

Procedure for Baptized Catholics to Celebrate Sacramental Initiation

(or to begin Celebrating Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and/or Eucharist)

Revised (9/1/15)

Updated (July 2020)

Baptism begins the life of Christian discipleship. As Catholics, we are strengthened by Confirmation and reception of the Eucharist. In formation for completing the Sacraments of Initiation, we seek to deepen our personal commitment to Jesus Christ, inviting the candidates to consider their personal relationship with Jesus and His Church family. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important part of preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist for the first time for any baptized person who has the use of reason.

Generally, a baptized Catholic should begin formation for these Sacraments at the age of reason (7 years old). **NB:** A similar procedure should be followed for those baptized Catholics that have already celebrated Confirmation or Eucharist and are seeking to complete their sacramental initiation.

In order to facilitate help to households, parish sessions for the initiation Sacraments should not be part of the regular faith formation program in the parish/mission/school. These sessions should include all members of the family or household whether they are separate or together. All members should be participating in some type of catechesis.

UPDATED: *The catechesis for these sacraments does not need to be a separate program and can take place during regularly-scheduled faith formation sessions, although there is no prohibition against a separate program. Offering family workshops/retreats will continue to be the norm.*

- A. **Interviews:** An interview with the family or household of the candidate should include an invitation to all family members to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; discernment as to what stage of discipleship the adults in the family are so as to mentor them toward a living faith. This should be done each year as the candidate progresses in his/her formation. Another option is to have an information session with several families. It is important to meet them and guide them into the direction of ongoing formation for each individual.
 - B. **Retreat:** One of the sessions in formation for each sacrament should be a retreat with the household of faith to give them time to pray, reflect; discuss their journey of discipleship, faith, and personal relationship with Christ. This can be led by a catechist or priest with several parishes together if parishes are small.
 - C. **Assessment:** There should be an opportunity for an objective evaluation of their preparedness at the end of each year. This might be done by either individual discussion or by a group discussion with several candidates. This assessment should not resemble an examination but provide a chance for the pastor or some designated leadership of the community to hear from the candidate their desire and readiness for celebrating the Sacraments.
- I. Petition to begin formation for celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist for the first time.**
- A. A candidate seeking formation to celebrate Confirmation/reception of the Eucharist for the first time begins with a petition submitted to the parish priest to begin formation for Reconciliation, leading to Confirmation and Eucharist. For a child who begins to have the use of reason, about 7 years of age, the parents or guardian

should submit the petition.

- B. A copy of the Baptismal record of the candidate should be included with the petition. This both emphasizes that Baptism is the foundation sacrament, and it is necessary so that when Confirmation and Eucharist are celebrated the appropriate notice can be readily sent to the church of Baptism.
- C. All those in the household who desire sacraments should be helped to work together in preparing themselves for celebration of the Sacraments together.
- D. The parish priest in accepting the petition should include the candidate's name in the prayer list for the parish that they might be included in prayer by the parish community.

UPDATED: *The catechesis for the Sacraments of Confession, Confirmation and First Eucharist will be a **minimum** of two years. This will include one year of systematic catechesis. However, parents, as primary educators of their children, may believe their children need more or less time to be ready to receive their sacraments. These instances should be reviewed with each family as they come forward.*

II. Year I: Initial Formation - Catechesis on the 16 Goals with emphasis on Baptism (First half of the year would be six hourly sessions) which can be done in various time slots.) Interview, Retreat, and Assessment should be included as part of this formation.

- A. The candidate takes an active role in his/her formation. For minors, this is properly facilitated by parents as the primary educators of their children. The parish community should offer help to candidates, and households of faith.
- B. The Curriculum Guide provides goals, objectives, and activities for this formation for both households and candidates.
- C. Each parish should be aware of individuals with special needs. With some adaptation and individual attention many people with special needs can be presented as candidates for the Sacraments.

III. Year I: Catechesis for First Reconciliation - (Second half of the year would be six hourly sessions) which can be done in various time slots.) Interview, Retreat, and Assessment should be included as part of this formation.

- A. Candidates for First Reconciliation should be helped to identify sin in their lives. Parents should be helped to identify when their child is ready to celebrate First Reconciliation. When the candidate is ready he/she should begin celebrating Confession monthly as he or she continues to prepare for the additional sacraments.

UPDATED: *The Sacrament of Confession is to be celebrated monthly at least six months prior to receiving Confirmation and Eucharist.*

- B. Once ready, candidates are free to choose to whom and when they will celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents can choose to bring the child with them at one of the regular Confession times, or to a parish Reconciliation Service, or to make an appointment for a special time. Ideally, the parents and others in the household of faith will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the child. This helps to affirm that the Sacrament is a part of the Christian life.

IV. Year II: Formation for Confirmation-10 hour sessions/ or *16 hour sessions Interview, Retreat, and Assessment are included in this formation.

- A. Formation for the Sacrament of Confirmation should take one year (10 hours) emphasizing the Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Gifts of the Spirit, the renewal of Baptismal promises, and reviewing the basic tenets of the faith.

- B. * Review of Baptism, 16 Goals, and Reconciliation should be part of this formation if the candidate has already celebrated Reconciliation and Eucharist and is only completing the Sacrament of Confirmation. (Six additional hours are required in addition to the 10 for Confirmation.)
- C. The Office of Faith Formation can assist parishes and household to provide resources for age appropriate catechesis which is developmentally appropriate.

V. Year III: Formation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist -10 hour sessions Interview, Retreat, and Assessment are included in this formation.

- A. First part of the year should include catechesis on the signs and symbols of the sacrament, the presence of Christ in the Liturgy, Adoration, and how to receive Communion.
- B. Second part of the year should focus on the Eucharistic Liturgy and the particular parts of the Mass. This catechesis should be presented with priests as catechists. Celebration of both Confirmation and Eucharist will take place following this year once the readiness has been established.
- C. Frequently during this year the parts of the Mass should be explained specifically to children.

VI. Establishing Readiness

- A. Each candidate should submit a written reflection sheet when he/she is ready to be considered for the celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.
- B. As stated previously, at the end of each year of formation for individual sacraments there should be an assessment held by the parish to establish the candidates' readiness.

VII. Registration for a particular date for celebrating the sacrament

- A. The parish will announce scheduled date(s) for the Bishop to visit and celebrate Confirmation and Eucharist. (Each parish will schedule dates with the Bishop's Office as has been the practice.)
- B. Households with people who will be ready for the celebration of the sacrament should, in a timely fashion, register for the date they desire to celebrate the sacrament. (Some parishes/missions may have more than one date each year.)

VIII. Mystagogia/Discipleship Formation – 6 hours completed within one year.

- A. Once the individual has completed the sacraments of initiation he/she is now moving forward as a “disciple in training” to live their life as a follower of Jesus Christ. *Forming Intentional Disciples* will be the content for these 6 sessions.
- B. Additionally, catechesis on Goals 9-16 deal with discipleship and should be included in this formation.
- C. At the age of 12 or 13, the Diocesan Youth Discipleship Ministry provides opportunities for a living faith at this stage of the individual's life. Parish programs should support and include these opportunities in the life of their communities.
- D. Ongoing faith formation for all individuals in the parish community is vital to the growth of a living faith at all stages of life. Parishes should provide and encourage all individuals from womb to tomb to engage in meaningful faith enrichment activities that involve word, worship, service and community.