



Becoming Disciples - Information for Families

Sacraments of Initiation for Children

When Jesus was on earth he called people to follow him, learn about God his Father and God's kingdom. These disciples eventually were able to share the Good News of a loving God with others and draw more followers to Jesus. These people continued this work after Jesus died, rose and returned to heaven. This is how the church began and how it continued for over 2,000 years.

Being a disciple begins with having a personal relationship with Jesus. In the Catholic Church we mark the beginning of this relationship with the sacrament of Baptism. Not only does Baptism begin a relationship with God, it also celebrates the place a person has within the Christian Community, namely the Church. Catholics have the opportunity to grow and develop their faith relationships through the sacraments, in particular the sacraments of initiation.

Your child has the opportunity to grow and develop their faith within the church through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion. The preparation for and the celebration of these sacraments is quite involved and requires a fair degree of commitment from both the Church and your family. Your child is already blessed by your decision to prepare for the sacraments of initiation.

While your parish church community is there to support your child in their faith development it is ultimately your choice as to when and how they participate. Typically children prepare for the sacraments with their peers or in a family group. There are many reasons why families make the choices they do about faith education and it is up to the church to accommodate their wishes as much as possible. It is important to remember the parish resources are limited so not every wish can be accommodated.

Most parishes encourage families to attend Sunday masses where children preparing for sacraments are acknowledged while celebrating with the community. Time spent in prayer and conversation with a child can be very fruitful in personalising meaning as they prepare to receive a sacrament in a group. Sharing the journey with sibling, friends and grandparents can also enrich a child's experience. The choice of a gift to mark the occasion can help make these memories last.



The ideal described in 'Becoming Disciples - Diocesan Policy on Sacraments of Initiation for Children' is a family-centred, parish-based and school supported program with joyful discipleship as its goal. The success of such a program depends on each family, parish and school in the partnership, a prayerful partnership which focuses upon the faith formation of children. Depending upon the resources of the parish special attention may be provided for families who have children with disabilities or additional needs. Please communicate these needs clearly to parish leaders as early as possible.

Catechists and teachers in schools have a vital role in the ongoing teaching of the faith to children but when it comes to preparing for a sacrament it is the parish which rightly guides the process. Many parishes are blessed with dedicated catechists and teachers who accompany families through the sacraments of initiation. Parents often find that they too can assist

each other with hospitality and guidance along the way to a child receiving a sacrament.

The home has long been recognised as the place where the faith is caught. Similar to love of others, love of God is learnt by children most effectively when experienced in the families. Praying, reading Bible stories and discussing God's place in our lives are some of the ways families naturally hand on the Catholic Christian faith to their kids. Preparing a child for Reconciliation, Confirmation or Holy Communion is a great time to renew the practice of faith in our homes. Simple things like decorations, books and grace before meals can create an environment where a child's love of God can be encouraged and supported.

When the holiness of a home is complimented with the sacredness of church, a child is given the best possible chance of spiritual wellbeing which is built on faith, hope and charity. Christian spirituality has been proven to provide children with optimism, resilience and generosity, all the hallmarks of a positive individual who is ready to experience life to the full.

Congratulations for choosing to pass on the Catholic faith to your child. It is a treasured heritage which has served families well for centuries and with the help of you and your family, will continue to bring God's love to our world today. We pray that you find nourishment in the experience of the sacraments during this special time and into the rest of your life.

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