



**GUIDELINES  
FOR SACRAMENTAL CATECHESIS**

**BAPTISM  
CONFIRMATION  
EUCCHARIST  
PENANCE**

**Diocese of Pueblo  
1996  
Revision  
2002**

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## **I. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS - SACRAMENTS**

The Catholic Church's sacramental system is a primary distinguishing mark among Christian churches. The sacraments are "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us..." (CCC-1131) Through the actions of the sacraments, the Church expresses its faith. It strengthens the faith of the people by sanctifying humankind at critical life moments.

The purpose of the sacraments is threefold. First, they are to make people holy. Secondly, they serve to unify and build up the Body of Christ. Thirdly, they are opportunities for the faithful to give worship to God. Through signs and symbols, sacraments are teachable moments in which faith is nourished and strengthened. The people are empowered to express their faith effectively through worship and Christian living.

"When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles..." (CCC-1124) As sacraments of faith, they remind the people of the Church's mission to evangelize. The greatest aspect of faith celebrated is the power of the Paschal mystery. The life and words of Jesus are the mysteries that become the foundations of the sacraments. "Sacraments are powers that come forth from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are the masterworks of God in the new and everlasting covenant" (CCC-1116).

## **II. CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES AND FOUNDATIONS**

### *A. Purpose of Catechesis*

The purpose of catechesis is to form mature Christians who respond generously to God's call. "Catechesis is that particular form of the ministry of the word which matures initial conversion to make it into a living, explicit and fruitful confession of faith: Catechesis has its origin in the confession of faith and leads to confession of faith" (GDC-82). It is a lifelong process for the faithful and a constant pastoral activity of the Christian community. Catechesis is modeled upon the three-fold activity of Jesus' mission: to teach, to sanctify, and to serve. Catechesis proclaims the good news. It invites people to a fruitful participation in sacraments and prayer. It provides the foundation for a life of service expressed through corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

In relationship to liturgy and sacraments, catechesis promotes active, conscious, genuine participation in the worship of the Church. "To fulfill its tasks, catechesis avails of two principal means: transmission of the Gospel message and experience of the Christian life. Liturgical formation, for example, must explain what the Christian liturgy is, and what the sacraments are. It must also, however, offer an experience of the different kinds of celebration and it must make symbols, gestures, etc. known and loved" (GDC-87).

The Church recognizes the necessity for catechesis, especially sacramental catechesis, inasmuch that it promulgates particular codes within its Canon Law. First, the faithful have a right to receive assistance from the Church out of its spiritual goods, word and sacraments (CCL-

213). Pastors are obligated to provide catechesis so that the faith of God's people becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living (CCL-773, 777). The community is obliged to support the catechetical endeavors of the Church (CCL-776, 835:4, 843). The parents are the primary influence in the transmission of faith and are obliged to provide catechesis for their children (CCL-774, NCD-25, 177, 229). Through law and catechetical directives, the Church clearly makes its expectations.

### B. Principles and Values

The Code of Canon Law establishes the intention of sacramental catechesis: *"In accord with the norms established by the diocesan bishop, the pastor is to make particular provision:*

1. *that suitable catechesis is given for the celebration of the sacraments;*
2. *that children are properly prepared for the reception of the sacrament of penance and Most Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of confirmation by means of catechetical formation given over a period of time;*
3. *that children are more fruitfully and deeply instructed through catechetical formation after the reception of First Communion;*
4. *that catechetical formation also be given to those handicapped in body or mind insofar as their condition permits;*
5. *that the faith of young people and adults be fortified, enlightened and developed through various means and endeavors (CCL-777).*

The following are principles (values) on which good sacramental catechesis is developed:

1. Catechesis focuses on developing a relationship with Christ which arises from an ongoing conversion of life.
2. Catechesis fosters a conscious understanding of the meaning of signs/symbols and sacramental rituals leading to active participation in the liturgical and apostolic life of the Church.
3. Catechesis motivates the faithful to have a desire for continued formation and it promotes the spirit of the sacraments.
4. Catechesis presumes that individuals who request the sacraments will be actively involved in sacramental catechesis and the celebration of the sacraments.
5. Catechesis and celebration of the sacraments is a responsibility of all the faithful.
6. Catechesis reflects pastoral sensitivity and inclusion of individuals who desire to
7. celebrate their faith with the community.

### C. The Baptismal Catechumenate: Inspiration for Catechesis in the Church

The Diocese of Pueblo encourages parish sacramental catechesis to reflect the intent of the Catechumenate experience. "Given that the *"missio ad gentes"* (mission of the people) is the paradigm of all the Church's missionary activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is joined to it, is the model of its catechizing activity (GDC-90).

Although there is a fundamental difference between catechumens and those engaged in post-baptismal catechesis, some elements of the baptismal catechumenate are now considered as

the source of inspiration for post-baptismal catechesis. The baptismal catechumen reminds the Church of the importance of initiation and the basic factors that constitute it: catechesis and the sacraments of initiation. The catechumenate is the responsibility of the entire Christian community. It is completely permeated by the *mystery of Christ's Passover* and for this reason all initiation must express its paschal nature. The baptismal catechumenate is the "initial locus" of inculturation. As the Church receives catechumens with their cultural ties, post-baptismal catechesis should do the same. The concept of the catechumenate as a process of formation and a school of faith offers all catechesis: comprehensiveness and integrity of formation, a gradual character expressed in definite stages, connected with meaningful rites, symbols, biblical and liturgical signs and constant references to the Christian Community (See *GDC-90*).

#### *D. Philosophy*

The Church provides criteria and focus for catechetical programs. These become the framework for assisting the faithful to understand the nature, signs and rituals of the sacraments. As with all catechesis, the process should be sensitive to maturity and cultural diversity. It must be inclusive for persons with diverse pastoral needs - disadvantaged, marital status, economic/social, etc.

#### *E. Norms/Directives*

Norms are the universal understanding of Canon Law and ecclesial documents as presented by the official Church. Directives are particular interpretations as given by the local Ordinary (Bishop). The directives are the practice of the diocese and should be maintained as faithfully as possible.

The directives given in this document on Sacramental Catechesis and Celebration are the minimal expectation of the diocese. Parishes may expand on these directives always reflecting pastoral sensitivity. It is expected that parishes will develop written policies that integrate diocesan directives and parish pastoral practice. These policies should be submitted to the diocese for review and placing in the parish files.

### III. BAPTISM

#### A. Theology

Baptism is the first step, the gate, toward providing a spirituality for Christian living. It is the invitation to begin formation that hands on the faith that the apostles received from Christ. Baptism begins the process of conversion and discipleship. It incorporates persons into the mystery of Christ and into the faith community. "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit...and the door which gives access to the other sacraments...we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word'"(CCC-1213). "I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit" (John 3:4).

As a sacrament, Baptism seals the person with the life of the Spirit. It challenges persons to be in community, which gives the mandate to be a positive influence in a world marred by sin and suffering. Baptism remits sins and cleanses the individual. "Further, Baptism is the sacrament by which its recipients are incorporated into the Church and are built up together in the Spirit into a house where God lives, into a holy nation and a royal priesthood. Baptism is a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been signed by it..." (RCIA-4) As a holy people, the baptized share the three works of Christ: to teach, to govern, and to sanctify.

Baptism calls for conversion and a new lifestyle. The Christian Community invites the newly baptized to follow the Risen Lord, by shaping their lives on the principles and values of the Gospel. The baptized person becomes a member of a community that shares God's mission in and to the world to bring about God's reign. Through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation Christ calls and commissions his people to share in his priestly, prophetic and kingly vocation.

"Baptism is therefore, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the Gospel of Christ. That is why the Church believes that it is its most basic and necessary duty to inspire all, catechumens, parents of children still to be baptized, and godparents, to that true and living faith by which they hold fast to Christ and enter into or confirm their commitment to the New Covenant. In order to enliven such faith, the Church prescribes the pastoral instruction of catechumens, the preparation of the children's parents, the celebration of God's word, and the profession of faith at the celebration of baptism" (RCIA-3).

#### B. Diocesan Directives

##### 1. Eligibility

- a) Uncatechized persons from other Christian traditions and unbaptized adults, who seek full initiation within the Church, must be admitted to the Catechumenate (CCL-851:1 and 865, RCIA – 751:1 and Statute 6). Baptized, uncatechized Catholics should be prepared for the sacraments in a process other than the catechumenate.

- b) Unbaptized children, who have attained the "age of reason," are to be admitted to the Catechumenate process adapted for children (*CCL-852: 1, RCIA – 19, and National Statutes-18, 1988*), Baptized, uncatechized Catholic children should be prepared for the sacraments in a way other than the Catechumenate adapted for children.
- c) In providing catechetical experiences for children of catechetical age, the following canons provide the meaning of "Age of Reason":
  - 1) Merely ecclesiastical laws bind those baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it and who enjoy sufficient use of reason and, unless the law expressly provides otherwise, have completed seven years of age (*CCL-11*).
  - 2) A person who has completed the eighteenth year of age is an adult, below this age, a person is a minor; before the completion of the seventh year a minor is called an infant and is held to be incompetent (*non sui compos*): with the completion of the seventh year a person is presumed to have the use of reason (*CCL-97*).
- d) Infants are presented for baptism by the desire and obligation of parents/guardians (*CCL-867*).
  - 1) The Church requires that parents/guardians provide a reasonable hope for the infant's upbringing in the faith as the basis of a licit baptism (*CCL-868*). The pastor or a designated parish representative can determine whether or not such a reasonable hope exists through an interview with the parents/guardians.
  - 2) If signs of reasonable hope are not present, the Church desires that baptism of infant is delayed until parents/guardians are adequately prepared to accept their role as primary catechists in the child's faith development and active participant in the faith community (*CCL-868*).
  - 3) Only a parent or legal guardian can give permission for a child to be baptized.
  - 4) Parishes may not deny baptism to an infant because of the parents' marriage status.
  - 5) "Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community" (*RBC-4*).

THE DIOCESE AFFIRMS THE INTENT OF THE CANONS QUOTED ABOVE, THE QUOTES FROM THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION AND STATUTES AND THE RITE OF INFANT BAPTISM.

## 2. Content for Catechesis for Infant Baptism

(Catechesis for Infant Baptism is primarily directed towards the adults who are parents, guardians and sponsors.)

The themes for reflection are: (consult *Catechism 1213-1284*):

- a) Meaning of Sacraments of Initiation

- 1) Community called Church
- 2) Responsibilities of Membership
- b) Ritual of Baptism
  - 1) History
  - 2) Scriptural Roots (Mt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:1-11; Jn. 3:1-6; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 9:23-27)
  - 3) Signs and Symbols (water, oil of catechumens and chrism, white garment, anointing, sign of the cross, light)
- c) Parental Roles and Responsibilities
  - 1) Transmission of faith
  - 2) Ongoing faith formation
  - 3) Personal involvement in mission of Church (consult *CCC-1213-1284*) and *Mt. 25:31-46; Jas. 2:14-26; Jn. 13:1-17; Jn. 14:12*).

**DIOCESAN RECOMMENDATION**

**The diocese expects parishes will provide a minimum of four to six hours of catechesis for the adults involved in the baptism of a child. Additional formation is recommended for parents who do not practice the faith.**

3. Sponsors (The diocese upholds Canons 872, 873 and 874 pertaining to Godparents/sponsors.)
  - a) Purpose and responsibilities  
 Insofar as possible one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or together with the parents, to present an infant at baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it (*CCL-872*).
  - b) Number of sponsors/Godparents  
 Only one male or one female sponsor or one of each sex is to be employed (*CCL-873*). (The commentary on this canon says the purpose is to exclude the multiplication of sponsors. The norm is: "Each child may have a Godfather and a Godmother." It assumes that an adult will have only one sponsor but a second one is not excluded.)
  - c) Qualifications of Godparents/Sponsors:  
 To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:
    - 1) be designated by the one to be baptized or by the parents or the one who takes their place or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role;
    - 2) have completed the sixteenth year, unless the diocesan bishop has established a different age or if it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for a just cause;

- 3) be a Catholic who has been baptized, confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
- 4) not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- 5) not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized.

(A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor. – If there is only one sponsor/Godparent that person must be Catholic.)

4. Adult Baptism, Reception into the Church and Baptism of Children of Catechetical Age.

(Catechesis for all groupings of persons is governed by ecclesial and canonical documents of the Church. The diocesan bishop provides the norms with the expectation that the pastor ensures that suitable catechesis is provided (*CCL-777:1*). The parish faith community shares in the responsibility of catechizing and giving witness to those seeking the sacraments (*RCIA-4*).

- a) Uncatechized and unbaptized adults are to be enrolled and receive formation through the process of the Catechumenate (*RCIA 4-7; CCL-851*). Baptized, uncatechized Catholics should be prepared for the sacraments in a way other than the Catechumenate.
- b) Unbaptized children of catechetical age are to be enrolled in the Catechumenate and receive formation that is age appropriate (*RCIA 252-259; National Statutes-18; CCL-852*). Baptized, uncatechized Catholic children should be prepared for the sacraments in a way other than the Catechumenate adapted for children.
- c) Children who are preparing for full initiation are to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation –Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, at the Easter Vigil (*RCIA-National Statutes: 19*)
- d) For infant baptism, the catechesis is directed towards the parents/guardians and sponsors (*CCL-851:2 and 867:1*). The content of this catechesis is provided by the diocese (see Content for Catechesis for Infant Baptism).
- e) Rituals

**e) The diocese mandates that parishes follow the process of initiation as given in The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (including The National Statutes for the Catechumenate approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November, 1986 and published in 1988) for adults seeking entrance into the Church. The diocese further recommends that persons involved in initiation ministry participate in preparation offered by the North American Forum on the Catechumenate or other authorized personnel.**

## 5. Rituals

- a) The celebration of the sacrament of Baptism is regulated by norms established through canonical and liturgical books that are ecclesiastically approved (*CCL-850*).
- b) The diocesan bishop is the ordinary minister who delegates and shares this duty with others who are ordained or specially designated by the bishop (*CCL-861*). The sacrament of Baptism should be celebrated on Sunday or at the Easter Vigil or other appropriate feasts (*CCL-856*). The diocese recommends that baptism be celebrated during Mass, so that the community may be present.
- c) For those in the Catechumenate, the Sacraments of Initiation are ordinarily celebrated at the Easter Vigil (*RCIA-8, 17-31*).
- d) The place for Baptism is a church or oratory, using the baptismal font as a symbol of entrance (*CCL-857:1* and *858*).
- e) Baptism is to be conferred either by immersion or by pouring, the prescriptions of the conference of bishops being observed (*CCL-854*).
- f) The place for Baptism is determined by the parish to which the parents/guardians reside and belong (*CCL-857.2*).
- g) The naming of the child should reflect virtues and values of a Christian lifestyle (*CCL-855*).
- h) The proof of Baptism and its recording are necessary for reception of other sacraments and must be done by the pastor (*CCL-877:1*).
  - 1) The pastor is to ensure that the Baptism was properly administered and witnessed (*CCL-875, 876, 877.2, 3*).

## Baptism Programs

The diocese encourages parishes to use baptism materials from main line publishers. The following publishers have baptism programs:

### Infant

Ave Maria

“Together at Baptism”

P. O. Box 428

Notre Dame, IN 46556-0428

1-800-282-5681

[www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com)

Benziger (no longer in stock but may be available from All Publishers)

“Blest Be the Child”

All Publishers

Communication Center

237 N. Michigan St.

South Bend, IN 46601

1-800-348-2227

Harcourt Religion Publisher

“Welcome New Life” (available in English and Spanish)

1665 Embassy West Drive, Suite 200

Dubuque, IA 52002-2259

1-800-922-7696

[www.brownroa.com](http://www.brownroa.com)

Living the Good News

“Baptism and Beyond”

600 Grant Street, Suite 400

Denver, CO 80203

1-800-824-1813

Our Sunday Visitor

“Baptism, the Most Precious Gift”

200 Noll Plaza

Huntington, IN 46750

1-800-348-2440

[www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com)

St. Anthony Messenger Press  
“Baby’s Baptism”  
1615 Republic Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45210-1298  
1-800-488-0488  
[www.AmericanCatholic.org](http://www.AmericanCatholic.org)

Silver Burdett Ginn Religion  
“We Celebrate Baptism”  
299 Jefferson Road  
Parsippany, NJ 07054  
1-800-552-2259  
[www.sbreligion.com](http://www.sbreligion.com)

Twenty-Third Publications  
“God’s Own Child”  
PO Box 180  
Mystic, CT 06355  
1-800-321-0411  
email:[ttpubs@aol.com](mailto:ttpubs@aol.com)

### Adult

The North American Forum on the Catechumenate recommends the materials from RCL for adult initiation.

Resources for Christian Living (RCL)  
“Foundations in Faith”  
200 East Bethany Drive  
Allen, TX 75002  
1-877-ASK-4-RCL  
[www.rclweb.com](http://www.rclweb.com)

## IV. CONFIRMATION

### A. Theology

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "No one can enter into the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5).

The presence of the Spirit in the life of the Catholic Christian is intricately involved in the Baptism that precedes it. We are washed, purified and welcomed into the family of Christ and sealed with his promise to be with us always in the laying on of hands and the anointing with the Holy Chrism.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) emphasized two important dimensions of the Sacrament of Confirmation. First, Confirmation is intimately connected to the Sacraments of Initiation – begun in Baptism and completed with the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Our use of the word **process** to describe the developing sense of conversion distinguishes Confirmation as not only a strengthening of the spiritual gifts, but an interaction within a community on the journey to everlasting life.

Second, the model given to us in the restoration of the catechumenate (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*) has changed the focus from being passive recipients of the sacramental graces and gifts to an expectation that having been given the gifts of the Spirit, Catholics of all ages are meant to actively use those gifts and witness to the life of Christ within them and within the community.

The gifts of the Spirit are now proclaimed in a contemporary language that evokes the fire of the Spirit that gives life to the Church. The prayer from the *Rite of Confirmation* says in part:

Send your Holy Spirit upon them (confirmands)  
to be their helper and guide.  
Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of right judgment and courage,  
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.  
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 146)*

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults gives us the restored catechumenate as well as reestablishing the order of the Sacraments as Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist. While the practice in the past century has been disruptive of this norm, efforts in recent years have challenged us to recognize the sequence of the initiation sacraments and yet preserve the right of the bishop to confirm baptized Catholics.

As we stand on the threshold of the third millennium, we are aware of the many pastoral implications of new Confirmation procedures.

## B. Diocesan Directives

### 1. Eligibility

- a) All baptized persons are eligible to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation (*CCL-889*).
- b) With appropriate instruction, persons may request to celebrate Confirmation (*CCL-890*).
- c) For those baptized as infants, the sacrament may be conferred at the attainment of the age of discretion or age as determined by the National Conference of Bishops (*CCL-891*). **For the Diocese of Pueblo, the age of reception is age sixteen and older.**
- d) Unbaptized and uncatechized children (of catechetical age – seven and older) and adults celebrate the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist at the Easter Vigil (*RCIA-3, National Statutes-18 and 19*).
- e) Adults, who have been baptized and received Eucharist, are eligible to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation with completion of suitable catechesis.

### 2. Content for Confirmation Catechesis – Adults

(Catechesis directed towards parents, sponsors and adults wishing to celebrate the sacrament themselves, should reflect the following themes, (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #683-747, 1285-1321):

- a) Fulfillment of Initiation
  - 1) Baptism begins the process.
  - 2) Confirmation renews baptismal promises and gifts of the Spirit.
  - 3) Eucharist nourishes the daily faith.
- b) Role of the Spirit
  - 1) Work of the Trinity
  - 2) Gifts of the Spirit – (wisdom and understanding, right judgment and courage, knowledge and reverence, wonder and awe – *RCIA #234 and RC #42*)
- c) Ritual of Confirmation
  - 1) History
  - 2) Scriptural roots
  - 3) Signs and symbols (oil, anointing with Chrism, baptismal vows, light/darkness, laying on of hands, sign of peace, welcoming the newly confirmed into the family – the Body of Christ)
- d) Roles and responsibilities
  - 1) Witness to the world
  - 2) Personal development

(Adults who have been baptized and who have celebrated Eucharist are to receive catechesis which is age appropriate but distinct from children's catechesis.)

3. Content for Confirmation Catechesis – Youth and Children  
(The following are themes to be used with children/youth, see *Catechism-#683-747, 1285-1321*):
- a) God's Gift
    - 1) Baptism begins membership
    - 2) Call to be responsible workers in God's reign
    - 3) Call to discipleship – work for justice and peace
  - b) Role of the Spirit
    - 1) Interrelationship of Trinity – create, redeem and sanctify
    - 2) Empowered by gifts of the Spirit (wisdom and understanding, right judgment and courage, knowledge and reverence, wonder and awe – *RCIA – 234* and *RC – 42*)
  - c) Ritual
    - 1) Scriptural roots (See *RC – 61, 62* for references from the Old and the New Testaments).
    - 2) Signs and symbols (oil, anointing with Chrism, baptismal vows, light/darkness, laying on of hands, sign of peace, welcoming the newly confirmed into the family – the Body of Christ)

Confirmation catechesis for youth and adults should provide opportunities for prayerful reflection (retreat), appropriate understanding of doctrine, and opportunities for involvement in the mission of the Church (service) by respecting the following principles:

- A. Confirmation is a sacrament of Initiation – calling for a remembering and renewal of Baptism.
- B. Confirmation is rooted in the Trinity – remembering God's love, following the person of Jesus, and living justly in the activity of the Spirit.
- C. Confirmation is about discipleship and mission – drawing persons into the life, work and mission of the Church.
- D. Confirmation is a celebration of the faith community – the responsibility of all the faithful to accept and use the diverse gifts for the kingdom of God.

## DIOCESAN RECOMMENDATIONS

**The bishop and the diocese strongly recommend and expect that parishes provide two years of confirmation catechesis for youth. These years should include retreats, service experiences and doctrinal formation. Only under extraordinary circumstances should the process for Confirmation formation be shortened. The diocese also recommends an initial interview and a concluding interview with the confirmation candidate and parish personnel. As part of the readiness for Confirmation, the candidate should show a willingness to make a commitment to share regularly in the sacramental and prayer life of the church.**

**Parents, along with sponsors, are to be intimately involved in Confirmation catechesis. This practice will help them renew their own faith, and it will set a good example for the youth. The adult sessions (for parents and sponsors of those preparing to celebrate Confirmation) are an important component in showing support for the confirmands. The diocese recommends a minimum of four meetings for parents and sponsors over the two-year formation process. Parishes should design the meetings to help the adults who are involved to grow in their own journey of faith.**

## 2. Sponsors

### a) Purpose and responsibilities

The responsibility of the sponsor is threefold: first, to help the confirmands live the Catholic, Christian lifestyle; secondly, to support parents in the faith growth of the confirmands; thirdly, to be a role model of faith for the

## 4. Sponsors

### a) Purpose and responsibilities

The responsibility of the sponsor is threefold: first to help the confirmands live the Catholic, Christian lifestyle; secondly, to support parents in the faith growth of the confirmands; thirdly, to be a role model of faith for the confirmands. The sponsor has an official ecclesial function to promote and safeguard the graces given at Baptism (*CCC – 1253-1255; CCL – 872*). The sponsor, through presence and support, sees that the one confirmed acts as a true witness to Christ and fulfills the obligation of the sacrament (*CCL – 892*). It is desirable, if possible, that the sponsor be one who assumed the role of sponsor at Baptism.

### b) Qualifications of Sponsors

The importance of the role of sponsor is defined by the Church (*CCL – 874:1*):

- 1) Understand the qualifications and intention of being a sponsor;
- 2) Attained the age of sixteen (16);
- 3) Is fully initiated – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist;
- 4) Has no canonical impediments;
- 5) Is not father or mother of the confirmation candidate.

Sponsors should receive catechesis and formation which highlights their role and responsibilities.

## 5. Ritual

a) "The ordinary minister of confirmation is the bishop; a presbyter who has this faculty by virtue of either the universal law or a special concession of competent authority also confers this sacrament validly" (*CCL – 882*).

b) A priest has the faculty to confirm those who are no longer infants and who are being baptized or brought into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil (*CCL – 883, 884*). The situation for Catholics (adults and children) has been stated above.

c) On the Feast of Pentecost priests may validly confer this sacrament in their own parishes for baptized Catholics completing their initiation, if the priest has received prior delegation from the bishop. These Catholics also have the choice of being confirmed by the bishop at the Cathedral.

- d) The sacrament of Confirmation is to be celebrated within the celebration of the Eucharist in the presence of the community gathered in a designated church (*CCL – 881*).
- e) In conferring the sacrament of Confirmation, the bishop or his rightful delegate, invites the Holy Spirit to strengthen the candidates with gifts and graces, anoints them with holy chrism, lays on his hands that they may become witnesses of Christ to their community and to the world, and he welcomes them into the community of the faithful.
- f) After the sacrament is completed, the pastor is required to record the celebration in parish records and must notify the church of Baptism (*CCL – 894-896*).

Confirmation Programs

The diocese recommends CONFIRMATION TEXTS from main-line publishers. These texts include the following:

Confirming Disciples

Center for Ministry Development  
 PO Box 699  
 Naugatuck, CT 06770                      1996

Of Water and the Spirit

Benziger  
 15319 Chatsworth St.  
 Mission Hills, CA 91395                      1990

Welcome to the Way

RCL (Resources for Christian Living)  
 PO Box 7000  
 Allen, TX 75013  
 1-877-RCL-INFO                      1988  
[www.RCLweb.com](http://www.RCLweb.com)

Confirmation: Gifted with the Spirit

Hi-Time Pflaum  
 330 Progress Rd.  
 Dayton, OH 45449  
 1-800-558-2292                      2001  
[www.HiTimePflaum.com](http://www.HiTimePflaum.com)

Sealed with the Spirit

Harcourt Religion Publishers  
 1665 Embassy West Drive, Suite 200  
 Dubuque, IA 52002  
 1-800-922-7696                      1994

[www.brownroa.com](http://www.brownroa.com)

Confirmed in a Faithful Community (Revised)

St. Mary's Press  
702 Terrace Heights  
Winona, MN 55987 2001

Confirming Faith

Ave Maria Press  
PO Box 428  
Notre Dame, IN 46556 1995

Gifted with The Spirit

Silver Burdette Ginn Religion  
4350 Equity Dr.  
PO Box 2649  
Columbus, OH 43216  
1-800-552-2259 1993

## V. EUCHARIST

### A. Theology

The Eucharist is the central sacramental action of the Church. As sacrament, it is the source and summit of all preaching found in the Gospels. Jesus present in the Eucharist is an active and effective sign of God's covenant with the people. As described in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42), the early Christian community "devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and prayers." They recognized the presence and spirit of the Risen Christ through prayer, song and the communal life. These first Christians believed the Eucharist was a sign and the reality of Jesus' presence within the assembly.

Throughout the ages the heart of the Church's teaching on the Eucharist has been the fact of the real presence of Jesus as the central Eucharistic teaching. "The Most Holy Eucharist is the most august sacrament by which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered, and received by which the Church constantly lives and grows. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated over the centuries, is the summit and source of all Christian worship and life; it signifies and effects the unity of the people of God and achieves the building up of the Body of Christ..." (CCL-897). It provides nourishment for Christians to live the Christian lifestyle in the current world community. Through participation and communion in the Eucharist Christians become the body and blood of Christ in the world.

The Eucharist, the central liturgical action of the gathered assembly, provides the unifying moment within the Body of Christ... "The celebration of the Eucharist is the action of Christ Himself and the Church; in it Christ the Lord, by the ministry of the priest, offers Himself, substantially present under forms of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives Himself as spiritual food to the faithful who are associated with His offering" (CCL-899.1). Through the Eucharist, Christians are led to a deeper relationship with Christ and others... "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" (RCIA-2).

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (#14) from the Second Vatican Council stresses the importance of Eucharistic instruction and full and active participation:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people," (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. Therefore, through the needed program

of instruction, pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it in all their pastoral work.

"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 (*CCC-1322*). The Eucharist is integral to the sacraments of initiation process. It is the climax of the journey of initiation" (*CCL-842*).

### *B. Diocesan Directives*

The preparation and celebration of the Eucharist are governed by Canon Law and approved liturgical texts relevant to the Eucharist. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is integrally connected with the other Sacraments of Initiation – baptism and confirmation that are required for full initiation (*CCC 842:1*). The diocese intends pastorally to respect the order of sequence of reception of the Sacraments of Initiation (*CCL 842:2*).

1. Eligibility
  - a) Those who have been baptized are invited to prepare for and to celebrate the other sacraments.
  - b) Baptized children, of catechetical age, are eligible to begin preparation during the second grade with celebration scheduled during the Paschal season.
  - c) Unbaptized children, of catechetical age, are to be enrolled in the catechumenate process.
    - 1) Reception of First Eucharist is celebrated with baptism and confirmation at the Easter Vigil.
2. Catechetical Content for adults (parents and guardians), see *CCC #1322-1419*.
  - a) Meaning of Eucharist
    - 1) Source and summit of worship
    - 2) Presence of Jesus
    - 3) Completion to initiation
  - b) Ritual of Eucharist
    - 1) Historical development
    - 2) Scriptural roots – the Lord's Supper
    - 3) Signs and symbols –(bread, wine, table, assembly)
  - c) Role of Parents
    - 1) To provide experiences of family meal celebrations
    - 2) To promote family prayer
    - 3) To participate in weekly Sunday liturgy

Catechesis must include the primary Scriptural, liturgical and doctrinal themes. These themes include:

- 1) The Lord's Supper continues the sacrifice of the cross;

- 2) The Eucharist is the memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ;
- 3) The Eucharist is a sacrifice, banquet, act of thanksgiving and praise, communion, and gifts and offerings of the faithful gathered in Jesus' name;
- 4) The Eucharist is an action of Christ and the Church;
- 5) The Eucharist is an act of public worship. This act of worship is offered in prayers of thanksgiving, expiation, petition, and praise; "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (#10 CSL).
- 6) The Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ by words and action of the Eucharistic prayer which contains the words of consecration (TRANSUBSTANTIATION).
- 7) The Eucharist calls the faithful to accept the challenge to embody Christ in the world by serving their brothers and sisters in word and action (Mt. 28:17-20).

These themes are important but it is equally important, that in catechetical sessions, leaders create a sense of awe and wonder of God's presence in all of life – in nature, in other people, in the happenings of our lives and in the sacramental celebrations of the Church.

3. Catechetical content for children (these themes are designed to help students grow into full and active liturgical participants):
  - a) Meaning of Eucharist
    - 1) Explore the meaning of baptism and belonging to the family of God.
    - 2) Catholic identity – (help children understand that the Eucharist is central to who we are as Catholics).
    - 3) Biblical stories with Eucharistic themes (For example: Ex. 16:3-36; Mk. 6:34-44; Lk. 22:7-20; and John 21:1-4)
  - b) Ritual
    - 1) Develop an understanding of Eucharist as prayer.
      - (a) Structure of the Eucharistic prayer
    - 2) Celebration of the presence of Jesus in Word, Eucharist, and Assembly
      - (a) Banquet
      - (b) Memorial Sacrifice
    - 3) Signs and symbols (Bread, Wine, Table and Assembly)
    - 4) Devotional and cultural practices

### **DIOCESAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Preparation for celebration of First Eucharist is primarily the responsibility of parents, guardians, Godparents, and the pastor with the pastoral staff. Parents/guardians and the child are to be actively participating in spiritual formation experiences, weekly Sunday eucharistic liturgies, and ongoing religious instruction (for at least one year prior to the celebration of First Eucharist). The diocese recommends that parishes provide three parent/family meetings (or the equivalent in a retreat format) to help participants grow spiritually. The purpose of parent/guardian sessions is to assist parents in preparing their child for celebrating the Eucharist for the first time. Leaders should encourage parents in their role as educators of their children and give them the background they need to accomplish this task.**

#### 4. Ritual

All celebrations of the Eucharist are governed by prescriptions set forth by the Code of Canon Law and approved liturgical documents of the Church.

- a) The first reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist must be celebrated within the context of the Sunday liturgy of the local faith community (*RCIA –2, CCL – 897-899*).
- b) The celebration should reflect a spirit of simplicity and joy. It remains focused on the meaning of the Eucharist as nourishment and the fulfillment of initiation into the faith community.
- c) Good celebrations reflect the culture of participants.
- d) The ritual reminds the assembly of the common Christian mission to go into the world to spread the good news of salvation.

## First Eucharist Programs

The diocese recommends main-line publishers for First Eucharist catechesis. The following publishers have First Eucharist Programs:

Benziger

First Eucharist (English and Spanish)

1-800-334-7344

5808 Breckenridge Parkway, Suite A

Tampa, FL 33610

[benziger.glencoe.com](http://benziger.glencoe.com)

Harcourt Religion Publishers

Celebrating Our Faith (English and Spanish)

1-800-922-7696

[www.brownroa.com](http://www.brownroa.com)

Living the Good News

First Eucharist and Beyond

1-800-824-1813

600 Grant St., Suite 400

Denver, CO 80203

Sadlier

First Eucharist (English and Spanish)

1-800-221-5175

9 Pine St.

New York, NY 10005-1002

[www.sadlier.com](http://www.sadlier.com)

Silver Burdett Ginn Religion

The Gift of Eucharist

1-800-552-2259

4350 Equity Drive, PO Box 2649

Columbus, OH 43216

[www.sbreligion.com](http://www.sbreligion.com)

## VI. PENANCE

### A. Theology

The Church is comprised of people, who are born into new life through Baptism, and yet weakened by the human condition and sin. The Church celebrates the power of Jesus Christ which provides healing and salvation. The Church calls humanity to a personal encounter with Christ through the sacrament of Reconciliation. "Because of human weakness, Christians turn aside from early love and even break off their friendship from God by sinning. The Lord, therefore, instituted a special sacrament of penance for the pardon of sins." (*RP- 800/73*)

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the restoration of the grace relationship which takes place with God's initiative. "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sin and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion" (*CCC-1422*). The people are called to celebrate God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

In the human condition, the experience of sin cuts one off from God, others and self. Sin creates a separation and disruption of the graced relationship initiated by Baptism. The wounds of sin are varied in the lives of individuals and of the community. The process of reconciliation assists in the removal of the separation. By the grace of a merciful God, the sinner embraces Penance as a channel of healing and forgiveness for a return to God, "who first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). It calls for a conversion, metanoia, which is witnessed in a life committed to service of God and neighbor. "For through the word of God, Christians receive light to recognize their sins and are called to conversion and to confidence in God's mercy" (*RP-17*). Reconciliation calls for the individual's acknowledgement of guilt and the intention to heal the break, the disunity, the individual's responsibility in the sin. God desires reconciliation, and human nature needs reconciliation.

The contemporary Christian faces many new and different moral problems. For these variations, they need several possibilities to experience and celebrate conversion of mind and heart as they speak to the quality of Christian moral living and a deeper life of faith. "The Sacrament of Penance focuses on the dynamic of confession: a) Contrition-heartfelt sorrow and aversion of sin and intention of sinning no more; b) Confession – examination of the inner life in the spirit of true knowledge before God; c) Penance – rectifying injuries, restoring order, and being healed; and d) Absolution – a ritual which manifests a change of heart and restoration of the covenant relationship." (*RP-6*) The Church provides three rites for individuals, who are conscious of personal sins committed since Baptism: Rite of Reconciliation for Individual Penitents; Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution; and the Rite of Reconciliation of Penitents with General Confession and Absolution. (This third rite can only be used in extreme circumstances and only with the permission of the bishop). These rites present the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an act of worship which gives the experience of a loving and reconciling God.

## *B. Diocesan Directives*

### 1. Eligibility

- a) Any baptized person, who has attained the age of discretion and has committed serious sin after baptism, is obligated to celebrate the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (*CCL* 987-89, 916).
- b) For persons involved in the Catechumenate process, the following procedures are outlined in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
  - 1) **CATECHUMENS (the unbaptized)**  
The catechumens celebrate their desire for conversion and acceptance of the Christian lifestyle through celebrating specific rituals, namely the Scrutinies and Exorcisms. After celebration of full initiation, the new Christians should receive catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The catechesis must be age appropriate and consistent with the content identified in the diocesan guidelines.
  - 2) **CANDIDATES FOR FULL COMMUNION**  
Those who have been validly baptized in other traditions are to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance prior to reception for full communion (*RCIA – Statutes 36, 1988*). The catechesis should be suitable for the age and developmental level of the candidate, and it should be distinct from catechesis for the sacraments of initiation.

### **DIOCESAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The diocese expects that sacramental catechesis for first reception of the sacrament of Penance be made available during the second grade year (CCL-914):**
  - a. Catechesis is to be age appropriate;**
  - b. Parent and child, assisted by pastor, catechists and the pastoral staff, will determine readiness;**
  - c. An opportunity to celebrate the sacrament must be made available;**
  - d. A child may not be denied the sacrament of Eucharist, if they do not celebrate Penance before reception of First Eucharist.**
- 2. Catechesis for the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is to be separate and distinct from catechesis for the sacrament of Eucharist.**
  - a. The child will see the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation as a distinct sacrament.**
  - b. The child will see the close relationship of Penance and Reconciliation to the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.**
  - c. The child will gradually understand Reconciliation as a way of celebrating on-going conversion and forming a Christ-like lifestyle.**
- 3. The Diocese of Pueblo expects that all children will have received formation and celebrated first reconciliation by the fifth grade.**
- 4. The Diocese recommends that parishes provide a minimum of four parent/family meetings (or the equivalent time in a retreat format) to help the adults involved understand this sacrament. The purpose of these sessions is to teach parents how to help their children grow morally and how to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time.**
- 5. Certificates for celebrating the sacrament should not be awarded because identifying penitents is not allowed.**
- 6. Ongoing catechesis for the sacrament of Penance for youth should be provided at later ages (6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and also in the high school years). Catechesis should correspond to the moral development of the particular age level.**
- 7. Reconciliation catechesis for all ages should include instruction on the seal of confession. What penitents tell the confessor is kept secret. The seal of confession is inviolable.**

2. Content for Catechesis – Adults

The following themes are to be used for catechesis for parents and guardians of children preparing for first penance (consult *Catechism - #1420-1498* and *Part III – Life in Christ*)

- a) Meaning of the Sacrament
  - 1) Living the call of the Beatitudes
  - 2) Meaning of sin and forgiveness
  - 3) Source of healing
- b) Ritual
  - 1) History of Sacrament
  - 2) Scripture narratives of forgiveness (Lk. 15:1-32; Mt. 6:14, 15; Mk. 6:14, 15; Jn. 20:19-23)
  - 3) Signs and symbols (person, absolution, baptismal promises)
- c) Dynamics of reconciliation
  - 1) Reading of God's word
  - 2) Contrition
  - 3) Confession
  - 4) Penance
  - 5) Absolution
- d) Additional content includes:
  - 1) Process of decision making
  - 2) Role models of forgiveness
  - 3) Contemporary moral issues

3. Content for children: there are two sets of criteria for teaching themes based on age (consult *Catechism #1420-1498* and *Part III-Life in Christ*):

Ages 7-9, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades:

- a) Meaning of the Sacrament
  - 1) Highlight lives of saints, family members, teachers and peers as models for good life.
  - 2) Stories of God's compassion – mercy – healing (Lk. 15:11-24; Lk. 7:36-40; Lk. 7:44-50; Lk. 15: 4-7; Lk. 19:1-10)
  - 3) Baptism gave new life – cleanses for God's love
  - 4) Sin is breaking relationships
- b) Rituals of Reconciliation
  - 1) Celebrations of life which show God's love
  - 2) Signs/symbols (sign of the cross, laying on of hands, sign of peace, and absolution)
  - 3) Format of reconciliation – reading God's word, contrition, confession, penance, absolution
  - 4) Penitential rite during Mass

- c) New Attitudes
  - 1) Learning to accept others
  - 2) Doing better in daily life
  - 3) Learning about the consequences of sin in our life and in the world
  - 4) Connecting reconciliation with baptism

Ages 10-12, grades 4-6:

- a) Meaning of the Sacrament
  - 1) Demands of God's love
    - a. Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12)
    - b. Commandments (Mt. 22: 37-40)
  - 2) Relationships which are broken
    - a. Effects of sin on self and society (social sin)
  - 3) Choosing Life
    - a. Conversion
    - b. Stories of Christian heroes and heroines
- b) Ritual
  - 1) Scriptural traditions and themes: (See references for younger grades.)
    - a. Mercy
    - b. Compassion
    - c. Forgiveness
  - 2) Signs and Symbols (sign of the cross, laying on of hands, sign of peace and absolution)
    - a. Formats of celebration – reading God's word, contrition, confession, penance, absolution
- c) New Attitudes
  - 1) Making decisions
  - 2) Knowing the source for being healed

4. Rituals

The governance for celebration of the Sacrament of Penance is found in *The Code of Canon Law* and *The Rite of Penance*.

## First Penance Programs

The diocese recommends main-line publishers for First Penance catechesis:

Benziger

First Reconciliation (Primary Grades – English and Spanish)

1-800-334-7344

5808 Breckenridge Parkway, Suite A

Tampa, FL 33610

[benziger.glencoe.com](http://benziger.glencoe.com)

Benziger

Reconciliation (Intermediates Grades)

1-800-334-7344

5808 Breckenridge Parkway, Suite A

Tampa, FL 33610

[benziger.glencoe.com](http://benziger.glencoe.com)

Harcourt Religion Publishers

Celebrating Our Faith – Reconciliation

1-800-922-7696

[www.brownroa.com](http://www.brownroa.com)

Living the Good News

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Silver Burdett Ginn Religion

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4350 Equity Drive

P.O. Box 2649

Columbus, OH 43216

[www.sbgreligion.com](http://www.sbgreligion.com)

## VII. SPECIAL ISSUES

### *A. CELEBRATION OF SACRAMENTS WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES*

In compliance with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of Pueblo provides guidelines for making all forms of liturgy and sacraments accessible to persons with disabilities. The inclusion of these special people provides the community of the faithful with a reminder that the Christian community reflects the diversity of Gods love.

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. By reason of their Baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.
2. Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.
3. Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active and conscious participation, according to their capacity. Pastoral ministers should not presume to know the needs of person with disabilities, but rather they should consult with them or their advocates before making determinations about the accessibility of a parish's facilities and the availability of its programs, policies and ministries. These adaptations are an ordinary part of the liturgical life of the parish. While full accessibility may not always be possible for every parish, it is desirable that at least one fully accessible community be available in a given area. Parishes may, in fact, decide to collaborate in the provision of services to those with disabilities.
4. Since the parish is the center of the Christian experience for most Catholics, pastoral ministers should make every effort to determine the presence of all Catholics with disabilities who reside within a parish's boundaries. Special effort should be made to welcome those parishioners with disabilities who live in institutions or group homes and are unable to frequent their parish churches or participate in parish activities. However, pastoral ministers should remember that many persons with disabilities still reside with their families. Pastoral visitation, the parish census and the diverse forms of parish diocesan social communication are just a few of the many ways in which the pastoral staff can work toward the inclusion of all parishioners in the parish's sacramental life.
5. In accord with Canon 777.4, pastors are responsible to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, their advocates and their families, as well as those knowledgeable in serving disabled persons can make a most valuable contribution to those programs. Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners

- with disabilities. Further, parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry, e.g. as care ministers, catechists, etc.
6. The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodation to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities. Pastoral ministers are encouraged to develop specific programs aimed at forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all of God's people around the table of the Lord.

## PARTICULAR SACRAMENTS

### *BAPTISM*

1. Through the sacrament of Baptism the faithful are incorporated into Christ and into his Church. They are formed into God's people and obtain forgiveness of all their sins.  
They become a new creation and are called, rightly, the children of God.
2. Because it is the sacrament of universal salvation, Baptism is to be available to all who freely ask for it, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving it. Baptism may be deferred only when there is no reason for hoping that the person will be brought up in the Catholic religion. Disability, of itself, is never a reason for postponing or refusing Baptism. Persons who lack the use of reason are to be baptized provided at least one parent or guardian consents to it.
3. So that baptism may be seen as a sacrament of the church's faith and of admittance into the people of God, it should be celebrated ordinarily in the parish church on a Sunday, or if possible at the Easter Vigil. The church, made present in the local community, has an important role to play in the baptism of all of its members. Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the baptized have the right to the love and help of the community.
4. Either personally or through others, the pastor is to see to it that the parents of an infant who is disabled, or those who take the place of the parents, are properly instructed as to the meaning of the sacrament of Baptism and the obligations attached to it. If possible, either the pastor or a member of the parish community should visit with the family, offering them the strength and support of the community which rejoices at the gift of new life and which promises to nurture the faith of its newest member. It is recommended that preparation programs for Baptism gather several families together so that they may commonly be formed by pastoral direction and prayer, and so that they may be strengthened by mutual support.
5. If the person to be baptized is of catechetical age, the Rite of Christian Initiation may be adapted according to need.
6. A sponsor is to be chosen who will assist the newly baptized in Christian initiation. Sponsors have a special role in fostering the faith life of the baptized person. As such, they are to be chosen and prepared accordingly. Persons with disabilities may be sponsors for these sacraments of initiation.

## *CONFIRMATION*

1. Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of Confirmation. In this way they receive the Holy Spirit, conforming them more perfectly to Christ and strengthening them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his body in faith and love.
2. Parents, those who care for persons with disabilities and shepherds of souls, especially pastors, are to see to it that the faithful who have been baptized are properly instructed to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and to approach it at the appropriate time. The diocesan bishop is obliged to see that the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred on his subjects who properly and reasonably request it.
3. All baptized, unconfirmed Catholics who possess the use of reason may receive the sacrament of Confirmation if they are suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew their baptismal promises. Persons who because of developmental or mental disabilities may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time.
4. Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful between the age of discretion (which is about the age of 7) and about 16 years of age, within the limits determined by the diocesan bishop, or when there is a danger of death or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause urges otherwise.
5. A sponsor for the one to be confirmed should be present. The sponsor assists the confirmed person on the continuing path of Christian initiation. For this reason, it is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at Baptism be the sponsor for Confirmation.

## *EUCCHARIST*

1. The Eucharist is the most august sacrament, in which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered and received, and by which the church constantly lives and grows. It is the summit and the source of all Christian worship and life, signifying and effecting the unity of the people of God, providing spiritual nourishment for the faithful and achieving the building up of the body of Christ. The celebration of the Eucharist is the center of the entire Christian life.
2. Parents, those who take the place of parents and pastors are to see to it that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the eucharist as early as possible. Pastors are to be vigilant lest any children come to the holy banquet who have not reached the use of reason or whom they judge are not sufficiently disposed. It is important to note, however, that the criterion for reception of holy communion is the same for persons with developmental and mental disabilities as for all persons, namely that the person be able to distinguish the body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture or reverential silence rather than verbally. Pastors are encouraged to consult with parents, those who take the place of parents, diocesan personnel involved with disability issues, psychologists, religious educators and other experts in making their judgement. If it is determined that a parishioner who is disabled is not ready to receive the

sacrament, great care is to be taken in explaining the reasons for this decision. Cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the baptized person to receive the sacrament. The existence of a disability is not considered in and of itself as disqualifying a person from receiving the eucharist.

3. Eucharistic celebrations are often enhanced by the exercise of the diverse forms of ministry open to the laity. In choosing those who will be invited to use their gifts in service to the parish community, the parish pastoral staff should be mindful of extending Christ's welcoming invitation to qualified parishioners with disabilities.

### *RECONCILIATION*

1. In the sacrament of Reconciliation, the Christian faithful obtain from the mercy of God pardon for their sins. At the same time they are reconciled with the church, which they have wounded by their sins and which works for their conversion by charity, example and prayer.
2. Only those who have the use of reason are capable of committing serious sin. Nevertheless, even small children and persons with mental disabilities often are conscious of committing acts that are sinful to some degree and may experience a sense of guilt and sorrow. As long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution. Those with profound mental disabilities who cannot experience even minimal contrition may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability.
3. Catholics who are deaf should have the opportunity to confess to a priest able to communicate with them in sign language if sign language is their primary means of communication. They may also confess through an approved sign language interpreter of their choice. The interpreter is strictly bound to respect the seal of confession. When no priest with signing skills is available, Catholics who are deaf should be permitted to make their confession in writing. The written materials are to be returned to the penitent or otherwise properly destroyed.
4. In the case of individuals with poor communication skills, sorrow for sin is to be accepted even if this repentance is expressed through some gesture rather than verbally. In posing questions and in the assignment of penances, the confessor is to proceed with prudence and discretion, mindful that he is at once judge and healer, minister-of justice as well as of mercy.

## *B. HOME SCHOOLING*

The diocese recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children (*CCL - #773, 776, 777; GDC – 226, CT – 68*). Some parents choose to live out their role of primary educators by providing formal and informal catechesis at home.

The same documents listed above also speak of the responsibility of the parish and pastor (or his delegate, usually the parish director of religious education) in providing catechetical instruction for the faithful. The rights and responsibilities of parents and the local parish call for collaboration between the two. These guidelines are for the purpose of insuring a cooperative partnership between parish leadership and parents who are home schooling in the ways of faith.

Parents, who are home schooling their children, are expected to fulfill the special requirements of parish sacramental preparation, including retreats, sacramental celebrations (or whatever the parish offers). Parents are expected to use diocesan recommended texts and they are to provide the parish with the necessary documentation (child's baptism certificate). Parents, the pastor or his delegate and the child/youth discern the readiness of the child/youth for celebrating a sacrament. Parishes may also require the attendance of home school children at sacramental classes with their peers to create community and unity among this segment of the parish and to express the communal, social, ecclesial and personal nature of the sacraments.

## REFERENCES USED IN DOCUMENT

- CCC - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- CCL - *Code of Canon Law*
- CLS - *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*
- CT - *Catechesis in Our Time*
- GDC - *General Directory for Catechesis*
- IFB - *Instruction on Infant Baptism*
- NCD - *National Catechetical Directory*
- RC - *The Rite of Confirmation*
- RCIA - *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*
- RP - *The Rite of Penance*
- WE - *Worship of Eucharist*