition are to complete their initiation through the RCIA as candidates. Whatever adaptations are made in particular circumstances, care should be taken to ensure that children are integrated into the life of the church and the community of their peers.
6. Children of catechetical age who have been baptized in another faith tradition but raised as Catholics are to be considered, for the purposes of initiation, already Catholic. For this reason, sacramental preparation for these children is governed by the Guidelines for Penance, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.

B. THE PARISH

1. The on-going education of the parish community to the meaning of the various elements of the RCIA is an integral part of implementing the rite.
2. Broad participation by the faithful in the ministries of the catechumenate process is to be encouraged. Special importance is attached to their participation in the work of evangelization through invitation and hospitality.
3. Parishes should make every effort to integrate the neophytes into the life and mission of the parish during the time of mystagogy, intensively during the fifty days of Easter (Easter to Pentecost) and continuing less formally until the next Easter (see National Statutes, 22-24).
4. Parishes should provide support, including financial support, for ongoing training of RCIA leaders and acquisition of adequate training and implementation materials.
5. Pastors, liturgists, and RCIA team members should be familiar with the entire text of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, including its various introductions and the National Statutes.
6. To the extent possible, the pastor should be actively involved in the initiation process.
7. Parishes assist those seeking initiation to find, as sponsors or godparents, people who are fully initiated members of the Church (baptized, confirmed, received eucharist) living a Catholic way of life. Normally, godparents and sponsors are at least 16 years old.

Godparents are persons who “accompany the candidates on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. . .

chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest” (*RCIA* 11).

Sponsors accompany “any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen.” They are persons “who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates’ moral character, faith, and intention” (*RCIA* 10). They may or may not be selected as godparents. Sponsors are also selected for baptized persons seeking full communion.

Peer companions, though not sponsors or godparents, are Catholic children of catechetical age who, through their help and example, support children in the initiation process.

Godparents and sponsors are to be trained carefully and supported wholeheartedly in the exercise of their sacred responsibilities. They act as primary witnesses to the one seeking initiation, walking with them on the journey of conversion and providing support through prayer, companionship, and witness.

In special circumstances, and only when there is a Catholic sponsor or godparent, members of other Christian denominations may serve as witnesses (See *RCIA*, Christian Initiation, General Introduction, ¶10.4; also see Code of Canon Law, 874, § 1-2)

8. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults must be implemented fully (*RCIA* 75) through:
 - a. Systematic catechesis offered with methodology appropriate to the circumstances, age, and needs of participants;
 - b. Apprenticeship in the life of prayer and Christian community, and participation in the apostolic mission of the Church;
 - c. Celebration of the principal preparatory rites (i.e., Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens; Rite of Sending the Catechumens for Election; First, Second, and Third Scrutinies; or the corresponding Rites for Baptized but Uncatechized Adults or Combined Rites [see *RCIA* Part II, 4,5 and Appendix I]), as well as the rites of the Easter Vigil.
9. The duration of the initiation process must be long enough to allow for the beginning of true interior conversion and thorough familiarity with a Catholic pattern of life.
10. After inquirers have had sufficient time “to conceive an initial faith” and “to show the first signs of conversion,” the unbaptized are admitted into the Catechumenate and the baptized are welcomed as Candidates for Full Communion. Two or three dates “are to be fixed as the usual times for carrying out” the Rite of Acceptance, (*RCIA* 18) the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates (*RCIA* 416-433), or the Combined Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming (*RCIA* 507-529).

11. Each parish in the diocese should work toward making appropriate care and catechetical ministry available to inquirers as soon as they approach the Church. For this reason a year-round catechumenate is ordinarily preferred to a catechumenate based on the school year.
12. The normal time for celebrating the sacraments of initiation for catechumens (the Elect) is at the Easter Vigil. When serious pastoral needs dictate, initiation may be celebrated at another appropriate time.
13. The period of mystagogy, or post-baptismal catechesis, is observed formally for the entire Easter Season (Easter through Pentecost) through careful celebration of the Masses for Neophytes and some intentional guidance in reflecting on the experience of the Easter Sacraments in the lives of the newly initiated.
14. The parish also gathers the newly initiated at least monthly during the year following their initiation for continuing formation in the Christian life and deeper integration into the life of the community (see National Statutes, # 24)
15. People of catechetical age (7 or older) who are brought into the Church through Baptism or profession of faith are always confirmed and receive Holy Communion at the same liturgical celebration.
16. The implementation of the RCIA should always be done in a way that embodies the virtue of hospitality for the individuals and families seeking initiation.
17. Adequate instruction for RCIA is “gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year” (*RCIA* 75,1) and oriented to conversion to Christ (see *RCIA* 78).
18. The sending forth of catechumens (Dismissal) for reflection upon God’s Word in the Lectionary is an integral part of the catechumenate and normally takes place during the Sunday Mass. For pastoral reasons (for example, only one Sunday Mass in a parish, insufficient numbers of catechumens), reflection on the Word may take place at another appropriate time during the week. However, this sending forth should not be omitted from Sunday Mass without significant reason because it ritually reinforces for the worshipping community the importance of the Scriptures in the process of conversion.
19. Although baptized candidates have a right to be present for the entire length of the Mass, they may be dismissed with the catechumens for reflection upon the Word. This would be especially helpful when parishes have small numbers of catechumens and candidates or whenever candidates can profit from participating in the Dismissal.

IV. Norms for Readiness

Catechumens and candidates are discerned to be ready for the Sacraments of Initiation when they have demonstrated, through word and deed, the following:

1. Understanding and appreciation (appropriate to age and circumstances) of the Word of God as revealed through Scripture, the tradition of the Church, and the living practice of the faith;
2. Willingness to let that Word inform attitudes, choices, and behavior in public and private relationships;
3. Desire for a personal relationship with Christ, manifested by a developing habit of private prayer, reflection on the scriptures, and consideration of the connection between the truths of faith and daily life;
4. Commitment to “full, conscious, and active” participation in the rites associated with Christian initiation and the life of the Catholic Church, especially in the parish;
5. Appropriate familiarity with and engagement in the pattern of Catholic life in its communal prayer and worship;
6. Active practice of the virtues, especially charity to others;
7. No canonical impediments to receiving the sacraments and living a fully Catholic life.

Minors must also have the approval of at least one custodial parent, expressed in writing.
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V. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

VI. The Beginning of the Initiation Process

There are no rites marking the Period of Evangelization and Pre-catechumenate (or Inquiry). Any reception, welcome, or prayers for inquirers must be entirely informal.

A. THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE/WELCOME.

1. The rites which formally begin the initiation process are found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA):

- For the unbaptized: 41-74
- For baptized candidates: 411-433
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 505-529
- For children: 260-276

Commentary:

- The rites of exorcism and renunciation of false worship (RCIA, 70-72) are done in our diocese only in exceptional circumstances and require the explicit permission of the bishop.
- The giving of a new name is not required. (RCIA, 73).
- The presentation of a cross and/or a Bible is optional (RCIA, 64; 525).
- When the group includes both baptized and unbaptized persons, care is to be exercised to respect and mark the distinction between them.
- For pastoral reasons, the General Intercessions and the Creed may be omitted following the celebration of any of these rites during Sunday Mass (RCIA, 68, 117, 156, 170, 177).
- The sending forth (Dismissal) of catechumens and candidates for further reflection on the Word of God begins with the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome and continues throughout the rest of the initiation process.
- The purpose and meaning of this dismissal is to be made clear both to the assembly and to those dismissed.

B. RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERIOD OF CATECHUMENATE AND CATECHETICAL FORMATION

1. The rites which mark this period of the initiation process are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 75-117
- For baptized candidates: 434-445
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 530-546
- For children, no special rites are given; see commentary below

Commentary:

- At Sunday Mass during this period, catechumens are ordinarily dismissed with a catechist after the homily for further reflection on the Sunday readings.
- Candidates may also be appropriately dismissed with catechumens.

- All of the rites of this period, even those which are often overlooked, are powerful enrichments to the experience of the catechumens.
- For baptized candidates, similar prayers and services can also be used; however, care is to be taken to honor their baptism and maintain the distinction between the baptized and the catechumens (see Resource Packet for examples). For this reason, the anointings are done only with catechumens.
- A duly qualified catechist responsible for catechumenal ministry in the parish may preside at the various rites of this period with the exception of the anointings and the sending.
- For the anointings and sending, a priest or deacon presides.
- In the Rite of Sending, signing of a Book of the Elect by the Catechumens takes place in the parish.
- The role of godparents and/or parish sponsors in the celebration of these and subsequent rites becomes more active during this period.
- These rites are ordinarily very fruitful for children who are properly prepared. If, however, in the judgment of the catechists, they place undue pressure on the children, these rites are not required.
- When children are included in the celebration of these rites, care is taken to adapt the rites suitably.
- The minor exorcisms and anointings may be more appropriately celebrated for children in separate Penitential Rites (Scrutinies) during Lent.

C. ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION

1. The rites which mark the election of catechumens and the call to continuing conversion of baptized candidates are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 118-137
- For baptized candidates: 446-458
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 547-561
- For children: 277-290

Commentary:

- In this diocese, the ordinary way catechumens are elected and candidates are called to continuing conversion is at the Call to the Easter Sacraments (the combined Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church).
- The Bishop celebrates this rite at several regional sites around the beginning of Lent.
- The Call to the Easter Sacraments is ordinarily celebrated in the context of the Liturgy of the Hours.

D. RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT AND PREPARATION FOR THE EASTER SACRAMENTS

1. The rites which belong to the period of Purification and Enlightenment and preparation for the Easter sacraments are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 138-205
- For baptized candidates: 459-472
- For unbaptized and baptized together, no special rituals are provided
- For children: 291-303

Commentary:

- Preparation for the Scrutinies of those to be initiated, as well as of the assembly, should focus on their purpose: “to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good.”
- The effective celebration of the Scrutinies presumes the use of the Sunday readings from Cycle A of the Lectionary. During Cycles B and C, the Cycle A readings may always be used on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent.
- If the Scrutinies are celebrated at only one Mass, some reference to them at the other Masses enriches the community’s participation in the progress of the elect toward Easter.
- If Scrutinies are celebrated with candidates and catechumens together, the language of the rite must be adapted to honor and acknowledge the distinction between the elect and baptized candidates (see Resource Packet for examples).
- Because of their special needs, the celebration of the Scrutinies with children may be done separately.

E. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

1. The rites which mark the initiation of the elect and candidates into full communion with the Catholic church are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 206-243
- For baptized candidates (at times other than the Easter Vigil): 473-504
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 562-594
- For children: 304-329
- The complexity and richness of this rite requires a thorough understanding and long-range preparation by all the ministers involved.
- The Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday provide an ideal context for the immediate preparation needed for the Easter Vigil.
- Immediate preparation of candidates for the sacraments is most effective when it gives them only essential information needed for intentional participation (e.g., responses, postures, gestures, appropriate dress, etc.) and leaves their guidance during the rites to sponsors and other ministers.
- For this reason, sponsors and other ministers need to be carefully prepared.

- Because they are primary symbols, the Elect and Candidates need to be easily visible and audible to the community.
- Of all sacramental celebrations, the initiatory rites should be most lavish in the use of water, oil, light, bread, wine.
- Because all the newly baptized are confirmed at the same celebration, the anointing after baptism is omitted.
- When a ceremonial baptismal garment is used, it is to be put on after Baptism, not before.
- A baptismal garment can be ordinary “dress up” clothing, or a ceremonial white robe or cape, etc. To avoid confusing sacramental symbols, a stole is not to be used.

F. RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

1. The rites which belong to the period of Mystagogy are found in the RCIA:

- For the newly baptized: 244-251
- For newly baptized children: 330

Commentary:

- The main liturgical setting for mystagogy is the Masses for Neophytes, i.e., the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season.
- The readings and prayers of these Masses are mystagogical in content and intent; i.e., directed to reflection upon the experience of the Easter Sacraments.
- With their families and sponsors, neophytes are given places of honor at the Sunday Eucharist during this time.
- The homily and the general intercessions for these Masses should reflect the mystagogical emphasis of the Sunday readings for the assembly and the presence and needs of the neophytes.
- During this period the bishop invites the neophytes and other new members of the Church to celebrate Mass with him.

A Glossary of Terms Related to Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age

Acceptance, Rite of: The rite by which unbaptized inquirers become catechumens. (For baptized candidates, see Welcome, Rite of.)

Anointing: The ritual application of sacred oil. Within the Rite of Christian Initiation, there are two types of anointing: the anointing with the Oil of Catechumens during the periods of Catechumenate and Purification and Enlightenment by a priest or deacon; and the anointing with Holy Chrism at Confirmation by a priest or bishop.

Blessing: Ritual prayers signifying God's love and the care of the Church for catechumens. These blessings, which instill courage, peace, and joy for the journey of conversion, may be given by a priest, deacon, or duly appointed lay catechist during the period of the catechumenate. Usually blessings are given at the conclusion of a Celebration of the Word or a catechetical session.

Book of the Elect: The book in which the elect sign their names at the Rite of Sending and which the Bishop then signs at the Call to the Easter Sacraments. These elect are fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.

Call to the Easter Sacraments: In the Diocese of Fort Worth, the name given to the combined rites of Election of Catechumens and the Call to Continuing Conversion of baptized candidates. Generally this occurs at regional sites at the beginning of Lent.

Call to Continuing Conversion: The rite celebrated at the beginning of Lent in which the desire of baptized candidates for full communion is formally recognized and affirmed by the Bishop; generally part of the Call to the Easter Sacraments.

Candidate: A baptized adult (for purposes of Christian initiation, anyone 7 years old or older) preparing for full communion with the Catholic Church; used in a broader sense, the term sometimes refers to anyone preparing to receive a sacrament.

Catechesis: The comprehensive and systematic apprenticeship in the faith which prepares catechumens and others for full communion with the Catholic Church. It consists of doctrinal instruction, liturgical education, moral formation, direction in the life of prayer, integration into community life, and training for mission in the world.

Catechetical age: The age at which children have the use of reason; generally, 7 years and older.

Catechumen: An adult (for purposes of Christian initiation, anyone 7 years old or older) who is unbaptized and has been accepted in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

Catechumenate: Generally, the process by which the Catholic Church initiates unbaptized adults and unbaptized children of catechetical age into full membership; specifically, the period of time that begins with the Rite of Welcoming and concludes with the Rite of Election. The length of this period is governed by the needs of the catechumen. (See RCIA, 36 – 40.)

Celebrations of the Word of God: Short scripture services conducted during the catechumenate period for the following purposes: to implant in the hearts of catechumens (and, where pastorally appropriate, candidates) the catechetical instruction they are receiving; to give them experience in different ways of prayer; to explain the liturgical seasons, signs and celebrations of the Church; and to prepare them more fully for participation at Sunday Mass.

Chrism: A sacred oil mixed with fragrance and consecrated by the bishop; used in the RCIA for anointing in the ritual of Confirmation. The same Chrism is used to anoint priests and bishops at ordination, infants at baptism, churches and altars during their dedication.

Conversion: A life-long journey of transformation, turning away from sin and embracing the Gospel. More than a one-time experience, conversion conforms the heart, mind, and actions of the believer to Christ.

Discernment: The process by which the one seeking baptism or full communion, and the community, guided by the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Church, explore and determine one's readiness to move to the next stage of initiation.

Dismissal: The sending forth of catechumens (and where appropriate, candidates) for guided reflection upon God's Word in the Lectionary. Normally this takes place during the Sunday Masses from the beginning of the Catechumenate period to the Easter Vigil.

Elect: Catechumens who have been chosen in the Rite of Election (normally at the beginning of Lent during the Call to the Easter Sacraments) to complete their initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Election, Rite of: The rite celebrated at the beginning of Lent in which catechumens are chosen by the Church for baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. This rite, generally part of the Call to the Easter Sacraments, marks the end of the Period of Catechumenate and the beginning of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment. Also known as Enrollment, Enlightenment, Period of: See Purification and Enlightenment, Period of.

Enrollment: See Election, Rite of

Exorcisms: Prayers for catechumens/elect seeking the power and protection of God in the struggle against evil and falsehood. The "minor exorcisms" found in the Period of Catechumenate may be presided over by a priest, deacon, or duly appointed catechist. The exorcisms which are part of the Scrutinies must be presided over by a priest or deacon.

Godparent: A fully initiated member of the Church (baptized, confirmed, received eucharist), living a Catholic way of life, who accompanies the candidate "on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. . . ." (RCIA 11). The godparent is chosen by the candidate (or in the case of children of catechetical age, their parents or guardians) on the basis of good example, spiritual maturity, and friendship. Normally, a godparent must be at least 16 years old.

Initiation: The entire process through which a person enters full communion with the Church.

Inquirer: Any adult, baptized or unbaptized, seeking to discover more about the faith and life of the Catholic Church prior to making a decision to join.

Inquiry: see Precatechumenate, period of.

Lectionary: Book of biblical readings used at Mass.

Mystagogy: The period after Easter when the neophytes and the entire community reflect upon the meaning and experience of the Easter sacraments.

National Statutes: Regulations governing the implementation of the RCIA in the United States; approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. They can be found in Appendix III of the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults.

Neophyte: A newly initiated Christian. This term is used during the period of post-baptismal catechesis (also known as mystagogy).

Peer companions: Catholic children of catechetical age who, through their help and example, support other children in the initiation process.

Precatechumenate, period of: The time before formal acceptance into the order of Catechumens when inquirers hear the Gospel, share stories of faith, and foster initial conversion.

Presentations: Rites celebrated during the Period of Purification and Enlightenment in which the church formally hands over to the elect the tradition of faith (in the Creed) and prayer (in the Lord's Prayer).

Purification and Enlightenment, Period of: Final preparation of the Elect, to help them and also the entire community prepare spiritually for the Easter sacraments. Ordinarily this period coincides with Lent when the Scrutinies and Presentations are celebrated.

Ritual text: In general, the book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (abbreviated RCIA); in particular, those sections of the RCIA which pertain to the different stages and celebrations of the initiation process.

Scrutinies: Rites celebrated with the elect (usually on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent) in which the Church prays for the spirit of repentance, for strength in the struggle against evil and for freedom in the pursuit of holiness. The presider for the scrutinies must be a priest or deacon.

Sending, Rite of: An optional rite at the end of the Period of Catechumenate during which catechumens are sent forth by the parish community to the Call to the Easter Sacraments. The ritual text also provides adaptations for sending of candidates as well.

Sponsor, parish: A member of the parish community who, through example and presence, accompanies persons seeking full initiation on the journey of conversion and helps the parish to know and welcome them more fully.

Sponsor, sacramental: A fully initiated Catholic who accepts responsibility for supporting the person seeking full communion, through prayer, example, and witness. The sacramental sponsor may or may not be a member of the parish. Normally, a sacramental sponsor must be at least 16 years old.

Triduum: The single celebration of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil.

Uncatechized: Having little or no formation, systematic or informal, in the practice and teachings of the Catholic faith; lacking familiarity with the spiritual, doctrinal, moral and sacramental basics of Catholic life.

Welcome, Rite of: The rite by which baptized candidates are formally included in the life of the community in preparation for full communion through confirmation and eucharist.

Guidelines

for the

Preparation and Celebration

of the

Sacrament of Baptism
(Rite of Baptism for Children)

for the

Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Baptism

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I. Doctrinal Overview

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

1. To Summarize The Church's Initiation Procedure In The First Century
 - a. It was loosely organized and much like the rites of early Jewish sects
 - b. It included:
 - 1) A period of preparation for instruction and repentance
 - 2) Reception into the community through a bath of water and sometimes a laying on of hands
2. Second Century through Fifth Century
 - a. Candidates for Baptism had a long period of preparation including instruction, prayer, and doing good works.
 - b. When ready for Baptism, the [candidates were vouched for by their sponsors,] and bathed, fasted, and prayed before receiving the sacrament.
 - c. For the ceremony, the candidates were exorcised and anointed. After disrobing, [they] went into the water to profess their faith and be baptized.
 - d. Clothed in white garments, they received a final anointing by the Bishop to confirm their new life in Christ.
 - e. When Bishops found it impossible to attend all Baptisms, the Western Church separated this final anointing from the Baptism itself to be administered later in the ceremony of Confirmation.
3. Sixth Century to the Twentieth Century
 - a. In the Middle Ages, Christianity became the common belief, and infant Baptisms, the general rule.
 - b. The long preparation for Baptism was no longer needed.
 - c. In some areas, a child was confirmed at the time of Baptism; but as time went on, this ceremony was postponed until a later age.
 - d. The Council of Trent in 1565 stated the "age of reason" as right for Confirmation.

- e. Confirmation was no longer seen as simply a sealing of Baptism but rather as a sacrament of growth, confirming the Christian person in his faith.
- f. The Bishop's Kiss of Peace becomes a blow to the cheek to signify that one must be ready to suffer for Christ.

4. Twentieth Century: Vatican Council II

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy offered some guidelines for the renewal of both Baptism and Confirmation.

- a. First of all, Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist were seen once again as sacraments of initiation, progressively incorporating the Christian into Christ and the believing community.
- b. The Rite of Baptism was to have different ceremonies for adults and for children, with adults again having a period of preparation in order to learn about Christ and to adopt a Christian life style. Stages in this preparation were to be marked off by special rites at different times.

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- c. In 1969 the revised rite of baptism for children, Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC), was promulgated, which was better adapted to the actual condition of children; the role and responsibilities of parents and godparents was more clearly expressed; stress was placed on educating parents and godparents in how to raise a child as a member of the Christian community. Suitable adaptations were also made for the baptism of a large number of children.
- d. Baptism is now frequently celebrated at the Sunday Eucharist of the community, and where this is not possible, it is still seen now as a communal celebration, not a private ceremony.

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INFANT BAPTISM

1. Faith and Baptism are integrally linked.

- The faith of the individual develops within the community of believers. (CCC 1253)
- An infant's faith is supported by the parents, by the godparents, and the whole Church community. (CCC 1255)

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC)

1253: Baptism is the sacrament of faith. [Cf. Mk 16:16.] But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the

Baptism

faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. The catechumen or the godparent is asked: "What do you ask of God's Church?" The response is: "Faith!"

***1255:** For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized – child or adult – on the road of Christian life. [Cf. CIC, cann. 872-874.] Their task is a truly ecclesial function (officium) [Cf. SC 67.] The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.*

Implications:

- Faith is conversion to Jesus Christ and the commitment to follow his ways. Faith is a gift of God received through the action of the Holy Spirit. Baptism, as a sacrament of initiation, welcomes the individual into the community of faith. By their own baptism, the community of believers is called to holiness and to spread the good news to all.
- The awakening of faith is a process of formation that is transmitted by and developed within the ecclesial community. The faith of the parents and the act of baptism unite the infant to the community of believers. It is the responsibility of the parents, godparents and the whole church community to hand on their faith in a supportive environment and to offer a living example of faith to the child.

2. Baptism is necessary for salvation.

- The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. (*CCC 1257*)
- The Church has always acknowledged various forms of baptism, i.e., baptism of blood, baptism of desire, and baptism of water. (*CCC 1258-60*)
- The Church entrusts to God's mercy children who die without baptism. (*CCC 1261*)

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*

***CCC 1257:** The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. [Cf. Jn 3:5.] He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. [Cf. Mt 28:19-20; cf. Council of Trent (1547) DS 1618; LG 14; AG 5.] Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. [Cf. Mk 16:16.] The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.*

***CCC 1258:** The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by*

their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament.

CCC 1259: *For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament.*

CCC 1260: *“Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery.” [GS 22 § 5; cf. LG 16; AG 7.] Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity.*

CCC 1261: *As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus’ tenderness toward children which caused him to say: “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,” [Mk 10:14; cf. 1 Tim 2:4.] allow us to hope that there is a way to salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the church’s call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.*

Implications:

- In John’s Gospel Our Lord said, “Unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) The Church understands these words to mean that Baptism is the door to life and to the kingdom of God. Baptism is the normal means by which those who hear the gospel are conformed to Christ and through which they share in the life of grace offered to all through the Paschal mystery. Baptism is necessary for salvation because it was commanded by Christ and because without it one cannot receive the other sacraments.
- The Church understands that, through no fault of their own, there are many who never have the opportunity to hear the gospel or to receive baptism. In addition to Water Baptism, the Church recognizes a Baptism by Blood and a Baptism of Desire. First among these is the Baptism of Blood. Those who suffer and die because of their faith are saved by their death for and with Christ. Catechumens who die before baptism have shown by their words and actions a desire to be baptized and are therefore saved by Christ. Those who have never heard the gospel of Christ or been exposed to His Church, can be saved by sincerely seeking God and striving to live a good life by following the divine law planted within their conscience.
- As regards children who die without Baptism, the Church entrusts them to the mercy of God. Children hold a special place in the heart of Jesus; therefore

we have the hope that He will provide a way of salvation for children who die without Baptism.

3. Baptism is a grace and gift of God.

- Baptism forgives all sins. (CCC 1263)
- Baptism makes one a “ ‘new creature’, an adopted son of God”. (CCC 1265)
- Baptism incorporates the infant into the Church. (CCC 1267)
- Baptism makes one a sharer in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. (CCC 1268)
- Baptism constitutes the sacramental bond of the unity of Christians. (CCC 1271)
- Baptism imprints an indelible spiritual mark. (CCC 1272)

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC)

CCC 1262: *The different effects of Baptism are signified by the perceptible elements of the sacramental rite. Immersion in water symbolizes not only death and purification, but also regeneration and renewal. Thus the two principal effects are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit. [Cf. Acts 2:38; Jn 3:5.]*

CCC 1265: *Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte “a new creature,” an adopted son of God, who has become a “partaker of the divine nature,” [2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 1:4; cf. Gal 4:5-7.] member of Christ and co-heir with him, [Cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 12:27; Rom 8:17.] and a temple of the Holy Spirit. [Cf. 1 Cor 6:19.]*

CCC 1267: *Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: “Therefore...we are members one of another.” [Eph 4:25.] Baptism incorporates us into the Church. From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” [1 Cor 12:13.]*

CCC 1268: *The baptized have become “living stones” to be “built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.” [1Pet 2:5.] By Baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. They are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that [they] may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light.” [1 Pet 2:9.] Baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers.*

CCC 1271: *Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: “For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Justified by faith in Baptism, [they] are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right*

Baptism

to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.” [UR 3.] “Baptism therefore constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn.” [UR 22 § 2.]

CCC 1272: Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation. [Cf. Rom 8:29; Council of Trent (1547); DS 1609-1619.] Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated.

Implications:

Spiritual rebirth is a gift from God. Baptism is the sign of a loving Father sharing His endless life, love and happiness with a child. It is the first of the sacraments of initiation into the life of God, welcoming a new member into the church community. The child is cleansed of original sin and is marked as belonging to Christ for all eternity. It is the privilege and responsibility of parents to bring their child as soon as possible to the sacrament. Parents and godparents are called to be Christian role models. The child has a right to the love and help of the community to grow and develop the life of grace and faith. The Catholic Church recognizes the baptism of other Christian denominations; therefore the sacrament is not to be repeated.

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II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, ages and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes lifelong learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN

1. The act of requesting Baptism for a child is in itself a sign of faith.
2. The preparation for the baptism of an infant is directed to parents and godparents.
3. God's very nature is to share life and love.
4. The Church desires that infants be brought to the sacrament of Baptism in the first few weeks after birth. (*cf. CCC 1250*)
5. "Christian parents will recognize that this practice [bringing their child to Baptism] also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them." (*CCC 1251*)
6. Sacramental catechesis for Infant Baptism enables the parents to understand more fully their responsibility to nurture the grace of the sacrament.
7. The role of the godparent(s) is twofold: (a) to be a support to the parents who are the primary influence in the life of the child; (b) to nurture the faith life of the child.
8. The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.

III. Policies

A. THE ONE TO BE BAPTIZED

Children who have not reached the "age of discretion" (7 years old) must be initiated using this rite. Children age seven and older must be initiated through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, adapted for children (cf. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, Introduction, 1; *RCIA*, 252, ff.; National Statutes, 18 - 21)

B. PARENTS

1. Formation is a fundamental element of Christian Initiation. It must be connected with the sacrament of Baptism, "the sacrament of faith." (Cf. *GDC 66*) Sacramental preparation for the sacrament of Baptism for parents is a prerequisite for the baptism of an infant. (Cf. *CIC, can. 867*) Pastoral discretion is required concerning the frequency of such preparation.
2. It is the responsibility of the parents to request baptism as soon as possible after the birth or before the birth of their child. They should go to their pastor or his delegate to request the sacrament for their child. (Cf. *CIC, can. 867*)
3. In an intact marriage, at least one parent/legal guardian should be a baptized Catholic. The non-Catholic parent must be willing to allow his/her child to be baptized in the Catholic Church. The sacrament should not be celebrated if the non-Catholic parent expresses strong opposition because the event of the sacrament should not divide the family. In cases where there is opposition, pastoral counseling should present options for future celebration of the sacrament when conditions are more favorable.
4. In case of divorce, the custodial parent may seek baptism. Civil law defines "custodial parent" as the one who at that moment has physical custody of the child.
5. Although the rite is insistent on the preparation of parents/guardians, none of the following may be made requirements for baptism of a child:
 - a. Convalidation of an invalid marriage
 - b. Any demonstrations of financial support, e.g., envelopes.
 - c. Any other obligation not found in Church law concerning baptism. (*CIC 868 1.1*)
6. According to the precepts of Canon Law (*CIC 857 2*), parents requesting Baptism of their child should ordinarily be members of the parish. With special permission of their pastor they may request Baptism in another parish.
7. Baptism shall not be refused to parents who have no permanent domicile. People without a parish, e.g. migrants and transients, are to be the objects of special solicitude and need

to be dealt with in the best pastoral way possible. Special care should be taken in each individual case.

C. GODPARENTS

1. “Each child may have a godfather and a godmother, the word ‘godparents’ is used in the rite to describe both.” (*Rite of Baptism for Children 6*)
2. Only one godparent is necessary. The godparent must be a fully initiated Catholic (baptized, confirmed, received eucharist), at least 16 years old, and must be leading a sacramental life in harmony with the church. (*Cf. CIC, can. 874*) The godparent should be willing to accept the responsibility of assisting the parents in developing the faith life of the child.
3. The godparent may not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized. (*Cf. CIC, can. 874*)
4. Although people of some cultures sometimes choose multiple godparents, only two names can actually be entered in the Baptismal Register. (*CIC, can. 873*)
5. A baptized and believing Christian from a separated church or community may act as a Christian witness at the request of the parents, but there must be a Catholic godparent. (*Cf. CIC, can. 874.*)
6. Godparents should be invited and encouraged to attend Baptismal Preparation in order to better understand their role as godparents. If they are from another parish, a letter of recommendation from their pastor is required.
7. Any person may serve as a proxy if the godparent is unable to be physically present at the baptism. The Church requires no specific stipulations regarding who may serve as a proxy.

D. PARISH

1. The priest or deacon is the ordinary minister of Baptism. If Baptism is celebrated during Mass, the presider ordinarily would also confer the baptism.
2. Outside the case of necessity, it is not lawful for anyone, without the required permission, to confer baptism in the territory of another, not even upon his own people. (*Cf. CIC, can. 862*)
3. Because we view Lent as a season of preparation for the Easter sacraments of Initiation, it seems more appropriate not to schedule baptisms during this time.
4. The baptismal rite should be celebrated, if possible, in the context of a Sunday liturgy before the entire community. When baptism is celebrated apart from Sunday liturgy, proper liturgical principles should be followed. The use of music and the various

liturgical ministries is encouraged.

5. For the integrity of the sacrament, the celebrant must always perform action (matter: pouring or immersing in water) and the formula (form: “I baptize you...”).
6. The parish is responsible for maintaining a preparation process for those who seek Baptism for an infant.
7. An effective catechesis for Baptism preparation would be based on the Rite of Baptism for Children. Topics to be covered and other suggestions for this catechesis may be found in the Resources section.
8. The pastor/pastoral administrator is personally responsible to ensure all baptisms are properly recorded. Proxies are not recorded.

IV. Norms for Readiness

1. If parents request baptism for their child and there is even minimal hope that the child will be raised Catholic, baptism cannot be denied. (*CCC* 1253)
2. Parents must participate in a parish-provided program that leads them to understand their role as “first teachers of their child in the ways of faith”. (*Rite of Baptism for Children, Final Blessing* 105)
3. If there is well founded concern that the child will not be raised Catholic, baptism will be delayed.

V. The Rite of Baptism

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols—words, gestures, objects, movements, etc.—of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE RITE OF BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN

Reception of the Children

Liturgy of the Word

Scripture Readings and Homily

Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism (optional in United States)

Celebration of the Sacrament

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

Baptism

Explanatory Rites

Anointing after Baptism

Clothing with White Garment

Lighted Candle

Ephphetha or Prayer over Ears and Mouth (optional in United States)

Conclusion of the Rite

Lord's Prayer (If Baptism takes place outside Mass; otherwise continue with Mass.)

Blessing and Dismissal

C. COMMENTARY ON IMPORTANT LITURGICAL ELEMENTS

At the Sunday Eucharist, this can be a time of introducing families to the community which will be their support through shared worship and the witness of Christian living.

1. Greeting and opening rites

These rites take place at the door of the church before the entrance procession as a sign of baptism as entrance into the Church. (*Rite of Baptism for Children 35*)

2. Rite of Baptism

- a. Water –
 - 1) The water should be clean and warm.
 - 2) The method for baptism of infants is immersion or the pouring of water. (*Rite of Baptism for Children 60*)
 - 3) In the case of pouring, water should be used lavishly.
- b. Oil of Chrism – Holy Chrism should be applied generously, not to be removed afterwards but to be rubbed into the skin.
- c. White garment—As an explanatory rite, the child may be dressed (after baptism) in an actual white gown or a simple white cape may be placed over the child. A godparent might be given this task.
- d. Lighting of candle—The lighting of the baptismal candle from the paschal candle may be the responsibility of a godparent.

3. Concluding Rite

If the baptism takes place during Sunday Eucharist, the Concluding Rite will be the special blessing for mothers, fathers, and the community at the end of Mass. If the baptism takes place outside Mass, for the concluding rite all gather around the altar for the Lord's Prayer and the special final blessing.

Additional information and models regarding the rite of baptism may be found in the resource packet.

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Confirmation
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Confirmation

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<p style="text-align: center;">GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION</p>

I. Doctrinal Overview

The celebration of Confirmation draws us more deeply into God's power and love that lives within each of us and the Church. Having first experienced the Spirit of God through Baptism, we are drawn into a deeper, more intimate relationship with God the Father through a continuing unfolding of the gifts of the Spirit which gives us strength to boldly witness for Christ.

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

1. In the First Century

- a. It was loosely organized and much like the rites of the early Jewish sects.
- b. It included: a period of preparation for instruction and repentance; reception into the community through a bath of water and sometimes a laying on of hands.

2. Second Century through Fifth Century

- a. Candidates for Baptism had a long period of preparation including instruction, prayer, and doing good works.
- b. When ready for Baptism, the candidates were vouched for by their sponsor; candidates bathed, fasted, and prayed before receiving the sacrament.
- c. For the ceremony, the candidates were exorcized and anointed. After disrobing, they went into the water to profess their faith and to be baptized.
- d. Clothed in a white garment, they received a final anointing by the Bishop to confirm their new life in Christ.
- e. When bishops found it impossible to attend all Baptisms, the Western Church separated this final anointing from the Baptism itself to be administered later in the ceremony of Confirmation.

3. Sixth Century to the Twentieth Century

- a. In the Middle Ages, Christianity became the common belief; and infant Baptisms, the general rule.
- b. The long preparation for Baptism was no longer needed.
- c. In some areas, a child was confirmed at the time of Baptism; but as time went on, this

ceremony was postponed until a later age.

- d. The Council of Trent in 1565 stated the “age of reason” as appropriate for Confirmation.
- e. Confirmation was no longer seen as simply a sealing of Baptism but rather as a sacrament of growth, confirming the Christian person in his faith.
- f. The bishop’s Kiss of Peace became a blow on the cheek to signify that one must be ready to suffer for Christ.

4. Twentieth Century

- a. Vatican II restores the catechumenate clearly emphasizing Confirmation’s close relationship with the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.
- b. The practice of baptizing infants continues the practice in which Baptism and Confirmation are experientially separated.

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B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

1. Confirmation welcomes us as a sacrament of initiation.

- Confirmation is linked to Baptism and Eucharist.
- Confirmation is part of our initiation into the faith community.
- Confirmation honors the growing spirituality of the individual.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*

CCC 1285: Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation, whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. (Cf. Roman Ritual, Rite of Confirmation (OC), Introduction 1)

For by the Sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. (LG 11; cf. Rite of Confirmation, Introduction 2)

CCC 1308: Although Confirmation is sometimes called the “sacrament of Christian maturity, we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election

Confirmation

and does not need “ratification” to become effective. St. Thomas reminds us of this:

Age of body does not determine age of soul. Even in childhood man can attain spiritual maturity: as the book of Wisdom says: For old age is not honored for length of time, or measured by number of years. Many children, through the strength of the Holy Spirit they have received, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood. (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 72, 8, ad 2; cf. Wis 4:8)

Implications:

Throughout the preparation process for Confirmation, we need to communicate the relationship between the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist). Remembering and renewing baptismal promises, participating in the Eucharist regularly and focusing on ways to live out the Eucharist in daily life are part of the preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation.

2. Confirmation is the work of the Trinity.

- Confirmation is part of the welcoming initiative of God the Father.
- Confirmation unites us more fully to Christ.
- Confirmation strengthens us with the Holy Spirit.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*

CCC 1286: *In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission. (Cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Lk 4:16-22) The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his Baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God. (Cf. Mt 3:13-17; Jn 1:33-34) He was conceived by the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him “without measure.” (Jn 3:34)*

CCC 1303: *From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace: it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba, Father!”; (Rom 8:15) - it unites us more firmly to Christ; it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us...*

CCC 1309: *Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit - his actions, his gifts, and his biddings - in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands. (Cf. Rite of Confirmation, Introduction 3)*

Implications:

The relationship between Jesus, the Holy Spirit and each one of the faithful is key to an understanding of the Father's love and call. Stories of faith, of God's love in our lives, of how God gifts us and calls us are essential for those preparing to be confirmed and for the entire community of faith. In this way we will recognize the person, presence, and ministry of Jesus and the Spirit among us.

3. Confirmation strengthens us for discipleship, mission and witness to our faith.

- Confirmation empowers us to witness to our faith.
- Confirmation, similar to Baptism and Eucharist, links us to the ministry of Christ and the mission of the Church.
- Confirmation deepens our initiation into the adventure of discipleship.
- Preparation for Confirmation is an evangelizing moment of conversion which includes celebrating the sacrament of Penance.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*

CCC 1287: *This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's, but was to be communicated to the whole messianic people. (Cf. Ezek 36:25-27; Joel 3:1-2) On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, (Cf. Lk 12:12; Jn 3:5-8; 7:37-39; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8) a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. (Cf. Jn 20:22; Acts 2:1-4) Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim "the mighty works of God," and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. (Acts 2:11; cf. 2:17-18) Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn. (Cf. Acts 2:38)*

CCC 1302: *It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.*

CCC 1303: *From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:*

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!";
(Rom 8- 5)
- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect; (Cf. LG 11)
- it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross: (Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1319; LG 11; 12)

Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts. (St. Ambrose, De myst. 7, 42: PL 16, 402-403)

CCC 1304: *Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the "character," which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness. (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609; Lk 24:48-49)*

CCC 1305: *This "character" perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and "the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (quasi ex officio)." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Sth III, 72,5, ad 2)*

CCC 1309: *Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit - his actions, his gifts, and his biddings - in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life...*

CCC 1310: *To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act. (Cf. Acts 1:14)*

Implications:

We prepare confirmands for a life of discipleship, recognizing more fully the gifts they bring in service to our Church and to those in need. We want to prepare each person to live in a way that relies on God's strength and nourishment and calls us to be faithful with others, through our Church.
--

4. Confirmation is a celebration of the community of faith.

- Confirmation joins us more fully to the ministering community.
- Confirmation is received by individuals and celebrated as community.
- Preparation strengthens a sense of belonging to the universal Church and local parish.
- Preparation includes a sponsor who represents the wider faith community.
- Preparation provides an opportunity to partner with families as communities of faith.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*

CCC 1301: *The sign of peace that concludes the rite of the sacrament signifies and demonstrates ecclesial communion with the bishop and with all the faithful. (Cf. St. Hippolytus, Trad. Ap. 21: SCH 11, 80-95)*

CCC 1303: . . . it renders our bond with the Church more perfect. (Cf. LG 11)

CCC 1309: Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit - his actions, his gifts, and his biddings - in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of the confirmands. (Cf. Rite of Confirmation, Introduction 3)

CCC 1311: Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of the sponsor. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents. (Cf. Rite of Confirmation, Introduction 5; 6; CIC, can. 893. 1-2)

Implications:

Confirmation preparation must involve the entire parish community to not only support the confirmands in their preparation but also to renew the whole community in God's Spirit. We must recognize ways to partner with the families of confirmands and provide resources that allow preparation efforts at church to be echoed at home. Sponsors play a key role in representing the community of faith as guide and supporter to the confirmands.

The above outline has been developed from the resource, *Confirming Disciples*, written by the Center for Ministry Development, P.O. Box 699, Naugatuck, CT 06770, 1996, with their permission.

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II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, ages, and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes lifelong learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION WITH ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS (the following principles are inclusive of adolescents and adults with a few named specifically when dealing with adolescents)

1. Invitation. Each year, parishioners of confirmation age who have not celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation will be invited by the parish into the preparation process. As a community of faith we are responsible to minister to and to call forth for ministry this entire group within the community.
2. Responding to the needs of Confirmands. The confirmation preparation process is both individual and communal. Responding to the diversity of confirmands includes many different learning styles, interests, starting points, experiences, abilities and limitations.
3. Adequate preparation. The Christian life calls us to a life-long process of faith development. Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation is a moment in this lifelong process which is focused on the Rite of Confirmation and the call to involvement in the life, mission and work of the church. During the period of preparation for Confirmation the sacrament of Penance should be celebrated.

I. For adults

Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation should be available to all adults who are participating in the sacramental life of the Church. It would be wise and good to use this “teachable moment” to offer a simple, short catechetical preparation for the sacrament.

II. For adolescents

Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation should be not longer than six months. Confirmation preparation and celebration should reside within a comprehensive youth ministry process (should not take the place of a youth ministry process and should not stand alone - completely separate from a youth ministry process). The youth ministry process should be developed in parishes beginning with youth in grade six and concluding with graduating seniors in high school.

Comprehensive ministry with youth:

1. Recognizes that young people learn, experience faith and grow in faith in many ways.
2. Includes: evangelization, catechesis, community life, prayer and worship, service and justice, leadership development, pastoral care and advocacy.
3. Reflects the responsibility of the entire faith community and draws young people into participation in the ministry efforts of the Church.
4. Respects and honors the role of parents in the faith development of young people.
5. Stresses the personal relationships and personal experiences with their peers and also with faith-filled adults within the community.

For detailed information on comprehensive youth ministry see: *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, USCC, 1997.

C. KEY CATECHETICAL ELEMENTS FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION:

1. The relationship of the initiation sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
2. The meaning of the Sacrament of Confirmation (role in salvation, deepening of baptismal grace).
3. The signs and symbols related to the Sacrament of Confirmation.
4. The Holy Spirit in our lives (Pentecost, grace, gifts from God).
5. The role of the persons involved in the catechesis and celebration of the sacrament: the bishop, pastor, director of religious education, coordinator of youth ministry catechists, parents, and sponsors.
6. The relationship between the parish community and the local Church (Diocese).
7. The Rite of Confirmation (the renewal of one's baptismal promises, the laying on of

hands, the seal of the Spirit, and the anointing with chrism).

8. The responsibilities of the confirmed Catholic to be an active witness to Christ and involvement in the mission of the Church (Learning to pray, growing spiritually, serving inside the faith community and outside).
9. The Sacrament of Penance and our call to grace.

D. PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES

Keep families in mind when designing sacramental preparation programs. Clarify the important role of families in the Confirmation process. Provide families with helpful resources for continued family faith growth. Be attentive and responsive to their ideas in regard to requirements, schedules and attitude of hospitality.

Summary of pastoral and catechetical principles

- ◆ Emphasizes what God is doing in our lives
not what we do to be worthy or deserving
- ◆ Involves the community of faith
not anonymous preparation programs
- ◆ Works in partnership with families
not in competition for family time and attention
- ◆ Launches confirmands toward full participation and active discipleship
not as an end but a beginning
- ◆ For adolescents, works within youth ministry which includes catechesis
not as separate or competing programs
- ◆ For adolescents, focuses on preparation for celebrating the sacrament
not as a place for all of the needed adolescent catechesis

III. Policies

A. THE CANDIDATE

Each baptized Catholic can and should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The candidates may request the Sacrament if they:

1. Are baptized and able to renew baptismal promises.
2. Are open to receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
3. Have received their First Communion, are participating in the Sunday Mass and in the sacramental life of the Church. (Adults and adolescents who have not received First Communion will be catechized through the RCIA process with age appropriate catechesis.)
4. Have reached 15 years of age.
5. Are willing to commit to active involvement in the parish Confirmation preparation process.
6. Are willing to continue to grow in faith following Confirmation and throughout their lifetime.

B. THE PARISH

Because the parish community has a responsibility to give witness of its faith to the candidates, the community should be made aware of and led to enter into the preparation and celebration of Confirmation.

1. The parish is responsible for developing and implementing a preparation process for teens and adults desiring to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.
 - a. Adult preparation should be open to any person attending Sunday Mass, participating in the sacramental life of the Church and seeking a deeper relationship with God and with the parish community.
 - b. Adolescent preparation can begin at 15 years of age, should not exceed six months and be a natural part of the parish youth ministry *process* (see *section II Principles and section IV Norms for Readiness*).
2. Each year the parish prepares for Confirmation, it is responsible for inviting adults and adolescents who have not received the sacrament of Confirmation.
3. The parish is responsible for involving all its members in the Confirmation preparation process including support and prayer for the confirmands.

4. Post-Confirmation: Confirmation should open the door to greater participation in the life of the Church. Parishes should continue to offer opportunities for the newly confirmed to continue to grow in their faith, share their faith and learn more about being Catholic.
5. The parish is responsible for sending Confirmation documentation to the proper baptismal parish of each candidate.

C. THE SPONSOR

Sponsors represent in a personal way the witness and support of the parish community. Opportunities for catechesis should be offered to the sponsors in order to assist them in fully understanding their role in the ongoing formation of the candidate.

Sponsors must:

1. Be at least 16 years of age and of either sex (e.g. a female sponsor for a male candidate).
2. Be practicing Catholics.
3. Have received all of the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist).
4. Be someone that the candidate can identify with in terms of Christian living.
5. Be someone who can share the faith journey of the candidate.
6. Assist in all aspects of the candidates' preparation and celebration of the sacrament, accompany their candidates to celebrate the sacrament, and continue to support the candidates to fulfill their baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit after the reception of the sacrament.

It is appropriate that the sponsor be the baptismal sponsor (god-parent) if that is possible. If that is not possible, the sponsor may be selected by the candidate with the help of their parent(s) and/or the parish community.

Parents may not be sponsors, but may present their son or daughter to the Bishop along with the sponsor.

D. THE PARENT(S) OR GUARDIAN OF THE ADOLESCENT CANDIDATE

Parent(s)/guardian are called to be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation process. The role of the parent(s)/guardian is an extension of the commitment they undertook at their child's Baptism. The family serves as the primary community of faith. As children grow in faith, the parental role lessens in regard to decision-making and becomes one of support and witness. For the Sacrament of Confirmation for adolescents, the parental role is very much

one of spiritual companion and advisor, that is, both parents and adolescents learning and growing in understanding of Catholic traditions and beliefs. This points to the understanding that forming faith is a lifelong process and that parents, as well as adolescents and children, should continue their own faith growth. It is in this way that parents will be able to share their own faith journey, thereby helping the candidates to make decisions about their faith.

Parents must:

1. Continue their own faith growth.
2. Indicate a willingness to support the candidate's faith journeys.
3. Support their adolescent candidates in choosing sponsors.
4. Support their adolescent candidates in prayer throughout the preparation process

IV. Norms for Readiness

A. THE NORMS FOR ADULT CANDIDATES' READINESS:*

1. Demonstrates age appropriate desire and understanding of the sacrament.
2. Are participating in Sunday Eucharistic liturgies.
3. Are active in some facet(s) of the life of the Church.

B. THE NORMS FOR ADOLESCENT CANDIDATES' READINESS:

1. Demonstrates age appropriate desire and understanding of the sacrament.
2. Are participating in Sunday Eucharistic liturgies.
3. Are active in some facet(s) of the life of the Church.
 - a. Youth ministry (grades 6-12) provides the context for growth in faith of all the young people of the parish before and after a person celebrates Confirmation. Youth ministry invites young people to become involved in one or more of the facets of the life of the Church including prayer and worship, justice and service, evangelization, catechesis, community life, leadership development, pastoral care, and advocacy. It is not the goal that every adolescent participate in every aspect of the Church but that they participate in meaningful ways in the life of the Church.
 - b. Youth ministry is not the equivalent of “youth group” or “youth club” (these represent only a small piece of a comprehensive youth ministry) but is meant here in the context of the NCCB/USCC document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. This is not to suggest a policy that only adolescents who have participated in the parish youth ministry from grade 6 can be confirmed, but instead gives us a broad way of evaluating how young people have been involved or will be involved in the parish.

*Individuals who approach the Church for this sacrament may need assistance in coming to this point of readiness. The parish community bears the responsibility to provide such assistance.

V. The Rite of Confirmation

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols, words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, especially to those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

1. Renewal of Baptismal Promises
The renewal of baptismal promises in the Rite of Confirmation reminds us that Confirmation is intimately connected with the other sacraments of initiation. This clearly shows that Confirmation follows Baptism. Further, the renewal of baptismal promises expresses not only what the candidate and the community believe but also their relationship to the paschal mystery and the call to discipleship. Finally, Confirmation as a rule takes place within mass to further connect Confirmation with the other sacraments of initiation.
2. Laying on of Hands
Just as Jesus healed the sick and blessed little children with this gesture, the apostles did the same through the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands has signified the calling forth of the gifts of the Spirit. During the Rite of Confirmation, the laying on of hands by the Bishop invokes the Spirit to come upon the confirmands and bring them the gifts of wisdom and understanding, right judgment and courage, knowledge and reverence, and wonder and awe.
3. Seal of the Holy Spirit
In the anointing with oil, confirmands are marked as belonging to Christ and in service to Christ for ever. This mark or seal has been given by God who has given us his Spirit in our hearts to be one in Christ's body. Jesus identifies himself in the New Testament as carrying the seal of God the Father (John 6:27) which identifies him with his Father's mission.

4. Anointing with Chrism

In biblical times, anointing was a sign of abundance and joy, cleansing and healing, able to bring about a radiance of beauty, health and strength. In the Rite of Confirmation, anointing is the sign of the Spirit. It reminds each person that they belong to Christ, that we share in the mission of Christ through the Spirit. Just as Jesus was anointed by the Spirit and experienced his humanity transformed by that anointing, our own humanity is transformed by the anointing through the Spirit. (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church #1293)

5. The Assembly

The sign of peace that concludes the rite of the sacrament signifies and demonstrates ecclesial communion with the bishop and with all the faithful. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1301, Cf. St. Hippolytus, Trad. Ap. 21:Sch 11, 80-95)
It is at this time that the newly confirmed are now full members of the community having completed all of the sacraments of initiation.

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Eucharist
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Eucharist

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GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

I. Doctrinal Overview

Christ is the sacrament of God. The Church is the sacrament of Christ. Through Baptism Christ gives us life and through the Eucharist Christ nourishes life abundantly. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10) Through the Eucharist Christ's life, death and resurrection are made real, are made present, and are offered sacramentally. In the Eucharist, Christ unites his Church and all her members with his work of salvation. All ministries and sacraments of the Church are bound up with the Eucharist in which Christ, acting through the ministry of the priesthood, gives himself as an offering to the Father. Through Eucharist the faithful individually and communally renew their promise to conform their lives to Christ. Through the Liturgies of the Word and of the Eucharist the events of Christ's life are made present. It is through the community whose unity is created by the Eucharist that the faithful are commissioned and empowered to evangelize. In Holy Communion, Christ completes the initiation of the faithful, nourishes them throughout their lives, and consoles them at the time of death with Viaticum.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides various names for the Eucharist (cf. CCC 1328-1332):

What is this sacrament called?

The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called:

Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words eucharistein (Cf. Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24) and eulogein (Cf. Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification. (CCC 1328)

The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9).

The Breaking of Bread, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal, when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19.), above all at the Last Supper (Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection (Cf. Lk 24:13-35), and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11); by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17).

The Eucharistic assembly (synaxis), because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). (CCC 1329)

The memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

The Holy Sacrifice, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering. The terms holy sacrifice of the Mass, "sacrifice of praise," spiritual sacrifice, pure and holy sacrifice are also used (Heb 13:15; cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Ps 116:13, 17; Mal 1:11), since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The Holy and Divine Liturgy, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the Sacred Mysteries. We speak of the Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. The Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name. (CCC 1330)

Holy Communion, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17). We also call it: the holy things (ta hagia; sancta) (Apostolic Constitutions 8, 13, 12: PG 1, 1108; Didache 9, 5; 10:6: SCh 248, 176-178) - the first meaning of the phrase "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed - the bread of angels, bread from heaven, medicine of immortality, (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Eph. 20, 2: SCh 10, 76) viaticum. . . (CCC 1331)

Holy Mass (Missa), because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives." (CCC 1332)

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

1. Summary from the Last Supper to 100 A.D.
 - a. Jesus uses Jewish Passover meal in a new way to express New Covenant; new relationship between God and humankind.
 - b. Jesus asked faith of followers during this meal that through his word, bread and wine make him present.
 - c. The new Passover meal or Eucharist is celebrated primarily in homes as a meal of unity among believers.
 - d. The ritual of Eucharist:
 - 1) readings from Old Testament
 - 2) readings from letters and gospels that later became the New Testament
 - 3) explanation or homily about readings and teachings of Jesus
 - 4) sharing Jesus' presence through bread and wine in context of a meal— at first an actual meal and later a stylized one
2. Summary from 100-600 A.D.
 - a. Eucharist celebrated in homes, very simply until 313.
 - b. Eucharist taken in hand and often taken home to sick or for communion during week.
 - c. The Eucharist is not celebrated daily.
 - d. In 313, public buildings used for the Eucharist.
 - e. Prayers and rituals become more formalized rather than spontaneous.
 - f. Renewal needed even by 384 when the Eucharistic celebration is changed from Greek to Latin
3. Summary from 600 to 1850 A.D.
 - a. Style of prayer changes
 - 1) end to period of improvisation
 - 2) prayers compiled and formalized
 - 3) concern over minor details in rite
 - b. Gulf between clergy and people because of
 - 1) elaboration and complication of ceremonies
 - 2) clergy rose in social status beyond laity
 - 3) bishops take on style of princes

- c. Laity felt unworthy to receive communion, therefore, Easter Duty promulgated in 1212.

4. Vatican II

The modern day movement for renewal was officially accepted in 1962 when the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council:

- a. Recognized the need for use of the vernacular for intelligent participation.
- b. Encouraged reception of Communion as part of each Eucharist under appearance of both with bread and wine.
- c. Urged greater use of Scripture and preaching.
- d. Priest facing people to underline once again the communal aspect of the Eucharist.
- e. The Prayer of the Faithful to encourage spontaneous prayer and the Kiss of Peace to express our fellowship.

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B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST, CORRELATION WITH THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PREPARATION

1. The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life.

- All sacraments and all ministries are oriented to the Eucharist.
- Eucharist is both a sign and a cause of communion.
- Eucharist is an anticipation of eternal life.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1324: *The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” (LG 11) “The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.” (PO 5)*

CCC 1325: *“The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God’s action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.” (Congregation of Rites, instruction, Eucharisticum Mysterium, 6.)*

CCC 1326: Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:28)

Implications:

In catechesis, the Eucharist is recognized and taught as the central mystery of the Church. It unites the Body of Christ in a common union that celebrates the member's anticipation of eternal life. It strengthens and compels the faithful to witness to the gospel in the world.

2. The Eucharist in God's plan of salvation.

- The signs of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection.
- The Sunday Eucharist is the center of the Church's life.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1333: At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: "He took bread . . ." "He took the cup filled with wine. . . ." The signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine, (Cf. Ps 104:13-15.) fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine" – gifts of the Creator. The Church sees in the gesture of the king-priest Melchizedek, who "brought out bread and wine," a prefiguring of her own offering. (Gen 14:18; cf. Roman Missal, EP I (Roman Canon) 95.)

CCC 1337: The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love. (Cf. Jn 13:1-17; 34-35.) In order to leave them a pledge of this love, in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover, he instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his death and Resurrection, and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return; "thereby he constituted them priests of the New Testament." (Council of Trent (1562): DS 1740.)

CCC 1343: It was above all on "the first day of the week," Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection that the Christians met "to break bread." (Acts 20:7) From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life.

Implications:

By celebrating the Sunday Eucharist, itself formational, the faithful continue to follow in the footsteps of the first Christians. Following the example of the early Christians, the assembly gathers together to proclaim the Paschal Mystery. The Holy Spirit consecrates not only bread and wine, but hallows the family of Christ. The Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation unite God and his people in an unbreakable bond.

3. The Eucharist is thanksgiving, memorial, sacrifice and Christ's presence.

- The Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving to the Father.
- The Eucharistic meal is a memorial of Christ's Passover.
- The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the words of institution.
- The whole Christ is truly present in the Eucharist.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1360: *The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all "thanksgiving."*

CCC 1364: *In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present. (Cf. Heb 7:25-27.) "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out." (LG 3; cf. 1Cor 5:7.)*

CCC 1365: *Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood." (Lk 22:19-20.) In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:28.)*

CCC 1374: *The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh III*, 73, 3c.) In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." (Council of Trent (1551: DS 1651.) "This presence is called 'real' – by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by*

Eucharist

which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” (Paul VI, MF 39.)

Implications:

Eucharist, (in Greek, “thanksgiving”), is a celebration of both the thanksgiving sacrifice and memorial banquet of our Lord’s Paschal Mystery. As a meal, Eucharist developed from Jewish meals, particularly the Passover meal. The Jews experience liberation made present every time they celebrate the Passover meal, a living memorial of the Exodus. As a sacrifice, Eucharist makes present Jesus’ body “given for you” and his blood, the New Covenant “poured out for you.” Catechesis will include the following truths regarding Eucharist:
That the whole risen Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the Eucharistic species; That He is present in the proclamation of the word, in the presider, and in the worshipping assembly.

4. There are many fruits derived from Holy Communion.

- Holy Communion augments union with Christ.
- Holy Communion separates us from sin.
- Holy Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens Baptismal union with Christ.
- Holy Communion commits us to social justice.
- Holy Communion is a sacrament of unity.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1391: *Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” (Jn 6:56.) Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.” (Jn 6:57.)*

On the feasts of the Lord, when the faithful receive the Body of the Son, they proclaim to one another the Good News that the first fruits of life have been given, as when the angel said to Mary Magdalene, “Christ is risen!” Now too are life and resurrection conferred on whoever receives Christ. (Fañqîth, Syriac Office of Antioch, Vol. I, Commun., 237 a-b.)

CCC 1393: *Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is “given up for us,” and the blood we drink “shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.” For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins:*

For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord’s death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always

*forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.
(St. Ambrose, De Sacr. 4,6,28: PL 16, 446; cf. 1 Cor 11:26.)*

CCC 1396: *The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body – the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. (Cf. 1 Cor12:13.) The Eucharist fulfills this call: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1 Cor 10:16-17.)*

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond “Amen” (“yes, it is true!”) and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, “the Body of Christ’ and respond “Amen.” Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true. (St. Augustine, Sermo 272: PL 38, 1247.)

CCC 1397: *The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren:*

You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother, . . . You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal. . . . God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful. (St. John Chrysostom, Hom. in 1 Cor. 27,4: PG 61, 229-230; cf. Mt 25:40.)

CCC 1398: *The Eucharist and the unity of Christians. Before the greatness of this mystery St. Augustine exclaims, “O sacrament of devotion! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!” (St. Augustine, In Jo. ev. 26,13:PL 35, 1613; cf. SC 47.) The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return.*

Implications:

The Eucharist strengthens Christians both as individuals and as Church to live Gospel values, giving a special priority to the poor. The maturing individual will continually grow in appreciation of the sacrament. Formation for children and adults offers opportunities for the participants to express their understanding and reflect upon their experiences. Careful attention should be given to allowing them to name the fruits that they have received and in helping them to see the individual and communal nature of Eucharist.

5. The Eucharist is the pledge of the glory to come.

- The Eucharist is an anticipation of the heavenly glory
- The Lord's presence is veiled now in the Eucharist, but will one day be fully manifest.
- There is no clearer sign of hope in the anticipated glory than participation in the Eucharist.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1402: *In an ancient prayer the Church acclaims the mystery of the Eucharist: "O sacred banquet in which Christ is received as food, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of the life to come is given to us." If the Eucharist is the memorial of the Passover of the Lord Jesus, if by our communion at the altar we are filled "with every heavenly blessing and grace," (Roman Missal, EP I (Roman Canon) 96: Supplices te rogamus.), then the Eucharist is also an anticipation of the heavenly glory.*

CCC 1404: *The Church knows that the Lord comes even now in his Eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled. Therefore we celebrate the Eucharist "awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ," (Roman Missal 126, embolism after the Our Father: expectantes beatam spem et adventum Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi; cf. Titus 2:13.) asking "to share in your glory when every tear will be wiped away. On that day we shall see you, our God, as you are. We shall become like you and praise you for ever through Christ our Lord." (EP III 116: prayer for the dead.)*

CCC 1405: *There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness dwells," (2 Pet 3:13.) than the Eucharist. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ," (LG 3; St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Eph. 20, 2: SCh 10, 76.)*

Implications:

People live in a world beset by hopelessness. For many people, the reality of the Eucharist is dim. Catechists should strive to show that the Eucharist is indeed a sacrament of hope, because even though it is veiled, the pledge of eternal glory is there. The Eucharist "sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints." (CCC 1419)

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II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, age and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes life-long learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

1. Active participation in the Sunday Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic life.
2. The Risen Christ is present in the proclaimed Word, in the gathered assembly, in the person of the priest, and in a unique way in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine.
3. The Church's desire is for the candidate to celebrate First Holy Communion as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion; normally this is in the second grade.
4. As faith deepens, so does understanding of the Eucharist.
5. The parish community nurtures and supports the faith journey of the candidates and their families and welcomes them to the Table of the Lord.
6. The family is the first and most important teacher in matters of faith.
7. Preparation for and the celebration of First Holy Communion is realized in a pastorally sensitive manner.
8. Effective catechesis requires sensitivity to the local multi-cultural and/or diverse family situations.

9. First Holy Communion is not an isolated event in an individual's life. The ongoing sacramental life of any individual deepens one's relationship with God and the Church.
10. Catechists, including parents, have a right to formation in contemporary theology. Candidates have a right to be taught by catechists who truly reflect the current mind of the Church. (cf. CCC 2037, GDC 234)
11. Continued catechesis on the Eucharist, adapted to the level of the learner, is an integral element of all programs of systematic catechesis.

III. Policies

A. THE CANDIDATE

1. The candidate is a churched, baptized Catholic.
2. The candidate has reached the age of discretion.
3. At least one active Catholic adult must be willing to support a minor's faith journey.
4. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins, candidates must be prepared for, encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and given the opportunity to do so.

B. THE PARISH

1. The parish is responsible for developing and implementing an appropriate preparation process for all parishioners desiring to receive First Holy Communion.
2. Any parishioner who has reached the age of discretion, and has been prepared for and given the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, is eligible and should be invited to participate in sacramental catechesis for First Holy Communion. The Church's desire is for children to celebrate First Holy Communion as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion, that is, about the seventh year of age. (*cf. CIC, can. 914*)
3. The written permission of the candidate's pastor is required before the candidate prepares for, and/or celebrates, First Holy Communion in another parish.
4. Once a candidate has reached the age of discretion and has requested the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, sacramental catechesis and the celebration of each of these sacraments shall occur within a year. (For candidates in the RCIA, please refer to the Diocesan RCIA Guidelines.)
5. Since each sacrament deserves distinct preparation, catechesis for First Holy Communion is conducted separately from catechesis for the sacrament of Penance.
6. It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as of the pastor, to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins candidates must be prepared for and encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and given the opportunity to do so. (*cf. CIC, can. 914*)
7. When circumstances allow, a First Communion program that is separate from a graded program has important advantages. It allows for individual readiness to determine

participation in the program rather than requiring a determination based on a particular age or grade. It also encourages the involvement of additional catechists who can specialize in sacramental preparation.

8. The parish is responsible for providing opportunities for involving all its members in the sacramental preparation process.
9. Taking into account the universal criteria as stated in The Catechism of the Catholic Church, the catechetical preparation process and materials must respond to the diversity present in the parish community:
 - a. Learning styles, interests, experiences, and abilities of the candidates and their families (*cf. GDC 148, 149, 170*);
 - b. Language, cultures, and cultural religious practices (*cf. GDC 146, 232*);
 - c. Variety of family structures;
 - d. Candidates who are physically, educationally, and/or psychologically challenged (*cf. GDC 189*);
 - e. The stage of the candidates' psychological and moral development.
10. "The sacraments are 'of the Church' in the double sense that they are 'by her' and 'for her'"(*CCC 1118*). Therefore, the actual and immediate preparation for the sacramental celebration of First Holy Communion must be within the context of the single sacramental program of the parish (*cf. CCC 2179, 2226*). Knowledge about the sacrament can be obtained in different settings, such as, the family, the parish school of religion, or the Catholic school.
11. Catechists who provide the formation of candidates and parents are to be trained in contemporary methodology, moral development, and the theology of the sacrament. (*cf. GDC 234, 235*)
12. Parish leadership has the responsibility to provide suitable opportunities for family involvement and celebration of First Holy Communion. Formation concerning the sacrament of Eucharist must be ongoing throughout all levels of faith formation in the parish.
13. Parents not only have the right but also the responsibility to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Holy Communion. Therefore, they should participate in the parish adult pre-sacramental catechesis. (*cf. CCC 2223, 2225*)
14. Content for parent pre-sacramental catechesis meetings should include the following:
 - a. Structure of the Mass

- b. Presence of Jesus: Word/Assembly/Bread-Wine/Priest
 - c. Scriptural Roots of the Eucharist
 - d. Living as a Eucharistic People
 - e. How to Celebrate the Sacrament
15. The celebration of First Holy Communion shall normally take place during a regular Sunday Mass, including the Saturday vigil Mass.
16. The preparation of adults for first reception of the Eucharist is an integral part of the RCIA process.
17. Catechesis concerning the Eucharist must be ongoing throughout formal elementary religious education and a faith theme in adolescent and adult catechesis. This ongoing catechesis should also include:
- a. the importance of Sunday,
 - b. the centrality of the Eucharist,
 - c. the connection of Viaticum to the community celebration of Eucharist,
 - d. deepening of personal spirituality through Eucharistic devotions, i.e., visits to the Blessed Sacrament, participation in times of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
18. The options of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand, and reception of Communion under both species, are to be left to the discretion of the individual communicant.

IV. Norms for Readiness

It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as of the pastor, to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins, candidates must be prepared for, encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and given the opportunity to do so. (*cf. CIC, can. 914*).

The norms for a candidate's readiness are:

1. The candidate demonstrates a desire to celebrate the sacrament of First Eucharist.
2. The candidate demonstrates age-appropriate understanding of the sacrament.
3. The candidate is participating in the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy on a regular basis.
4. The candidate knows how to receive communion.

V. The Rite: Ritual Considerations for First Holy Communion

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

1. Children live and grow in a world of adult rituals: holiday celebrations, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, and graduations. Because these rituals consist of words to hear, songs to sing, things to see and do, they have an appeal for children. In time, they discover their deeper meanings. Children preparing for First Eucharist should share as fully as possible in the richness of the ritual, so that they may begin to experience the realities of union with God and one another in Jesus, which words can only attempt to explain.
2. Prior to the reception of Communion:
 - a. The candidate is free from mortal sin;
 - b. The candidate has observed the rules of fasting requiring that a person refrain from eating all food and from drinking liquids other than water for at least one hour prior to the time to receive Eucharistic Communion.
 - c. The actions/gestures of Eucharist are drawn from everyday life. As children are taught:
 - to greet others warmly,
 - to forgive and ask forgiveness,
 - to listen attentively and to speak their thoughts sincerely,
 - to share what they have,
 - to eat at a common table,
 - to give generously,

- to receive gratefully,
- to celebrate joy,

they are prepared for full participation in the Mass. They should study the Mass in order to see how these actions/gestures are manifested there.

The celebration of First Eucharist is the celebration of the whole Christian community welcoming the first communicant. The celebration of First Eucharist should be held at a regularly scheduled Sunday parish Mass, including the Saturday vigil Mass. It is important that the community is made aware of the presence of the first communicant. Suitable opportunities for first communicant recognition might be: the greeting, the entrance procession, the homily, the prayers of intercession, and/or the calling forth of the family at the time of reception of communion.

MASS OF FIRST COMMUNION

First Communions can be spread throughout the Sunday Masses.

If there are large group communions, care must be taken to insure a reverent atmosphere suited to worship.

When planning group celebrations of First Eucharist, care ought to be taken that the number of children to receive the sacrament does not preclude the presence of the parish community and the families of the children.

- a. Clothing: Simple and appropriate clothing for the children is recommended. Parishes should offer guidelines regarding clothing suitable for the celebration.
- b. Music and singing are normative in liturgical celebrations. The music should be chosen from the parish repertoire. Secular and/or catechetical music is not appropriate for use in the liturgy.

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Penance
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Penance

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GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

I. Doctrinal Overview

Beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that the sacrament of Penance has undergone over the centuries, the sacrament has always contained two equally essential elements: the process of conversion for the penitent and the process of forgiveness and homecoming through the intervention of the Church. (cf. CCC 1448) These two realities of spiritual life are celebrated in the Sacrament of Penance.

“What is this sacrament called?”

It is called the sacrament of conversion because it makes sacramentally present Jesus’ call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father (cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 15:18) from whom one has strayed by sin.

It is called the sacrament of Penance, since it consecrates the Christian sinner’s personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction. (CCC 1423)

It is called the sacrament of confession, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a “confession” - acknowledgment and praise - of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

It is called the sacrament of forgiveness, since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants the penitent ‘pardon and peace’ [Order of Penance 46: formula of absolution].

*It is called the sacrament of Reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: ‘Be reconciled to God’ [2 Cor. 5:20]. He who lives by God’s merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord’s call: ‘Go; first be reconciled to your brother’ [Mt. 5:24].”
(CCC 1424)*

These Guidelines will refer to the sacrament as the sacrament of Penance in order to be in agreement with the terminology used in the 1991 publication, “The Rites of the Catholic Church,” approved for use in the dioceses of the United States by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See.

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

1. The First 250 Years
 - a. Baptism forgives former sin.
 - b. Little indication of public confession after Baptism.
 - c. In some areas, no absolution for serious sins.
 - d. Hope for forgiveness rests with the judgment of God.
2. From the Year 300 On
 - a. Penance becomes public and communal
 - b. Penance is once in a life time
 - c. Penance is necessary for these three sins:
 - giving up the faith;
 - committing murder;
 - breaking the marriage vow.
3. From the Fourth to Tenth Century
 - a. Private penance is developed by Irish monks
 - b. Penances are contained in Penitential Books
 - c. Penance can be given many times in life
 - d. Should penance be private or public?
4. Tenth Century to the Second Vatican Council
 - a. In 1200, Pope Gregory initiates reforms. Penance is to be known as confession.
 - b. In 1215 a Council at Lateran decrees that confession from now on is to be private.
 - c. The sacrament must be received once a year if one has committed grave sin.
 - d. There are different ways of confessing sins that are valid:
 - 1) a communal penance service
 - 2) individual celebration of the sacrament

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*The Ritual gives a third form of the sacrament called ‘The Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution’; this form is allowed under certain, unusual situations. The bishop is the judge of whether or not the conditions required for general absolution exist.

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FIRST PENANCE PREPARATION

1. Penance and reconciliation are an integral part of the sacramental life of the Church.

- In Baptism one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins.
- The practice of penance strengthens Christians as they struggle against the frailty and weakness of human nature and the inclination to sin.
- The Eucharist is the source and nourishment of daily conversion and a remedy from daily faults.
- The Anointing of the Sick provides forgiveness of sins.
- Just as the sacraments of initiation form a unity, so too Penance, Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum are the sacraments that complete the earthly pilgrimage.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1427: Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.’ (Mk. 1:15) In the Church’s preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism (Cf. Acts 2:38) that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

CCC 1426: Conversion to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Body and Blood of Christ received as food have made us ‘holy and without blemish,’ just as the Church herself, the Bride of Christ, is ‘holy and without blemish.’ [Eph 1:4; Eph 5:27.] Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls concupiscence, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life. [Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1515.] This is the struggle of conversion directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us. [Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545; LG 40.]

CCC 1436: Eucharist and Penance. Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of

Christ, which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened. 'It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins.' [Council of Trent (1551): DS 1638.]

CCC 1532: *The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects: the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church; the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age; the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance; the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul; the preparation for passing over to eternal life.*

CCC 1524: *In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum. Communion in the body and blood of Christ, received at this moment of 'passing over' to the Father, has a particular significance and importance. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection, according to the words of the Lord: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' [Jn. 6:54] The sacrament of Christ once dead and now risen, the Eucharist is here the sacrament of passing over from death to life, from this world to the Father. [Cf. Jn 13:1.]*

Implications:

In the sacrament of Penance, the Church calls its members to continuous renewal of their love of God and of all their brothers and sisters. Penance impacts everything the Church does. While preparing for this sacrament penitents should be reminded that conversion is accomplished in daily life and forgiveness of sins is accomplished by living sacramentally. Care should be taken to balance the sanctifying aspects of all the sacraments. Penitents should be taught that Eucharist, which is a memorial of our Lord's death and resurrection, is the root sacrament of reconciliation and conversion. The separate nature of the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance should be respected while noting their interrelationship. The faithful should trust the reconciliation that is inherent in the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist.

2. Christ continuously calls all to conversion.

- Conversion is first of all a work of the greatness of God's love through the Holy Spirit
- Conversion is both personal and social.
- Conversion is of the heart and implies a change in attitude and behavior.
- Conversion and repentance are accomplished in daily life.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1428: *Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, 'clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.'* [LG 8 # 3.] *This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a 'contrite heart,' drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.* [Ps 51:17 ; cf. Jn 6:44 ; Jn 12:32 ; 1 Jn 4:10 .]

CCC 1434: *The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, [Cf. Tob 12:8 ; Mt 6:1-18 .] which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity 'which covers a multitude of sins.'* [1 Pet 4:8 ; Cf. Jas 5:20 .]

CCC 1435: *Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right, [Cf. Am 5:24 ; Isa 1:17 .] by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.* [Cf. Lk 9:23 .]

CCC 1438: *The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. [Cf. SC 109-110; CIC, Cann. 1249-1253; CCEO, Cann. 880-883.] These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).*

Implications:

Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, Penance and renewal offer a continual challenge to the community of faith. Penance and renewal are the faith community's response to God's great gift of love revealed through Jesus. Through Christ's paschal mystery the Holy Spirit makes the Church aware that it is holy and yet always in need of purification. The Church engages in the roles of both teacher and disciple. The task of all Christians is to learn to say "yes" ever more fully to God and to transform their lives in accordance with the personal and social values of the Gospel.

3. Sin is an offense against God and damages relationship with the Church and the world.

- Only God forgives sin.
- The sacrament of Penance entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church.
- The priest, on behalf of Christ, reconciles the sinner to God and the Church.
- Confession to a priest is essential to the sacrament of Penance; enumeration of sins by name and number is required only in the case of mortal sin.
- Confession of everyday faults is recommended by the Church.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1441: *Only God forgives sins .(Cf. Mk. 2:7.) Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, 'The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' and exercises this divine power: 'Your sins are forgiven.' (Mk. 2:5, 10; Lk 7:48.) Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name. (Cf. Jn 20:21-23.)*

CCC 1440: *Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Cf. LG 11).*

CCC 1456: *Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance: "All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of the Decalogue; for these sins sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly." (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1680 (ND 1626); cf. Ex 20:17; Mt 5:28)*

CCC 1457: *According to the Church's command, "after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year" (Cf. CIC, can 989; Council of Trent (1551): DS 1683; DS 1708). Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession (Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1647; 1661; CIC, can 916; CCEO, can. 711). Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time (Cf. CIC, can. 914).*

CCC 1458: *Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.[Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1680; CIC, can. 988 # 2.] Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed*

by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful: [Cf. Lk 6:36.] Whoever confesses his sins . . . is already working with God. God indicts your sins; if you also indict them, you are joined with God. Man and sinner are, so to speak, two realities: when you hear 'man' - this is what God has made; when you hear 'sinner' - this is what man himself has made. Destroy what you have made, so that God may save what he has made When you begin to abhor what you have made, it is then that your good works are beginning, since you are accusing yourself of your evil works. The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. You do the truth and come to the light. [St. Augustine, In Jo. ev. 12, 13: PL 35, 1491.]

Implications:

The sacrament of Penance renews and strengthens charity among the members of the Body of Christ. Since the sacrament strengthens awareness of the greatness of God's love and encourages the practice of charity, it is both a fitting preparation for First Holy Communion and a renewal of the soul's baptismal state. In the case of mortal sin, individual confession and absolution remain the only ordinary way for the faithful to reconcile themselves with God and the Church. Parents and catechists entrusted with the faith formation of children should use ongoing age appropriate catechesis in explaining the importance of this sacrament and its relationship to sin.

4. Penance is the sacrament of forgiveness

- It is for all those who have fallen into sin after Baptism.
- Contrition is a basic component of celebrating the sacrament.
- Confession of sins facilitates reconciliation.
- Justice requires satisfaction/penance for sins
- The priest is a sign of God's merciful love for the sinner
- The sacrament of Penance brings about a true restoration of the dignity and blessings of a child and friend of God.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1446: *Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church; above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck, which is the loss of grace" (Tertullian, De Paenit. 4, 2: PL 1, 1343; cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1542).*

CCC 1451: *Among the penitent's acts contrition occupies first place. Contrition is "sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again" (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1676).*

CCC 1468: *"The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God's grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship" (Cf. Roman Catechism, II, V, 18). Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation "is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation" (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1674). Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true "spiritual resurrection," restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God (Cf. Lk 15:32).*

CCC 1460: *The penance the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent's personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible with the gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. Such penances help configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, 'provided we suffer with him.' [Rom 8:17; Rom 3:25; 1Jn 2:1-2; cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1690.] The satisfaction that we make for our sins, however, is not so much ours as though it were not done through Jesus Christ. We who can do nothing ourselves, as if just by ourselves, can do all things with the cooperation of 'him who strengthens' us. Thus man has nothing of which to boast, but all our boasting is in Christ . . . in whom we make satisfaction by bringing forth 'fruits that befit repentance.' These fruits have their efficacy from him, by him they are offered to the Father, and through him they are accepted by the Father. [Council of Trent (1551): DS 1691; cf. Phil 4:13; 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; Gal 6:14; Lk 3:8.]"*

CCC 1465: *When he celebrates the sacrament of Penance, the priest is fulfilling the ministry of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, of the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds, of the Father who awaits the prodigal son and welcomes him on his return, and of the just and impartial judge whose judgment is both just and merciful. The priest is the sign and the instrument of God's merciful love for the sinner.*

Implications:

The sacrament of Penance should always be taught and celebrated in such a way that it will be perceived not as a burden, but as a welcomed opportunity. The sacrament is God's gift of healing when people, both individually and socially, have ruptured or seriously hurt their relationship with God and the community. Reconciliation presupposes conversion and a determination to avoid that sin,

either personal or social, for which one is forgiven. Because it pleases God to reconcile others to himself through the Church, the penitent confesses to a priest who is representative of the Church. As a sign of conversion, the penitent accepts the penance given by the priest.

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II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, ages and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes lifelong learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

1. The Church's desire is for the candidate to celebrate the sacrament of Penance as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion. Normally this should be in the second grade (cf. CIC, can. 204; CCC 1457).
2. Sacramental catechesis for Penance enables the child to celebrate the sacrament and to understand why the sacrament is beneficial.
3. Early appreciation for Penance begins in the life of the family. Parents play a primary role of support and instruction through family experiences, parental attitudes and participation in the sacrament of Penance.
4. Formal catechesis for Penance is provided by parishes for adults, as well as for children and their parents. The catechesis includes:
 - the meaning of sin,
 - conscience formation,
 - the meaning of the sacrament and the various forms of celebrating the sacrament,
 - and, a recognition of the love and mercy of God and His people which is extended through the sacrament (cf. CCC 1074, 1075, 1657).
5. Catechesis for Penance is an ongoing process.

6. Catechists and parents should be aware of the principles and stages of psychological and moral development.
7. By being sensitive to and analyzing the local multi-cultural and religious situations, each parish will discover the needs proper to its situation and will realistically foster appropriate catechesis.

Taking into account the universal criteria as stated in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the sacramental catechetical preparation process and materials should respond to the diversity present in the parish community:

- learning styles, interests, experiences, and abilities of the candidates and their families (cf. *GDC* 148, 149, 170),
 - language, cultures, and cultural religious practices (cf. *GDC* 146, 232),
 - variety of family structures,
 - candidates who are physically, educationally, and/or psychologically challenged (cf. *GDC* 189),
 - the stage of the candidates' psychological and moral development.
8. "The sacraments are 'of the Church' in the double sense that they are 'by her' and 'for her.'" (*CCC* 1118) Therefore, the actual and immediate preparation for the sacramental celebration of First Penance must be within the context of the parish sacramental program (cf. *CCC* 2179, 2226). Knowledge about the sacrament can be obtained in various contexts.
 9. Through the RCIA process catechumens and candidates will be prepared for the time when they will first celebrate the sacrament of Penance. The preparation for and celebration of the sacrament of Penance will be made available to all uncatechized Catholics or those baptized in another faith tradition before they are brought into full communion with the Church. (cf. *RCIA* sacramental guidelines)

III. Policies

A. THE CANDIDATE

1. It is essential to have received Baptism in order to celebrate the sacrament of Penance. (*cf. CIC, can. 204, 988*)
2. A level of moral development has been reached whereby the individual is able to recognize that actions or attitudes can harm relationships and that these damaged relationships necessitate the celebration of reconciliation.
3. Any parishioner, who has reached the age of discretion, normally seven years of age, is eligible and should be invited to participate in sacramental catechesis for Penance.
4. The choice of confessors is to be left to the discretion of the individual penitent.

B. THE PARISH

1. The parish is responsible for developing and implementing a preparation process for all parishioners desiring to receive the sacrament of Penance.
2. The parish is responsible for providing opportunities to involve all its members in the sacramental preparation process, including support and prayer for the candidates.
3. The written permission of the candidate's pastor is required before the candidate prepares for First Penance in another parish.
4. When circumstances allow, a sacrament preparation program that is separate from a religious education/school program is recommended.
5. It is the teaching of the Church that the sacrament of Penance continues Baptism's work of reconciliation and forgiveness (*cf. CIC, can. 989; CCC 2042*). Therefore, it is appropriate that the candidate celebrate the sacrament of Penance as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion, which is about the seventh year of age. (*cf. CIC, can. 914; CCC 1457*)
6. Once candidates have reached the age of discretion and have either individually requested or have been presented by their parents/ legal guardians for the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, sacramental catechesis and the celebration of each of these sacraments shall occur within a year. (For candidates in the RCIA, please refer to the Diocesan RCIA Guidelines.)
7. Catechists who provide the formation of candidates and parents are to be trained in contemporary methodology, moral development, and theology of the sacrament. (*cf. GDC 234, 235*)

8. Catechesis concerning the sacrament of Penance must be provided for the parents so they can better help their children understand and celebrate the sacrament.
9. Parents have not only the right but also the responsibility to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Penance. Therefore, they should participate in the parish adult pre-sacramental catechesis. (*cf. CCC 2223, 2225*)
10. Content for parent pre-sacramental catechesis meetings is rooted in the Paschal Mystery and should include the following:
 - a. History and Development of the Sacrament
 - b. Forgiveness in Scripture
 - c. Sin and Morality: How to Make Good Choices
 - d. Reconciliation in Daily Life
 - e. How to Celebrate the Rite
 - f. Importance of Participation in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy
11. Catechesis for the sacrament of Penance is to precede First Holy Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation.
12. Pastoral care should be taken to develop an understanding in the faithful, that in subsequent celebrations of the sacrament, one does not need to celebrate the sacrament of Penance before receiving communion, except in the case of serious sin.
13. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins, candidates must be *prepared for, encouraged to celebrate* the sacrament of Penance, and be given the *opportunity* to do so. (*cf. CIC, cann. 914, 988, 989; CCC 1457*)
14. Parish leadership has the responsibility to provide suitable opportunities for family involvement and celebration of the sacrament of Penance. Formation on the sacrament of Penance must be ongoing throughout all levels of faith formation in the parish

IV. Norms For Readiness

1. It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as of the pastor, to see that children who have reached the use of reason have celebrated the sacrament of Penance before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins. (cf. *CIC*, can. 914)
2. The norms for a candidate's readiness are:
 - a. The candidate demonstrates a desire to celebrate the sacrament of Penance.
 - b. The candidate understands the roles of the various participants (penitent, priest, and community) in the Rite of Reconciliation, knows how to celebrate the Rite and can follow the procedure for doing so.
 - c. The candidate demonstrates an age-appropriate understanding of the sacrament.
 - d. The candidate is participating in the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy on a regular basis; catechesis concerning the participation at Sunday Eucharist may be necessary and should be welcoming and inviting.

V. The Rite of Penance

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE RITE OF PENANCE

1. At any penance celebration the penitent must always have the choice of confessing anonymously or face-to-face.
2. The Rite of Reconciliation of Individual Penitents (Rite I)
 - a. Reception of the penitent
 - b. Greeting
 - c. Sign of the Cross
 - d. Invitation to trust in God
 - e. Reading of the Word of God (optional)
 - f. Confession of sins and acceptance of satisfaction
This should be done in conversational, comfortable manner.
The penance may be directly related to sins confessed or prayer may also be appropriate.
 - g. Prayer of the penitent (Act of Contrition)
 - h. Absolution
 - i. Proclamation of praise of God and dismissal
3. The Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution (Rite II)

This is the form of the sacrament experienced by many Catholics during recent years. In actual practice, however, the rite has often not been successful in

leading the penitent through all the various stages of the sacrament. It often functions as a communal preparation for the individual celebration, since because of the large crowds it is not always opportune to ask people to wait for the communal celebration of thanksgiving and dismissal.

The basic outline is:

- a. Opening song
- b. Celebrant greets people
- c. Opening prayer
- d. Sacred Scripture
- e. Homily
- f. General examination of conscience and a confession of sorrow (the Confiteor or some other similar prayer) by the community
- g. Individual confession and absolution
- h. Personal or communal penance, as appropriate
- i. Communal thanksgiving and dismissal

The use of Scripture is sometimes developed into a full liturgy of the Word using three Scripture passages with responsorial Psalm and Gospel verse. However, this full celebration may place a burden on people and clergy when there are large numbers of penitents. A single, well-chosen passage of Sacred Scripture (with preference given to the Gospels) followed by a homily can be a sufficient preparation with personal examination of conscience. This is not to suggest that additional scripture readings may not sometimes be appropriate.

Care must be given as well, when possible, to include the final element of praise and thanksgiving. This has been managed well in some parishes by having groups of penitents gather at a given place after they have completed their penance; there they may pray in thanksgiving together and be dismissed in small groups during the course of the evening.

4. The Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution (Rite III)

[The diocesan bishop is the judge of whether or not the conditions required for general absolution exist. (*cf. CIC, can 961; CCC 1483*)

C. COMMENTARY ON IMPORTANT ELEMENTS

1. *The Communal Celebration of the Sacrament.* At times, especially during the seasons of Advent and Lent, parishes should offer the opportunity for the faithful to receive the sacrament of Penance in the context of a communal penance celebration. Such celebrations express fully that as Christians we approach God as a family, asking forgiveness of our brothers and sisters even as we ask forgiveness of our Father pledging our support of one another in our common effort to grow toward the Kingdom of God.

Such celebrations highlight the fact that the Sacrament of Penance is not merely a means of ‘getting rid of sins,’ it is a joyful celebration, a welcoming of God’s forgiveness.

2. *Listening to the Word of God.* Listening to the Word of God to experience the Divine call to each of us plays an indispensable role in the Sacrament of Penance. The Word of God reminds us of our calling to live a Christian life. We hear God’s Word primarily in its proclamation of the Church. We can also recognize God’s call in the experiences of daily life. The Word of God helps us open our hearts to the divine healing love.
3. *Confession.* Confession, or the actual recognition of sin, is not simply an enumeration of sins. It is an expression of our desire to live the life to which our Baptism calls us. When we confess our sins, we open ourselves to the grace of conversion. We try to rebuild or renew our relationship with God. We seek to become reconciled with our neighbor. We look to being renewed within ourselves.
4. *Role of the Priest.* In the sacrament of Penance, the priest is not a judge whose role is to condemn sinners. The priest is one who is called to preach the Gospel of forgiveness. He is to pray with and on behalf of sinners. Especially, he is to accept and understand the sinner. The priest leads the penitent to the healing presence of the merciful God.

D. SELECTION OF MUSIC

Music appropriate for the celebration of the sacrament should be drawn from the parish repertoire.

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Anointing

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<p style="text-align:center">GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK</p>
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I. Doctrinal Overview

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

1. Beginnings to 751 A.D. [*]
 - a. Lay and priestly anointings, with lay anointing the more common.
 - b. All baptized (with the exception of those who had been admitted to the order of penitents) could be anointed.
 - c. Any sickness, except minor inconveniences, was the focus or center of the sacrament.
 - d. The major effect of the sacrament is clearly stated as bodily health. Spiritual effects are clearly subordinated.

[*] Ed. – The date of Pepin’s ascension to the throne and the time of the so-called Carolingian reform.

2. 751 A.D. – 1100 A.D.

The time from 751 into the 12th century should be understood as a time of gradual transition from the broad understanding and use of the sacrament of the sick to a much restricted understanding and limited use of what became known as the sacrament of extreme unction or final anointing.

3. 1100 A.D. Onward

- a. Only priestly anointing was allowed.
- b. Small children and some mentally disturbed people could not be anointed. The order of penitents had disappeared.
- c. The moment of dying centralizes the entire theological interpretation of the sacrament.
- d. The major effect is spiritualized, that is, spiritual health, and the statement of James 5, 14ff, is exegeted on this spiritual basis.

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4. Vatican II on. . .
 - a. Only priestly anointing allowed.
 - b. The sacrament is open to those who can benefit from it.
 - c. The focus is on illness rather than on death.
 - d. The spiritual profit still is primary, but the rite speaks of physical health, if it is God's will.
 - e. Some types of mental illness are now recognized as serious, and those who would be strengthened by the sacrament may be anointed.

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH* AND *THE RITE OF THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

1. Suffering and pain are part of the human condition. (*Pastoral Care of the Sick* [hereafter PCS] 1)

- Human suffering is a consequence of original sin.
- Suffering and pain should not be regarded as punishment for individual sins. (*PCS* 2)
- Suffering and pain can lead people to either turn toward God or away from God.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The Rite of the Pastoral Care of the Sick*

PCS 1: Suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems that trouble the human spirit. Christians feel and experience pain as do all other people; yet their faith helps them to grasp more deeply the mystery of suffering and to bear their pain with greater courage. From Christ's words they know that sickness has meaning and value for their own salvation and for the salvation of the world. They also know that Christ, who during his life often visited and healed the sick, loves them in their illness.

PCS 2: Although closely linked with the human condition, sickness cannot as a general rule be regarded as a punishment inflicted on each individual for personal sins (see John 9:3). Christ himself, who is without sin, in fulfilling the words of Isaiah took on all the wounds of his passion and shared in all human pain (see Isaiah 53:4-5). Christ is still pained and tormented in his members, made like him. Still, our afflictions seem but momentary and slight when compared to the greatness of the eternal glory for which they prepare us (see 2 Corinthians 4:17).

CCC 1500: Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death.

Implications:

We need to understand that God intended an ordered universe. Human sin disrupted this order and brought suffering, war, division... The prophetic tradition recognized a certain connection between Israel's lack of fidelity to the Covenant and human suffering, but Jesus refused to recognize that suffering and illness are caused by personal sin (John 9:3).

2. In Christ, human suffering is redemptive for the world. (PCS 3)

- Faith helps Christians grasp more deeply the mystery of suffering. *(PCS 1)*
- Christ suffered, and suffers still in his members. *(PCS 3)*
- The sick can witness to the higher things of God. *(PCS 3)*
- Yet it is God's will that humans fight against suffering and sickness. *(PCS 3)*

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The Rite of the Pastoral Care of the Sick*

PCS 1: See above, under 1.

PCS 3: Part of the plan laid out by God's providence is that we should fight strenuously against all sickness and carefully seek the blessings of good health, so that we may fulfill our role in human society and in the Church. Yet we should always be prepared to fill up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings for the salvation of the world as we look forward to creation's being set free in the glory of the Children of God. (see Colossians 1:24; Romans 8:19-21)

CCC 1506: Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn. By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick. Jesus associates them with his own life of poverty and service. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing: "So they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." (Mk 6:12-13)

CCC 1508: The Holy Spirit gives to some a special charism of healing (Cf. 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30) so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord. But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses. Thus St. Paul must learn from the Lord that "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," and that the sufferings to be endured can mean that "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church." (2 Cor 12:9; Col 1:24)

CCC 1522: *An ecclesial grace. The sick who receive this sacrament, “by freely uniting themselves to the passion and death of Christ,” “contribute to the good of the people of God.” (LG II 2) By celebrating this sacrament the Church, in the communion of saints, intercedes for the benefit of the sick person, and he, for his part, through the grace of this sacrament, contributes to the sanctification of the Church and to the good of all men for whom the Church suffers and offers herself through Christ to God the Father.*

Implications:

Although not good in itself, suffering can lead one to a deeper understanding of the paschal mystery – the dying and rising of Christ – and its manifestation in one’s own life – one’s dying and rising with Christ. The Church in both its ministers and in the community at large should do what is possible to support those who suffer, but all must go further: as a matter of justice, Christians have a responsibility to fight against disease and illness. The medical profession has a particular role in healing. All are called to sensitivity toward the sick, offering them hope of healing; realizing that the ultimate goal is whatever will lead to salvation.

3. Christ heals the sick through the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

- Through his healing, the Kingdom of God breaks into the world.
- Jesus healed the sick throughout his public ministry. (PCS 5)
- The Church continues the healing ministry, as evidenced in the Letter of James (see James 5:14-16). (PCS 5)
- The foundation for the sacrament is Christ’s Paschal Mystery. (PCS 5)
- The celebration of the sacrament consists in the laying on of hands by the priests of the Church, the prayer of faith, and anointing with blessed oil. (PCS 5)

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The Rite of the Pastoral Care of the Sick*

PCS 5: *The Lord himself showed great concern for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the sick and commanded his followers to do likewise. This is clear from the gospels, and above all from the existence of the sacrament of anointing, which he instituted and which is made known in the Letter of James. Since then the Church has never ceased to celebrate this sacrament for its members by the anointing and the prayer of its priests, commending those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them (see James 5:14-16). Moreover, the Church exhorts them to associate themselves willingly with the passion and death of Christ (see Romans 8:17), (See also Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Peter 4:13.) and thus contribute to the welfare of the people of God. (See Council of Trent, sess. 14, De Extrema Unctione, cap.1: Denz.-Schön. 1695; Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 11: AAS 57 (1965) 15.)*

CCC 1503: *Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:16; cf Mt 4:24) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins (Cf. Mk 2:5-12); he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of.(Cf. Mk 2:17) His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me."(Mt 25:36) His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.*

CCC 1504: *Often Jesus asks the sick to believe.(Cf Mk 5:34, 36; 9:32) He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands,(Cf Mk 7:32 – 36; 8:22 - 25) mud and washing.(Cf Jn 9:6-7) The sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all." (Lk 6:19; cf Mk 1:41; 3:10; 6:56) And so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us.*

CCC 1505: *Moved by so much suffering, Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."(Mt 8:17; cf Isa 53:4) But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through the Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world"(Jn 1:29; cf Isa 53:4-6) of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive passion.*

CCC 1507: *The risen Lord renews this mission ("in my name ... they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mk 16:17-18)) and confirms it through signs that the church performs by invoking his name.(Cf Acts 9:34; 14:3) These signs demonstrate in a special way that Jesus is truly "God who saves."(Cf Mt 1:21; Acts)*

CCC 1520: *A particular gift of the Holy Spirit. The first grace of this sacrament is one of strengthening, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of serious illness or the frailty of old age. This grace is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who renews trust and faith in God and strengthens against the temptations of the evil one, the temptation to discouragement and anguish in the face of death. (Cf. Heb 2:15) This assistance from the Lord by the power of his Spirit is meant to lead the sick person to healing of the soul, but also of the body if such is God's will. (Cf. Council of Florence (1439); DS 1325) Furthermore, "if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (Jas 5:15; cf. Council of Trent (1551); DS 1717.)*

CCC 1521: *Union with the passion of Christ. By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ's Passion: in a certain way he is consecrated to bear fruit by configuration to the Savior's redemptive Passion. Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus.*

CCC 1532: *The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects:*

- *The uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church;*
- *the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church*
- *the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age*
- *the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance;*
- *the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;*
- *the preparation for passing over to eternal life.*

Implications:

The Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' healings were an in-breaking of the Kingdom. The Church serves the Kingdom of God in various ways, including the practice of the healing sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick. Instruction on the Anointing of the Sick should include the difference between cures and healing. The purpose of the sacrament is not to cure one from one's illness (physical or mental). Even if one does not recover from one's physical infirmity after anointing, the purpose of the sacrament is healing. Healing is spiritual, follows the pattern of the paschal mystery, and includes in a broad sense, reconciliation. Instruction on the Anointing of the Sick also needs to insist that it is a sacrament of the living and therefore should be sought as soon as one is aware of serious illness or is facing critical medical procedures.

4. The proper sacrament for the dying is Viaticum (Holy Communion).

Correlation with The Catechism of the Catholic Church and The Rite of the Pastoral Care of the Sick

PCS 26: *When in their passage from this life Christians are strengthened by the body and blood of Christ in viaticum, they have the pledge of the resurrection that the Lord promised "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" (John 6:54).*

(PCS 26 cont.) : *When possible, viaticum should be received within Mass so that the sick person may receive communion under both kinds. Communion received*

Anointing

as viaticum should be considered a special sign of participation in the mystery which is celebrated in the eucharist: the mystery of the death of the Lord and his passage to the Father.¹

PCS 27: *All baptized Christians who are able to receive communion are bound to receive viaticum by reason of the precept to receive communion when in danger of death from any cause. Priests with pastoral responsibility must see that the celebration of this sacrament is not delayed, but that the faithful are nourished by it while still in full possession of their faculties.*

CCC 1524: *In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum. Communion in the body and blood of Christ, received at this moment of “passing over” to the Father, has a particular significance and importance. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection, according to the words of the Lord: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (Jn 6:54) The sacrament of Christ once dead and now risen, the Eucharist is here the sacrament of passing over from death to life, from this world to the Father. (Cf. Jn 13:1)*

Implications:

The Church offers this special moment of comfort and reassurance to those facing death with the added text “May the Lord Jesus protect you and lead you to eternal life”. If a priest administers viaticum, he may add the apostolic pardon for the dying. Hence, viaticum should be requested when one is in full possession of one’s faculties.

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¹ See Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, May 25, 1967, nos. 336, 39, 41[DOL 179, nos. 1265, 1268, 1270].

II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, ages and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes lifelong learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

1. The person who is seriously ill or facing serious surgery or treatment may ask for the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. The rite specifically includes serious mental illness as appropriate for the reception of the sacrament.
2. All that is involved in the celebration of this sacrament must take into account the physical condition of the one requesting it.
3. The pastoral concern of the celebrant, the texts of the Church's prayers and scriptures, the use of music where appropriate, all contribute to the catechesis of the person.
4. As much as is feasible, the community of faith should be represented during the anointing; however, as always, the physical condition of the sick person is the determining factor.

III. Polices

A. THE CANDIDATE

1. The Sacrament of Anointing is appropriate for those whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or advanced age. This includes persons who are seriously ill whether at home, in hospitals or in nursing homes, as well as children who are old enough to experience benefit from the Sacrament.
2. The nature of this sacrament demands the earliest possible celebration at the beginning of a serious illness or in the face of serious surgery. To postpone anointing can only convey the faulty impression that this is a sacrament for the dying.
3. Although frequency of anointing is a matter of pastoral judgment, a person may request the sacrament again if the sickness recurs or if the condition becomes more serious.
4. Persons who are already dead are not to be anointed. The Order of Christian Funerals has prayers for the dead which are more appropriate.

B. THE PARISH

1. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick should be part of the overall care and concern of the church for the sick of the community. This care includes visits to the sick, taking communion when requested, and prayer for their well-being.
2. The Sacrament of Anointing is often preceded by the Sacrament of Penance and, in cases of danger of death, followed by Viaticum.
3. The actual time of the anointing should be chosen in consultation with the family and the sick person so that a convenient time may be chosen for all to participate. If done early in an illness, a greater selection of days and times will be possible.
4. The Sacrament of Anointing may be celebrated in the sick person's room, at home or in the hospital. It may also be celebrated in the parish church or hospital chapel. Consideration should be given to the condition of the patient, others in the room, the space available and the needs of a real celebration.
5. If the sick person wishes (or asks) to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance, provision for this is made prior to the celebration of Anointing.
6. Frequency of anointing is a matter of pastoral judgment. The Sacrament of Anointing may be repeated if the sickness recurs or if the condition becomes more serious.
7. It is recommended that the priest be prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick when visiting the sick in a hospital or a nursing home.

8. Anointing of the Sick should be celebrated in parishes at least once or twice annually during Mass after appropriate preparation of the congregation. This celebration may occur during any Sunday Mass, although it does not seem appropriate during the Easter or Christmas seasons. Care must be taken not to overburden the Mass at any time.
9. Appropriate readings are found in the Lectionary and in the Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum. The Ordo will indicate any restrictions on the choice of texts from the Rite itself.

IV. Norms For Readiness

1. The only requirement for this sacrament is the awareness of serious illness or danger of death.
2. For the parish community, when the scriptures assigned lend themselves to the topic, there should be occasional preaching on the healing ministry of Jesus, his compassion for the sick, the Church's concern for their well being, and a connection of these with the Church's celebration of the sacrament of the sick.

V. The Rite Of The Anointing Of The Sick

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols—words, gestures, objects, movements, etc.—of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE RITE OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

If The Sacrament of Penance Has Been Requested, It Takes Place Before The Anointing

Opening Rite

Greeting

Sprinkling with Holy Water – optional

Instruction

Penitential Rite

Liturgy of the Word

Scripture

Brief homily

Liturgy of Anointing

Litany

Laying on of Hands

Prayer over the Oil (or Blessing of the Oil)

Anointing (forehead and hands are anointed)

Prayer after Anointing

Lord's Prayer

Liturgy of Holy Communion

Communion

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite

Blessing

C. COMMENTARY ON IMPORTANT LITURGICAL ELEMENTS

1. Oil of the Sick – Care must be taken that the oil is fresh, not rancid. In case of necessity, the celebrant may bless the oil himself but only within the celebration of the sacrament. Any vegetable oil may be used.
2. Communal Celebration - Every means must be used to involve the community with the individual who is sick or homebound, without allowing this concern and care to become burdensome for the one it is supposed to strengthen.

D. SELECTION OF MUSIC

Music for the celebration of the Anointing of the Sick should be peaceful, meaningful, comforting and helpful to bring one to faith.

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Marriage
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Marriage

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GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

I. Doctrinal Overview

An Invitation to Marriage

The Marriage Guidelines for the Dioceses of Texas, issued by the Texas Catholic Conference, state: “marriage is first and foremost, a gift of God. Instituted by God at creation, marriage was elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, giving special graces to the married couple to enable them to live their God-given vocation. In order to help the couple live an intimate partnership of conjugal life and love, those in pastoral care need to provide a loving, practical preparation for marriage that involves true evangelization and formation for responsible parenting.”

Therefore, the Church is committed to doing everything possible for engaged couples so that they may fulfill their vocation in Christian joy and establish a family, a church of the home, where they can communicate respect for life and dignity of every human being from the first moment of conception until death. Marriage can be a time when they can experience the relentless dedication and self-emptying necessary to be husband and father, wife and mother, so that they can truly reflect Christ’s love for His Church and the Church’s love for Christ.

The book of Isaiah (42:3) reminds us neither to “break the crushed reed nor quench the wavering flame.” We can easily make assumptions about what young adults “ought to know” about being Catholic and become frustrated when we see their level of ignorance or lack of practice of faith. But we can choose to see the situation as a special opportunity for evangelization. When couples are treated with respect, it usually turns out that they are pleased that a priest, deacon, pastoral administrator or sponsor couple is willing to spend time with them and to give them an opportunity to ask questions about the Catholic faith. This style of ministry can gently lead them in a direction where they might, perhaps for the first time, see that practicing the faith - now as adults - might help them be even more successful in their desire to live Christian marriage.

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

1. Old Testament Marriage Practices
 - a. Creation story in Genesis points to monogamy in marriage.
 - b. As God's chosen people evolved, they moved from polygamy to monogamy.
 - c. Parents arranged marriages of their children, often at young age and sometimes for love. The partners were often from within family groups.
 - d. Marriage was a civil contract not sanctioned by religious rite and celebrated within the home.
 - e. Sexual inequality -- wife was the property of the husband.
 - f. Marriage was dissoluble, but only men could ask for divorce.
2. New Testament Marriage Teaching (Summary) –
 - a. Jesus affirmed the dignity of marriage as monogamous, exclusive, and permanent.
 - b. Paul developed the theology of marriage, likening it to the union of Christ and his Church. Men and women were to be mutually respectful and loving.
 - c. Despite New Testament teaching, marriage was seen as a civil contract experienced in the Lord and religious rites were not used.
3. Marriage In Early Church 100 A.D. To 1000 A.D. –
 - a. Roman civil ceremonies continued; gradually Christian blessings came to be attached.
 - b. Marriage was based on the consent of bride's father or couple's mutual consent.
 - c. In the 8th century, the Church began legislating certain aspects of marriage, protecting the freedom of marriage partners, but these laws did not supersede civil laws.
 - d. Civil divorce laws applied to Christians and non-Christians. Church did not always forbid divorce and remarriage for Christians.
4. Church Marriage Practice 1000 To 1200 A.D. –
 - a. The Church began to legislate directly and to institute rituals to insure that there would be a public commitment on the part of the couple. The Pauline principle of

bride and groom as a sign of the relationship between Christ and his Church was developed.

- b. Theologians raised questions of legality and indissolubility of marriage in the 12th century. Divorce and remarriage were prohibited. For validity, marriage required mutual consent.

5. Church Marriage Practice From 1200 To 1500 A.D. –

- a. By the 13th century Pope Alexander III proclaimed the authority of the Church to grant dispensations and judge questions of validity. Mutual consent in marriage became the criterion for validity. Consummation following consent made marriage indissoluble.
- b. Marriage was discussed in legalistic terms. Church lawyers moved away from biblical understanding of marriage. Consent is redefined as “contract.”
- c. Marriage as a sacrament is re-examined. In the first millennium, marriage had been termed as a ‘sacrament’ but only in sense of sign or mystery. By the late 12th century, marriage became a ‘sacrament’ in the sense we now consider traditional. Lombard’s treatise on marriage as sacrament became the standard school text. Some doubted sexuality could be a means of grace and therefore doubted marriage could be a sacrament.
- d. Alexander of Hales said all marriages are signs of God’s love. Baptism makes Christian marriage a means of union with God. Hales’ teaching was adopted throughout the Church.

6. Church Marriage Practice From 1500 To 1600 A.D. –

- a. Protestant reformers challenged the Catholic approach to marriage. They claimed there is no New Testament evidence that marriage is a sacrament.
- b. Council of Trent debated marriage questions. It declared that marriage is a sacrament. It discussed questions relating to the respective authority of Church and State regarding marriage. It was decided that the Church would legislate only for Catholics. A Church law was enacted stating that Catholics could marry validly only in presence of a priest and two witnesses.

7. Church Marriage Practice From 1600 To 1900 A.D. –

- a. Questions regarding Church/State authority over marriage persisted, especially as the governments of different countries insisted sometimes on total control of marriage laws to the exclusion of any religious control. As a result, two ceremonies sometimes were required, civil and religious. The Church left the marriage of non-Catholics and unbaptized persons totally under civil control.
 - b. Theologians saw contract and sacrament as one reality and tolerated the double marriage rite where it was required.
8. Church Marriage Practice From 1900 To Present –
- a. Procreation as primary purpose of marriage was re-evaluated. Mutual love is given priority by some. Pius XI reaffirmed the priority of procreation.
 - b. Vatican II emphasized the richness of the marriage relationship and sought a balance between procreation and love.
 - c. The new marriage rite (1969) is flexible in ritual details, emphasizing the couple as ministers of the sacrament.
 - d. New regulations for mixed marriages allow a couple to be married before the minister of either faith and in either Church. The non-Catholic need not promise to raise the children as Catholics.
 - e. Marriage counseling and enrichment now play a key role. There is more extensive pre-marriage preparation. Marriage and family support groups are encouraged and growing.

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B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION

1. Marriage is in God's plan of creation.

- In a discussion of Genesis 2:24, the first part of the Catechism speaks about God's plan for creation and the fundamental dignity of men and women. It offers a sign of hope that stems from the unity of the sexes.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 372: "Man and woman were made 'for each other' - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be 'helpmate' to the other, for they are equal as persons ('bone of my bones. . .') and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God

Marriage

unites them in such a way that, by forming 'one flesh', [[Gen 2:24](#) .] they can transmit human life: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.' [[Gen 1:28](#) .] By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents co-operate in a unique way in the Creator's work. [Cf. *Gaudium et spes*(GS) 50 # 1.]”

Implications:

What does it mean to be a “communion of persons”? How does that translate into practice? To be in communion is to be about the work of mission. Mission entails caring for the other, moving beyond the personal boundaries of oneself to see to the needs of the other. A culture of care, created before a marriage, cemented at the bans, and nurtured through the whole of life, is precisely what a “communion of persons” means. It means hard work, dedication, and loyalty. It means building a future. It gives shape to a couple’s response, through the witness of their lives together, to the consequences of the fall. Sin and death are never victorious when a couple acts as a communion of persons. Faithful spouses return to paradise.

2. Marriage is a vocation.

- Marriage is a calling from God to love and serve each other. Striving for unity is a daily effort to love one’s spouse as Jesus loves us, to share the strength that this striving gives to each.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1603: “*The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws.... God himself is the author of marriage.*’ [[GS](#) 48 # 1.] *The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures, and spiritual attitudes. These differences should not cause us to forget its common and permanent characteristics. Although the dignity of this institution is not transparent everywhere with the same clarity,* [Cf. [GS](#) 47 # 2.] *some sense of the greatness of the matrimonial union exists in all cultures. ‘The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life.’* [[GS](#) 47 # 1.]”

Implications:

The Catechism reiterates, “the vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator” (CCC, no. 1603). Two things about this are immediately striking. First, divine authorship of marriage is paramount. Couples need assurance that God is working in the midst of their married life and that they themselves are cooperating in the grace

bestowed upon them. Second, the vocation to married life is of equal value to men and women. Equality is part of the divine plan for human salvation and in fact reflects back upon God's perfect love for humanity. Neither sex has sole possession of the ability to reflect these perfections. Their fundamental equality stems from the recognition that each is "hard-wired" in such a way as to offer unique gifts to the other person, so difference is in the mix. The importance of equality cannot be downplayed. Only out of this kind of radical parity can marriage be understood.

3. Marriage is an integral part of the sacramental life of the Church.

- A sacrament is a visible sign of God's grace, an outward sign of an inner reality, a human symbol of a divine mystery. A man and a woman married in Christ are the sign and symbol of this reality and divine mystery. They are the sign and the source of God's grace.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1601: *"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."* [Codex Iuris Canonici(CIC), can. 1055 # 1; cf. GS 48 # 1.]

CCC 1641: *"By reason of their state in life and of their order, [Christian spouses] have their own special gifts in the People of God."* [Lumen gentium(LG) 11 # 2.] *This grace proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couple's love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they 'help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children.'* [LG 11 # 2; cf. LG 41.]

CCC 1642: *"Christ is the source of this grace. 'Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony.'* [GS 48 # 2.] *Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to 'be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,'* [Eph 5:21 ; cf. Gal 6:2 .] *and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb:*

How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father? . . . How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the

same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit.[Tertullian, Ad uxorem. 2, 8, 6-7: PL 1, 1412-1413; cf. FC 13.]”

Implications:

The classical Catholic definition of sacrament, “outward sign of inward grace,” which took a thousand years to become established,¹ can now be more fully explicated. A sacrament is a prophetic symbol in which the Church, the body of Christ in the world, reveals and celebrates in representation the presence and action of God, which is grace itself.

To say that marriage is a sacrament is to say that it is a prophetic symbol, a reality with a double meaning. On one level, it reveals and celebrates the covenant union between a man and a woman. On another level, that union becomes a symbol revealing and celebrating the covenant union between Christ and Christ’s Church.

Every couple that enters marriage says, in one way or another, “I love you.” Couples entering a Christian, covenantal, sacramental marriages say that too, and more. They say, “I love you as Christ loves us, steadfastly and faithfully.” A sacramental marriage is more than a legal bond; it is also a religious covenant. It is more than a legal right; it is also grace. The presence of grace in its most ancient Christian sense, namely the presence of the gracious God, is not something extrinsic to sacramental marriage. It is something intrinsic to such a marriage, something without which it would not be sacramental marriage at all. In a truly sacramental marriage—the marriage between two baptized Christians—the love of God and Christ provides the eschatological model of the love to which the spouses are to aspire. This is part of what the Catholic Church means when it teaches that marriage is graced and is, therefore, sacrament.

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¹ Cf. Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Omaha, Neb.: Creighton University, 1995), 29-34.

II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacrament. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes the engaged couple, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, ages, and circumstances of the engaged couple.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes lifelong learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

1. Active participation in the Sunday Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic life and is to be encouraged.
2. To receive the sacrament of Marriage fruitfully, the spouses are strongly advised to receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. [CIC, can. 1065 # 2]
3. Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of confirmation should receive it before being admitted to marriage, if it can be done without grave inconvenience. [CIC, can. 1065 # 1]
4. Communion under both species is to be offered at all Eucharistic celebrations. The decision to receive from the cup should be the option of the communicant, not of the presider.
5. Since it could weaken the sacramental sign of communion if only one partner receives, when Catholics marry non-Catholics, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage outside of Mass should be encouraged in order to strengthen this sacrament of unity.
6. Effective catechesis requires sensitivity to the local multi-cultural and/or diverse family situations.

III. Policies

The following policy statements are drawn from the Marriage Guidelines for the Dioceses of Texas, published by the Texas Catholic Conference. For commentary on these policy statements, refer to this TCC publication.

1. Initial Interview – To assure adequate time for marriage preparation, couples planning to marry need to contact the parish 9 to 12 months prior to the provisional date for the wedding. Each engaged couple is to have an initial interview with the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative as soon as feasible at or after the first contact. The interview is for the purpose of:
 - a. Determining the eligibility of the engaged couple according to civil law.
 - b. Determining eligibility according to Catholic Church law.
 - c. Explaining the marriage preparation process.
 - d. Setting a provisional date for the wedding.

The initial interview is to take place at least four months prior to the provisional date of the wedding.

The marriage preparation offered by the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative should include the administration of a diagnostic inventory instrument to facilitate greater mutual understanding. The instrument is to be administered as soon as conveniently possible after the initial interview.

Where canonical permission has been obtained for the marriage to take place in another parish, that pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative will conduct the initial interview. Where a visiting minister from outside the diocese is coming to officiate, the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative is responsible for the initial interview. After the initial interview, communication between ministers is needed for a clear understanding on where the prenuptial forms will be completed and who will do further preparation with the engaged couple.

2. Primary Marriage Preparation
 - a. The Primary Marriage Preparation (PMP) is to be experienced by both parties, preferably together. It in no way replaces the instructions by the pastor, pastoral administrator or a clergy representative both before and after the PMP.
 - b. Primary Marriage Preparation includes a Pre-Cana, Cana II, Engaged Encounter, a parish Sponsor Couple program or other parish-based program, e.g., Unitas. A combination of two or more of these PMP's is considered beneficial.

- c. The PMP is to be completed 60 to 90 days before the wedding.
 - d. Refusal to participate in the PMP is a pastoral concern. It warrants a re-evaluation of readiness for marriage.
 - e. Exceptions to participation in the PMP may include validation of a long-standing civil union and marriages of the elderly or widowed.
3. Pastoral Follow-Up Interview—After the PMP, the 60 to 90 day period of time permits the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative and the couple to discuss, in a series of interviews, what they have discovered about themselves and their relationship during the PMP. After these follow-up interviews, if the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative is unable to reach a conclusive assessment regarding the couple’s readiness for marriage, he/she should seek immediate consultation with qualified resource personnel, including medical or psychological experts, if such seems appropriate.
 4. Marriages of Young People—If, at the time of the wedding, either of the parties will be under 19 years of age, then:
 - a. At least six months should elapse after the completion of the Primary Marriage Preparation.
 - b. Parental consultation and completion of the “Canonical Free State” form must take place.
 5. Pregnancy—If the couple had not planned to marry, pregnancy, of itself, is not considered sufficient reason to enter marriage or shorten the marriage preparation process.
 6. Non-Practicing Catholics—Request for marriage in the Catholic faith is a unique opportunity for the evangelization and reconciliation of Catholics who do not practice, or strongly identify with their faith. The non-practicing Catholic person should be given an opportunity to return to the active practice of the faith. Such a person should receive special catechesis in the Catholic faith as well as the Primary Marriage Preparation.
 7. Mixed Marriages—Marriage between a Catholic and a person who is not Catholic presents religious issues of major importance. The Church calls on parties to examine these issues by requiring that:
 - a. The Catholic party reaffirms his/her faith in Jesus Christ and, with God’s help, intends to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church.

- b. The Catholic party promises to do all in his/her power to share the faith with the children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.
 - c. The Catholic party must respect the faith position of his/her spouse.
 - d. The non-Catholic party must be informed of the reaffirmation and promises of the Catholic party.
 - e. The priest, deacon or pastoral administrator must be morally certain that the reaffirmation and promises have been sincerely made.
8. Validation or *Sanatio* – Persons who married outside the Catholic Church and wish to validate their union will participate in the normal assessment and preparation process, including, for example, Today...Tomorrow...Forever, Marriage Encounter, Jesús Te Invita Al Sacramento Del Matrimonio, Jornada Familiar, REFOCCUS with a sponsor couple/group or other parish based enrichment programs.

Couples who marry outside the Church must wait at least six months before having the marriage validated.

For validations following annulments or dissolutions, appropriate pastoral care should be given.

Sanatio (*Sanatio In Radice*, the “healing of the marriage in its root”) cases involve the validation of a marriage attempted without sacramental form when the non-Catholic party refuses to go through another ceremony before a priest or deacon and two witnesses, or the couple truly believe they made a commitment at the time of the civil marriage. It is also referred to as a retroactive validation. Contact the Tribunal for more information and the procedure.

9. Previous Marriage—Previous marriage (Catholic or non-Catholic) is an impediment to marriage in the Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator the fact of the previous marriage(s) in an effort to seek resolution. In such cases, the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator is to be careful to avoid the following:
- a. Setting even a tentative date for marriage in the Catholic Church before the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator has received confirmation that the final decree of invalidity has been issued.
 - b. Misleading the parties into expecting an affirmative tribunal decision.
 - c. Offering the parties assurances that the case will be concluded within a specific period of time.

- d. Arranging for a subsequent marriage to take place without allowing sufficient time for the healing process following the separation and divorce.
10. Places where marriage may be celebrated – Wedding ceremonies in the diocese are to be celebrated in a sacred place, normally a Catholic church. Weddings may also take place in college chapels. A Catholic ceremony may also take place for good reasons in a non-Catholic church, but special permission must be sought. Permission will not be given for weddings in homes, gardens or similar places.
11. Planning for the ceremony should give consideration to ethnic customs that are in harmony with the spirit of the liturgy. A meeting with the parish Liturgy Director and Music Director should take place soon after the Initial Interview so the couple knows the options available in liturgy and music.
12. Appeal—Since the right to marry derives from natural law, a couple has the right to appeal a decision which delays or prevents their marriage. This appeal is sent to the Bishop's office.

IV. Norms for Readiness

1. The couple is of age and displays maturity appropriate to assuming the rights and responsibilities of marriage.
2. Through prayer and discernment they each believe they are called to the vocation of marriage and that this is the right person with whom to enter into an exclusive relationship for life.
3. There are no pressures to marry or objections to the marriage.
4. They share a realistic view of marriage and expectations.
5. The priest, deacon, pastoral administrator or their representative has arrived at a prudent assessment that the couple is free to marry according to the terms of both civil and canon law.
6. If the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator, however, has valid reasons to believe that the couple is not capable of living the necessary commitments of Christian marriage (e.g., a history of violent behavior or chronic addiction), he must take the responsibility of halting the process at this point and do his best to recommend an appropriate course of therapy for the couple.
7. A positive assessment on the part of the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator does not exclude the possibility of doubts about the wisdom of the couple's desire to marry in the Church. Since no one can know for certain how the couple will make use of the graces that God is surely willing to give them, hesitancy is resolved, usually correctly, in favor of giving the couple - and God's grace - the benefit of the doubt.
8. Any concerns about the couple's readiness to marry are to be noted on the pre-nuptial forms.
9. Readiness of the couple to marry is ultimately determined by themselves, rather than by the clergy or delegated parish ministers. It is they, the bride and groom, who minister the sacrament to each other because of their natural right to marry. Prudent counsel may assist them to assess their readiness for marriage and prepare to receive the graces of the sacrament.

V. The Rite Of Marriage

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

1. Introduction
 - a. Communal Participation
The celebration of this sacrament is not one for the wedding party alone: all present are to be active witnesses and participants. Hence, the preparation of a simple worship aid is urged to enable all to take part as fully as possible.
 - b. Time of Celebration
The sacrament may be celebrated at any time of the year; however, certain holy days and seasons (e.g. Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Thursday through Easter, Corpus Christi...) displace the wedding Mass texts. Even on those days or during those seasons, one reading is to be taken from those designated for weddings, and the nuptial blessing given. Couples may be encouraged to celebrate this sacrament at the Sunday Eucharist before the entire community.

“When a marriage is celebrated during Advent or Lent or other days of penance, the parish priest should advise the couple to take into consideration the special nature of these times.” (Rite of Marriage(RM), Introduction, par. 11) This admonition would affect the decoration of the worship space in particular.
 - c. Ministers Needed

The primary ministers are the couple. The priest or deacon is the presider and official witness for the Church. Other ministers normally needed in the celebration of a sacrament: lectors, special ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers, ministers of hospitality, should be prepared for their proper roles in this sacrament. The use of members of the wedding party and members of the two families in these roles where possible is to be encouraged. After them, members of the parish community should be considered. Above all, the use of the priest or deacon for all readings is to be avoided.

2. Physical Preparation

The ceremony will always take place in a church or college chapel. When Marriage is celebrated within Mass, everything normally needed for the celebration of Mass should be prepared. Whatever may be called for in the use of a devotional, e.g., holy water, lasso, arras, unity candle, etc. should also be prepared.

3. Outline Of Rite

“Within the Rite of the Sacrament of Marriage, the arrangement of its parts may be varied if it seems more suitable; even the consent may be omitted as long as the priest asks and receives the consent of the contracting parties.” (RM Intro., par 14) Since it could weaken the sacramental sign to continue with the celebration of Eucharist where at communion only one may receive, in cases of Catholics marrying non-Catholics, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage outside of Mass should be encouraged in order to strengthen this sacrament of unity.

a. Celebration of Marriage Within Mass

1) Entrance Rites

- Procession – instrumental, followed by Gathering Hymn sung by all or procession with communal hymn or Procession – instrumental
- Greeting and Welcome, Opening Prayer (Penitential Rite and Glory to God omitted)

2) Liturgy of the Word (always and only Scripture)

- Readings with psalm response, Gospel acclamation, Gospel and homily
- “There may be three readings...After the Gospel the priest gives a homily drawn from the sacred text.” (RM, par. 21,22)

3) Liturgy of Marriage

- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing and exchange of rings
- Devotional (optional—see “*Cultural Adaptations*’ below)
- General Intercessions

4) Liturgy of Eucharist: As usual with following particulars:

Marriage

- Members of the wedding party may bring bread and wine to the bride and groom who may then hand them to the priest.
- The “Deliver us” after the Lord’s Prayer is omitted. In its place the Nuptial Blessing is given.
- Sign of Peace.- Care should be taken to keep this exchange brief, so as not to create the impression that this is a general “reception.”
- After Communion a song of thanksgiving by the community may be sung.
- Prayer after Communion may be followed by a devotional action.

5) Dismissal Rites

- Blessing
- Dismissal (which may include presentation of the couple to the community)
- Recessional as usual.

b. Celebration of Marriage Outside Mass

1) Entrance Rites

- Procession – instrumental, followed by Gathering Hymn sung by all or Procession with communal hymn or Procession – instrumental
- Greeting and Welcome, Opening Prayer (Penitential Rite and Glory to God omitted)

2) Liturgy of the Word (always and only Scripture)

- Readings with psalm response, Gospel acclamation, Gospel and homily
- “There may be three readings...After the Gospel the priest gives a homily drawn from the sacred text.” (*RM par. 21,22*)

3) Liturgy of Marriage:

- Exchange of vows
- Blessing and exchange of rings
- Devotional (optional—see “Cultural Adaptations” below)
- Sign of Peace (pastoral practice, not required by Rite)
- General Intercessions
- Nuptial Blessing
- Lord’s Prayer
- Solemn Blessing
- Devotional (optional)
- Presentation of the Couple (optional)
- Recessional

C. COMMENTARY ON IMPORTANT ELEMENTS

Various approved marriage preparation texts offer options for different parts of the Rite that should be explained to the couple.

Parish traditions in line with liturgical guidelines may vary throughout the Diocese and should be respected.

Communion under both species is to be offered at all Eucharistic celebrations. The decision to receive from the cup should be the option of the communicant, not of the presider.

1. Symbols—The couple is itself the principal symbol, sealed by the spoken vows; thus care should be taken that the vows are audible to the community. The ring(s) and other images, e.g. *lazo*, *arras*, unity candle, etc., serve to highlight one or another facet of the basic symbol.
2. Gesture—More than a hand movement, gesture extends to the total body language of the ritual. Attention should be paid, for example, to the planning of the wedding procession: one makes a statement without words in presenting the wedding party. Questions that might clarify the import of gestures might include “Does the wedding party enter as a fashion display or as logical procession?”; “Are both sets of parents actively engaged in the procession, or are they fringe figures, except for the father of the bride?”; “Is the ordained minister part of the procession?” This question has arisen because of the strong (and correct) understanding that the couples are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. However, it is the priest or deacon who presides and therefore is properly part of the procession, coming at the end.
3. Environment—The assembly gathered in the place of worship is the proper environment of this Sacrament. However, decoration of the worship space is both traditional and appropriate. What is to be sought is not the creation of a totally different setting, e.g. a garden scene, but instead the use of decorations which point to and enhance the action instead of calling attention to themselves. A word of caution: the multiple use of a symbol weakens its impact. Parishes may insist that important liturgical seasonal environments are not disturbed, e.g. Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, etc.
4. Cultural Adaptations—After the exchange of rings, what was called above a devotional may be inserted. The crowning or veiling already mentioned, the *lazo*, the gift of gold coins, the unity candle are some possibilities. The choice should be meaningful to the couple and harmonize with the wedding liturgy’s true and authentic spirit, and not simply be a “filler” for the ceremony. The ritual should thus reflect both language and culture of the couple.

Devotional actions should not outweigh the sacramental action.

D. SELECTION OF MUSIC

As in all the Rites, music is a servant-art whose purpose is to glorify God and transform His people. The topic of music for weddings is a particularly sensitive one. Therefore, it is recommended that parishes adhere to the WEDDING MUSIC GUIDELINES, Diocese

of Fort Worth, which are provided by the Office of Worship and which are included here for parish use.

VI. Wedding Music Guidelines: Diocese Of Fort Worth

A. INTRODUCTION

In our Catholic way of life, new meaning is given to the personal and public dimensions of marriage. The personal relationship between man and woman becomes sacrament, for each is called to be the presence of Christ to the other. The public commitment is sacrament in that this couple is called to be the sign to the Christian community of Christ's unconditional love for His people. The couple is the sacrament.

A Christian wedding then is more than a solemn exchange of vows by an engaged couple. It is an act of worship in which the bride and groom assemble the Church and come together to celebrate a sacrament, to offer thanks and praise together with their family and friends, and to ask God's blessing on their life together as husband and wife.

Whether a wedding consists of Liturgy of the Word/Liturgy of Marriage, or Liturgy of the Word/Liturgy of Marriage/Liturgy of the Eucharist, it is in the first place an assembly of the Church for worship. Those assembled are not present as spectators, but as witnesses and worshipers who manifest the Lord's presence when they gather in his name. They should become one assembly through prayer and song so that together they may bring about a sacramental encounter with the Lord.

B. THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN THE CATHOLIC WEDDING

Music, when used in the liturgical rites of the Church, is a servant-art. It serves the Word of God and the sacramental action. Its purpose is to glorify God and to transform God's people. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share, to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith as that faith is experienced in life. It should heighten the texts so that their meaning is uncovered more fully and more effectively. Music can impart a quality of joy and enthusiasm and a sense of unity to the congregation. Above all, it sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration.

1. The Musical Judgment:

Is the music technically, aesthetically and expressively good? This is a judgment not only of the composition, but about its performance considering the available musicians and resources. Unfortunately we often confuse judgment on the value of music with judgment on the style of music, falsely equating all musical value with one particular musical style. Good music of whatever style (chant, polyphony, choral hymns, responsorial singing, contemporary compositions, folk idiom) has been recognized and fully admitted by the Church as an aid to liturgical worship.

2. The Liturgical Judgment:

What kind of music and/or musical text is called for at a given place in the liturgy? Where is instrumental music or even silence more appropriate than vocal music? What parts of the liturgy by their nature belong to the assembly? It is important to be familiar with the documents on the Sacred Liturgy, especially with *Music in Catholic Worship (MCW)*, published by the Bishops' Committee on the *Liturgy (National Conference of Catholic Bishops)*.

3. The Pastoral Judgment:

Does the music in this celebration enable these people as congregation to express their faith more authentically in this place, in this age, in this culture? This is a very important part of judging the music. One must consider the cultural background of the couple, the stage in their journey of faith. Inasmuch as it is possible, it is necessary to serve the couple and their special event.

C. PREPARATION OF THE WEDDING—LITURGY AND MUSIC

Within the first three months of the couple's preparation for marriage, and after the initial meeting with the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator the couple shall be given a session on the preparation of the Liturgy and Music for the Wedding. The liturgist, the staff musician, the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator, may give this session. Some processes for this type of preparation can be found in *Pastoral Music*, published by National Association of Pastoral Musicians, Oct-Nov. 1978, Vol. 3, #1, pp. 6-8. Plans for the music and the Liturgy could include a printed program prepared by the staff or the couple.

D. MUSIC IN THE WEDDING LITURGY

A musician is an integral minister in the celebration of the sacrament and if available, should not be replaced by recorded music.

The minister, the liturgist, or the parish musician will assist the couple in the selection of appropriate music for their wedding. The emphasis should be on liturgical music, that is, music whose texts are drawn from biblical sources and whose context is the Sacrament of Marriage or the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Care must be taken that a music selection does not impede the natural flow of the liturgy. Selection of music focusing on the Blessed Virgin Mary or the saints should be made only in the context of the couple's personal faith. It may be used before the liturgical celebration or at the appropriate devotional moment.

A preoccupation with music for soloists should not exclude the congregation from singing those parts that are rightfully theirs. A parish cantor should function as song leader to lead the congregation so that the assembled people will feel comfortable and secure in this participation.

Instrumental music (organ, guitar, brass, strings or woodwinds) adds much to the joy of the occasion, but should be integrated into the overall plan of music, and performed competently and artistically.

E. COMMENTS ABOUT MUSIC AND ITS PLACEMENT

1. Preludes

The musician should furnish prelude music. More flexibility is allowed in choosing the music for this time. Instrumental music is encouraged. Special requests of the couple, which reflect the principles listed in “Comments on the Use of Popular Music” but are not appropriate during the Liturgy, may be used here. (See below.)

2. Preparation of the Congregation

Good liturgy cannot happen without the preparation of those present. It is appropriate to have a short rehearsal so that the assembly can participate. This is a moment of hospitality, especially for mixed-faith communities.

In the Liturgy of the Word the responsorial psalm refrain belongs to the congregation and should be sung. (Music in Catholic Worship(MCW), #45, #63). In the Liturgy of the Eucharist the Eucharistic acclamations (Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen) ought to be sung by the congregation, and familiar or easily learned musical settings should be selected. (MCW, #54)

The congregation must be prepared for its part. The ushers should have all seated in time to begin; guests should be seated close to the front. The music minister should speak briefly to the assembly of their participation and conduct a short preparatory session for the guests. Copies of words and music should be made available to all those present.

When preparing printed worship aids, the liturgist or musician must follow proper legal procedures re copyright permissions and form. (Cf. Copyright Update - Reprint Permission Policies of Publishers of Liturgical Music and Sacred Scriptures, Appendix I.)

3. Processional

To reflect the unity of the liturgical procession, one piece of music should be used for the entire procession. This music should set the tone of the celebration (joyful, festive, solemn, majestic, simple, etc.). It is music that unites the members of the assembly to one another and focuses their attention on the principal celebrants, the bride and groom. These types of professionals can be used:

a. Instrumental music

b. Instrumental music followed by a gathering song. All may sing a brief hymn/song after the wedding party is in its place.

- c. Congregational hymn/song to accompany the procession

F. LITURGY OF THE WORD

This is an integral part of the ritual, regardless of whether the liturgy with Eucharist or the liturgy without Eucharist is selected.

All readings must be selected from Scripture. There may be as many as three readings. A Responsorial Psalm properly follows an Old Testament reading. If two readings are selected and the first is from the New Testament, a Responsorial Psalm may follow. There should always be a Gospel selection. A sung Gospel Acclamation should precede the Gospel.

1. Responsorial Psalm

The psalm must be in Responsorial form, i.e., the refrain sung or spoken by all. The norm is to have the psalm sung. If the psalm is spoken, music background can enhance this prayer form.

2. Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel Acclamation must be sung or it is omitted. When it is sung, its versicle may be spoken or sung. If the Gospel Acclamation is omitted, the versicle is omitted as well.

G. LITURGY OF MARRIAGE

The Liturgy of Marriage will be considered in each of the two following forms: with Eucharist and without Eucharist.

H. LITURGY WITH EUCHARIST (RM, #23 - #37)

Exchange of Vows—One of the ritual formulas must be selected.

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Devotional—A meaningful prayer or gesture of cultural tradition (holy water, unity candle, lazo, arras, breaking of a glass...) may be used. (RM, #15, #16) If a song is used, it should be brief to avoid disrupting the flow of the liturgy. The couple ought to choose only what has meaning for them personally; they are not obliged to have anything at this point.

General Intercessions—The couple may compose petitions following the format of the ritual.

I. LITURGY OF EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Gifts—It is recommended that instrumental music accompany the presentation and preparation of the gifts. This part of the liturgy is brief and transitional, and extensive solo singing should be curtailed as an inappropriate delay of the liturgy.

Eucharistic Acclamations—The three Eucharistic Acclamations (Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen) should be sung in familiar musical settings by the congregation. The cantor/soloist should lead the people in the sung acclamations. The singing of all three is strongly encouraged.

The Lord's Prayer—The "Our Father" must be recited or sung by ALL. A prayer common to all Christians, it is a powerful sign of unity when all join in reciting or singing it. When the Nuptial Blessing is given during the Eucharistic liturgy, it replaces the prayer "Deliver us..." and the doxology of the Lord's Prayer. If the Lord's Prayer is sung, "the traditional text is retained.... All settings must provide for the participation of the priest and all present." (*MCW*, #67)

Reciting the Lord's Prayer would encourage all to participate. As most wedding congregations are of mixed faiths, it would be helpful to have the full text printed in the program.

Sign of Peace – This should be a brief exchange among the wedding party members and among the bride and groom and their parents.

Lamb of God—This is to accompany the action of the Breaking of the Bread and may be recited or sung in a familiar setting by the congregation. It should not extend beyond the preparation for Communion of the Bread and chalices.

Communion – The Communion song should have a refrain to be sung by all during the procession. The text should speak to the unity of the assembly using the restrictions that apply to Sunday Mass. Instrumental music may be used here.

Song of Common Praise—After communion, the entire assembly may sing a song of praise (or spend a few moments in silent meditation).

Devotion – A devotion such as the unity candle or a visit to the statue of the Blessed Mother may be inserted here and may be accompanied by music. If a song is used, it should not delay the flow of the liturgy.

Recessional—The priest or deacon's blessing and dismissal should be followed immediately by a stirring joyous recessional. (Instrumental music would be most appropriate.)

J. LITURGY WITHOUT EUCHARIST (*RM*, #43-#51)

Exchange of Vows - One of the ritual formulas must be selected.

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Devotional—A meaningful prayer or gesture of cultural tradition (holy water, unity candle, lazo, arras, breaking of a glass...) may be used. (*RM*, #15, #16) If a song is used, it should be brief to avoid disrupting the flow of the liturgy. The couple ought to choose only what has meaning for them personally; they are not obliged to have anything at this point.

Sign of Peace—A pastoral practice has been to insert the Sign of Peace here. This should be a brief exchange among the wedding party members and among the bride and groom and their parents.

General Intercessions—The couple may compose petitions following the format of the ritual.

Nuptial Blessing

The Lord's Prayer—The "Our Father" must be recited or sung by ALL. A prayer common to all Christians, it is a powerful sign of unity when all join in reciting or singing it. If sung, "the traditional text is retained...All settings must provide for the participation of the priest and all present." (*MCW*, #67)

For a mixed faith congregation it would be helpful to have the full text printed in the program.

[Sign of Peace—If this rite was not included above, it may be done here. If it was previously included, it is not repeated.]

Solemn Blessing

Recessional—The priest or deacon's blessing and dismissal should be followed immediately by a stirring joyous recessional. (Instrumental music would be most appropriate.)

K. COMMENTS ON THE USE OF POPULAR MUSIC

The question should be raised to the couple: "How does this piece of music relate to the Scriptures you have chosen?"

The following principles are to be kept in mind:

- a. All music is to reflect Catholic theology. As an example, "From a Distance" does not reflect the Catholic belief in the indwelling presence of God. "In This Very Room" indicates that a couple needs no one except one another, a far cry from the Catholic sense of community.
- b. Music that speaks directly or indirectly of the divine-religious dimension of love is suitable for the wedding.

- c. A song that NEGATES explicitly or implicitly the divine-religious dimension is unsuitable for the wedding. (e.g. All You Need is Love, Love Can Build a Bridge.)

In considering the liturgical propriety of “popular” secular music, a distinction must be made between music of the disc (music we listen to, which attracts by melody and/or text), which may be appropriate, and music of the theater (music strongly associated with a particular play and context) that is not appropriate in a sacred liturgical setting.

An exception to this latter category is the “Wedding March” from Wagner’s “Lohengrin.” In general, only the professional musician knows the original context of this music. The popular context is simply wedding. Therefore, even though other processions are encouraged or preferred, this selection cannot be categorically forbidden. We urge pastoral sensitivity.

The one planning with the couple can suggest that a song that is special to the couple (but which is unsuitable for liturgy) may be more appropriate at the wedding rehearsal supper or at their first dance at the reception. It might help them to understand by asking them to imagine asking the wedding reception band to play “Now Thank We All Our God.”

Here much pastoral sensitivity must be employed so that the couple is brought to an awareness of the reasons for the Church’s legitimate restriction of the use of popular music. (The “why” is more important for the couple to understand than the “no.”)

The Office of Worship can give additional help in selection of titles.

VII. Catechesis

A. REMOTE CATECHESIS

“Catechesis for Marriage is not limited to the period immediately before marriage. People begin to learn the meaning of married love and to acquire reverence for married life very early in childhood; parents are the primary catechists of their children with respect to such matters.” (*The National Catechetical Directory* (NCD) #131)

1. The Home

- a. The home is the key place in which remote catechesis for this sacrament takes place. The child’s parents are both catechists and models. From her/his earliest years, a child learns what a Christian marriage is through daily contact with the adults in the home environment.
- b. “Spouses, conscientiously living out their married life in mutual love and respect and in the upbringing of their children, reflect the mutual love of Christ and His Church. They not only enrich each others lives, but they inspire and provide examples for their children.
Inspired by the example and family prayer of their parents, children, and in fact everyone living under the family roof, will more easily set out upon the path of a truly human training, of salvation, and of holiness.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, #48)

2. Religious Education/Youth Ministry Programs

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Marriage should be an integral part of the parish religious education program. The scope and depth of this catechesis is to be adapted to the age of the students. Marriage as one of the sacraments of the Church should be presented at elementary level. For junior high and high school students the sacramentality, the permanence, the quality of the marriage relationship, the joys and duties of this lifestyle should be carefully presented.

3. Content

- a. Content of remote catechesis includes, but is not limited to, the following concepts:
 1. Christian marriage is between a baptized man and a baptized woman.
 2. Marriage partners are mutually, freely chosen.
 3. Marriage union reflects the union of Christ with the Church.
 4. Christian marriage is a permanent, exclusive commitment to each other regardless of the pressures of society or peers.

5. Marriage partners are open to each other in love, to each other's emotional, spiritual and social growth, to the procreation and the Christian parenting of children.
6. Marriage is a vocation.
7. Characteristics of genuine love as distinguished from infatuation or as a process for mutual self-satisfaction.
8. Reasons for and readiness for marriage.
9. Human sexuality especially in the context of human growth and development and sexual intimacy.
10. Communication and inter-personal relationships.
11. Marriage as a Christian lifestyle

B. PROXIMATE CATECHESIS

In addition to the guidelines outlined above, a couple preparing for marriage should receive specific catechesis to assist them in their readiness for celebrating this sacrament. Catechesis is appropriate not only for those wishing to enter into marriage for the first time, but also for those who have been in a previous marriage and for those who have been married outside the Church and who wish to have their marriage sanated or validated.

The priest, deacon or pastoral administrator who interviews the couple, carries out much of this catechesis but other parish ministers, especially married couples, need to participate in this ministry. The proximate preparation for marriage, however, should ordinarily begin only when all impediments to the marriage have been removed.

1. General Concepts

Couples preparing for marriage should understand clearly all the concepts outlined in remote catechesis and the implications for a lifelong experience of marriage. Proximity to the actual celebration of the sacrament brings those concepts out of the theoretical realm, and into the very practical context of immediate applicability.

2. Other Catechetical Considerations

- a. Catechesis helps couples understand marriage as a holy relationship, blessed and supported by God for the duration of life itself. Through the Sacrament of Marriage, God's grace is constantly available to them. (*NCD #131*) The couple understands that God and the Christian community will be supportive of them during their married life.

- b. Catechesis emphasizes that one of the purposes of marriage is the mutual support and growth of love between husband and wife.
- c. Openness to procreation and the parenting of children is required in a Christian marriage.

“But marriage is not merely for the procreation of children: its nature as an indissoluble covenant between two people and the good of the children demand that the mutual love of the partners be properly shown, that it should grow and mature. Even in cases where despite the intense desire of the spouses there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life and preserves its value and indissolubility.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, #50)

- 3. “Catechesis also includes a clear presentation of the Church’s teaching concerning moral methods of regulating births, the evil of artificial birth control and of sterilization for that purpose, and the crime of abortion; it should stress the protection due to human life once conceived.” (*NCD* #131)
- 4. The value of the Catholic faith as a source of strength for the couple should be clearly emphasized. While it recognizes the sacramental nature of interchurch marriages, the Church encourages marriages within the faith.
- 5. Even when only one partner in a marriage is Catholic, catechesis includes the norms and laws of the Church pertaining to Christian marriage.
- 6. When a Catholic is about to enter into marriage with a non-Christian, the Catholic party requests a canonical dispensation. As the unity of Christian belief will not be available to them in their married life, catechesis should encourage the couple to explore honestly the difficulties that will affect them as a result of this reality.
- 7. Couples are encouraged to participate in two or three marriage preparation programs, e.g., Engaged Encounter; Pre-Cana; Sponsor Couple Program; Nos Amaremos Toda la Vida; etc.
- 8. Special catechesis is needed for those who have suffered the trauma of loss of a former spouse through death or annulment of a former marriage. In the latter case, a decree of invalidity may be obtained through the diocesan Marriage Tribunal. The declaration of invalidity states that a valid marriage never existed between the parties according to the Church’s understanding and definition of marriage.
- 9. “Catechesis on the Church’s teaching concerning the consequences of remarriage after divorce is not only necessary but will be supportive for the divorced.” (*NCD* #131) The entire parish community should share concern for those involved in a divorce.

C. ONGOING CATECHESIS

An awareness and appreciation of the Sacrament of Marriage among Catholics, an awareness of the challenges and blessings of married life, and a continuous up-dating of one's own knowledge of the Church's concern for married couples are some of the reasons parishes should provide ongoing catechesis for this sacrament.

Ongoing catechesis may include, but is not limited to the following:

1. All the areas described above in the remote and proximate catechesis.
2. Programs of marriage enrichment should be part of every parish adult catechetical agenda and include opportunities for:
 - a. those newly married
 - b. new parents or those about to be parents
 - c. those who want to revitalize their marriages
 - d. those who are celebrating a significant family milestone or crisis, and
 - e. those who are celebrating a significant anniversary, e.g. 25th or 50th.
3. Special training programs provided by competent staff should be utilized for effective training of sponsor couples. Married couples should be involved in giving catechesis concerning marriage. They should continue pastoral involvement with the newly married couple through the early stages of the marriage.
4. Catechesis and pastoral care should always be available to those who have experienced the agony of failure in their efforts to live out their marriage commitment.

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Holy Orders
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Holy Orders

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<p style="text-align:center">GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS</p>
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Note: Because both preparation of candidates for Holy Orders and celebration of the sacrament are uniquely the responsibility of the Diocesan bishop and his staff; and because these responsibilities are so closely regulated by both national and universal norms, the diocesan guidelines will give only a doctrinal overview.

For further information about preparation of candidates and celebration of the sacrament, contact the Diocesan Office of Vocations and the Diocesan Office for Permanent Diaconate.

I. Doctrinal Overview

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

1. Summary to 100 A. D.
 - a. Only one priest – Jesus Christ; his ministry, service.
 - b. All believers share Christ’s ministry
 - c. Ordained priest – a special sign of Christ’s priesthood and a call to serve all Believers in living out Jesus’ ministry.
 - d. First priestly leaders (Bishops) recognized by their outstanding service and guided community in learning Jesus’ teachings, doing good works and celebrating the Eucharist.
 - e. At first there were different types of Church government but before too long the monarchical form – as for a king – prevailed.
 - f. Bishop looked to talents of other Christian men and women – preaching, teaching, healing, and prophesying – to help him in his ministry.
 - g. Two groups became recognized assistants: Priests to act as advisors, deacons to work with the daily needs of the people.
2. Summary: Second to Sixth Centuries
 - a. All the individual tasks of ministry had an ordination rite to give “authority” for the job.
 - b. Authority within the whole Church was by “collegiality,” mutual consultation and renewal.

- c. Bishops delegated power to priests so they could minister to the growing number of churches.
 - d. Priest's role as "Vicar of Christ" carried idea of special spiritual power.
 - e. Clergy gained further power by acting as judges and counselors in government.
 - f. Power-authority tended to overshadow as priestly ministry.
3. Summary: Sixth to Sixteenth Centuries
- a. Monastic life influenced priesthood
 - 1) Separateness of clergy emphasized in tonsure and special clothing
 - 2) Celibacy for all priests
 - 3) A life of prayer and spirituality separate from everyday world.
 - b. Middle ages and Renaissance saw priesthood as one of several levels of power. Bishops, not priests, had power to confirm and ordain.
 - c. Clergy took over total responsibility for worship and devotion – no role for people.
 - d. Priests tended to form an elite class with political and church power.
 - e. Council of Trent tried to limit Bishops' power and to insure better education for priests.
4. Seventeen and eighteenth centuries the aspect of secular and political power in the priesthood began to disappear. The clergy became pastors, "sacristy" priests, caring for the church and ceremonies of worship, holding office hours in the sacristy, and seldom leaving the confines of the church except to visit the sick. They continued to be "separated" men, held to be wise in the ways of God, but sharing little with the lives of the people.
5. Nineteenth Century to Vatican II
- a. With the resources of the Vatican library at hand, scholars begin to examine the history and development of the priesthood.
 - b. Catholic theologians began to examine the signs of Christ's priesthood in their own ministries and those of other faiths.
 - c. In 1962, the Bishops at Vatican II commissioned new rites of ordination that talk of sharing and service rather than authority and power. Like the early Church leaders,

they begin working things out in collegiality.

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6. Vatican II to the present.
 - a. Vatican II's renewal of Church traditions affirms the role of Bishop as fullness of priesthood.
 - b. The relationship of priests to their bishop in a spirit of collegiality is emphasized.
 - c. The office of deacon is restored as a permanent order in the Church's sacramental ministry.
 - d. Restoration of the essential place of Scripture in the life and worship of the Church brings about a new emphasis on the role of preaching in the life and ministry of all ordained ministers.
 - e. The Council's vision of the Church as the People of God infuses its understanding of ordained ministry with a more communitarian spirit. Clergy become more free to utilize the talents and experience of laity in the exercise of their ministry of leadership and service.

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS AND CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

1. The source of all ministry in the Church is the priestly, prophetic, and royal ministry of Christ.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 874: Christ is himself the source of ministry in the Church.

2. The principle locus of the on-going ministry of Christ is the People of God which is the Church. As such the entire church and all its members share in the one priesthood of Jesus

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1546: Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father." [Rev 1:6; cf. Rev 5:9-10; [1 Pet 2:5, 9](#) .] The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments

Holy Order

of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are “consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood.” [LG 10 # 1.]

3. Holy Orders is the sacrament by which Christ provides ministers to serve the community and assist in the development of the baptismal service of all its members.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 874: Christ . . . instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal: “In order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body. The holders of office, who are invested with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interests of their brethren, so that all who belong to the People of God . . . may attain to salvation.” [LG 18.]

CCC 1547: The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests . . . is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.

4. The service for which Holy Orders empowers its recipients is exercised in three degrees by bishops, priests, and deacons.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1554: . . . Catholic doctrine teaches that the degrees of priestly participation (episcopate and presbyterate) and the degree of service (diaconate) are all three conferred by a sacramental act called “ordination,” that is, by the sacrament of Holy Orders.

5. The fullness of the sacrament is found in the order of Bishop, whose members are successors to the Apostles in a ministry of teaching, sanctification, and leadership.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1557: The Second Vatican Council “teaches . . . that the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness namely which, both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and the language of the Fathers of the Church, is called the high priesthood, the acme (summa) of the sacred ministry.” [LG 21 # 2.]

CCC 1594: The bishop receives the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders, which integrates him into the episcopal college and makes him the visible head of the particular Church entrusted to him.

6. A bishop, together with all the bishops of the Church and in communion with the Bishop of Rome, is a unique sign of, and has unique responsibility for, the unity of the universal church.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

*CCC 1560: As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the solicitude for all the Churches: "Though each bishop is the lawful pastor only of the portion of the flock entrusted to his care, as a legitimate successor of the apostles he is, by divine institution and precept, responsible with the other bishops for the apostolic mission of the Church." [Pius XII, *Fidei donum*: AAS 49 (1957) 237; cf. *LG* 23; *CD* 4; 36; 37; *AG* 5; 6; 38.]*

CCC 1594: As successors of the apostles and members of the college, the bishops share in the apostolic responsibility and mission of the whole Church under the authority of the Pope, successor of St. Peter.

7. Priests share with bishops a participation in the one priesthood of Christ which is essentially different from the baptismal participation in that same priesthood

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1547: The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, "each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ." While being "ordered one to another," they differ essentially. [LG 10 # 2.] In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace -- a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit--the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.

*CCC 1592: The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*).*

8. Priests serve the Church under the authority and in fraternal collaboration with the local bishop. Together with the bishop they bear special responsibility for the well being of the local Church.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1567: “The priests, prudent cooperators of the episcopal college and its support and instrument, called to the service of the People of God, constitute, together with their bishop, a unique sacerdotal college (presbyterium) dedicated, it is true, to a variety of distinct duties. In each local assembly of the faithful they represent, in a certain sense, the bishop, with whom they are associated in all trust and generosity; in part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and in their daily toils discharge them.” [LG 28 # 2.] Priests can exercise their ministry only in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him. The promise of obedience they make to the bishop at the moment of ordination and the kiss of peace from him at the end of the ordination liturgy mean that the bishop considers them his co-workers, his sons, his brothers and his friends, and that they in return owe him love and obedience.

CCC 1595: Priests are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity and at the same time depend on them in the exercise of their pastoral functions; they are called to be the bishops’ prudent co-workers. They form around their bishop the presbyterium which bears responsibility with him for the particular Church. . . .

9. In virtue of their ordination into the sacramental priesthood, bishops and priests express the dignity of their office most fully in presiding at the Holy Eucharist.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1566: “It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful (synaxis) that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father.” [LG 28; cf. [1 Cor 11:26](#) .] From this unique sacrifice their whole priestly ministry draws its strength. [Cf. [PQ 2](#).]

10. Deacons are ordained for service and receive, like those ordained priest and bishop, a sacramental character which permanently conforms them to Christ and empowers them for ministry of word and sacrament.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1581: This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.

Like priests, deacons exercise their service always under the authority of the local bishop.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1569: At an ordination to the diaconate only the bishop lays hands on the candidate, thus signifying the deacon's special attachment to the bishop in the tasks of his "diakonia." [Cf. St. Hippolytus, Trad. ap. 8: SCh 11, 58-62.]

- 11. In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, men who are ordained for permanent service in the diaconate may be married at the time of their ordination. Those ordained as deacons in preparation for priestly ordination must be celibate.**

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1579: All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." [Mt 19:12].

- 12. The selection and preparation of candidates for priesthood and diaconate is the responsibility of the local bishop**

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1578: No one has a right to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God. [Cf. Heb 5:4 .] Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God's call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be received only as an unmerited gift.

- 13. Because Holy Orders is a sacrament for the building up of the Church, the celebration of this sacrament should include as many of the faithful of the local Church as possible.**

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1572: Given the importance that the ordination of a bishop, a priest, or a deacon has for the life of the particular Church, its celebration calls for as many of the faithful as possible to take part.

14. Ordination to all three orders of the sacrament is conferred by the laying on of hands and particular prayers of consecration by the ordaining bishop.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1573: The essential rite of the sacrament of Holy Orders for all three degrees consists in the bishop's imposition of hands on the head of the ordinand and in the bishop's specific consecratory prayer asking God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his gifts proper to the ministry to which the candidate is being ordained.[Cf. Pius XII, apostolic constitution, Sacramentum Ordinis: DS 3858.]

CCC 1597: The sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred by the laying on of hands followed by a solemn prayer of consecration asking God to grant the ordinand the graces of the Holy Spirit required for his ministry.