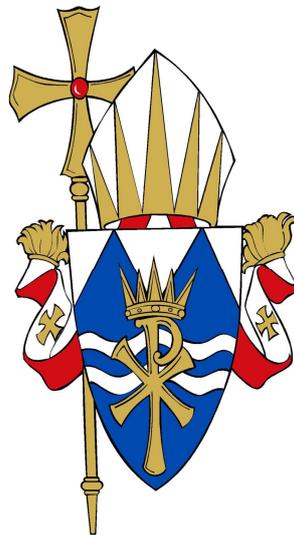


# **Diocese of Parramatta**

## **Policy on Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacrament of Penance for Children of Catechetical Age who have been Baptised**







My dear People,

I am pleased to present to you the policy for the administration of the Sacraments of Initiation and First Confession for Children who have been baptised in the Diocese of Parramatta.

This policy takes up the 'Pionine' sequence of the Sacraments of Initiation which allows the preparation for First Confession and First Holy Communion to take place in different years and before preparation for Confirmation. This separation allows for appropriate catechises at different age levels. Our goal is to give our children and their families the best possible experience of initiation into God's family and every encouragement to see that initiation through, in a life lived in faith, hope and love. The Sacramental preparation and ongoing catechesis is parish-based, family-centred and school-supported. Therefore, parish, home and school form a partnership in Faith.

In Baptism we receive the gift of new life in Christ and begin a new and wonderful relationship with God. We continue to deepen this relationship nourished by the Eucharist and are bound more perfectly to the Church and strengthened by the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. Through the Sacrament of Penance we follow Jesus' call to conversion.

Christian initiation, through the means of the sacraments, forms the foundation of Christian life. It is the effectiveness of the sacraments of initiation that is of importance: *so that the faithful can be helped both to mature through the formation received in our communities and to give their lives an authentically Eucharistic direction, so that they can offer a reason for the hope within them in a way suited to our times.*<sup>1</sup>

I want to thank our priests, sacramental teams, parents, teachers and catechists for their energetic work to date and to express my confidence that you will continue to form our young people well for their lives ahead.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Anthony Fisher OP  
Bishop of Parramatta

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<sup>1</sup> Sacramentum Caritatis 18

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## THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE CHURCH TEACHING

*The Sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and of the Church, they are signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about. Thus they contribute in the most effective manner to establishing, strengthening and manifesting ecclesiastical communion.*<sup>2</sup>

*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.*<sup>3</sup>

The sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation - lay the foundations of every Christian life. *The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.*<sup>4</sup>

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.

*At 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.*<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Confirmation fills us with the Holy Spirit and makes us more completely the image of the Lord, so that we bear witness to him before the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness.<sup>6</sup>

*Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, we receive in increasing measure, the treasures of divine life and advance towards the perfection of charity.*<sup>7</sup>

*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.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Code of Canon Law (CIC), 1983. canon 840

<sup>3</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 1229

<sup>4</sup> CCC 1212

<sup>5</sup> Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), General Introduction 2

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* 2

<sup>7</sup> Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation

<sup>8</sup> RCIA General Introduction 2

Whilst the Sacrament of Penance is not one of the Sacraments of Initiation, it is however a requirement for receiving First Eucharist and Confirmation.<sup>9</sup> *Conversion to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the Body and Blood of Christ received as food, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit make us “holy and without blemish.” Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin.*<sup>10</sup> Sacramental Reconciliation with God and neighbour disposes us to receive the graces of the Eucharist and Confirmation.

## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Initiation into the life of the Church is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful.<sup>11</sup> The whole community is responsible for passing on its faith, its story, values and traditions to the next generation; and for introducing its children into the Sacramental life of the Church. The participation of the whole faith community is required prior to, during and after the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation.<sup>12</sup>

## INITIATION

- In the process of initiation there are three sacramental moments: Baptism, the Eucharist and Confirmation. These three sacraments together accomplish Christian Initiation: *Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (vitae spiritualis ianua), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word.”*<sup>13</sup>
- Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.<sup>14</sup> Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. *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.*<sup>15</sup>
- *The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. 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.*<sup>16</sup>
- *By the sacrament of Confirmation, (the baptised) 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.*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> CIC 914

<sup>10</sup> CCC 1426

<sup>11</sup> RCIA 4

<sup>12</sup> cf. RCIA 9

<sup>13</sup> CCC 1213

<sup>14</sup> CCC 1427

<sup>15</sup> CCC 1428

<sup>16</sup> CCC 1324

<sup>17</sup> CCC 1285

- Whilst the ages of the reception of the sacraments vary and different traditions exist within the Church regarding the order of the Sacraments of Initiation, the variations are of pastoral character. It is the effectiveness of the Sacraments of Initiation that is of importance: *so that the faithful can be helped both to mature through the formation received in our communities and to give their lives an authentically Eucharistic direction, so that they can offer a reason for the hope within them in a way suited to our times.*<sup>18</sup>
- It is appropriate within the Confirmation celebration that it include the process of renewal of Baptismal promises, sealing with the gift of the Spirit (Confirmation) and then proceed to the Eucharistic table, so that the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation is emphasised.
- The Sacrament of Penance is a preparation for the reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation. It is the responsibility of the parish priest and parents to ensure that children be presented for the Sacrament of Penance prior to the reception of First Eucharist.<sup>19</sup>

Parish, home and school form a partnership in Faith.

## FAMILY

The parents as the children's first and principle educators, provide an introduction to the Sacraments by word and example.

- *Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelising their children.<sup>20</sup> Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children.<sup>21</sup> Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith.*<sup>22</sup>
- The family unit, the *domestic church*,<sup>23</sup> has the primary responsibility to form and gradually increase the spirit of faith in the children.<sup>24</sup> It is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human family during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis to the full human and Christian maturity.<sup>25</sup> This sharing enables parents to lead their child to an understanding of and a desire for the sacraments. The parish-based, family-centred, school-supported sacramental process creates particular opportunities for parents to continue sharing their faith with their child at the appropriate time.
- As part of fulfilling this responsibility and in preparing their child for the sacraments, parents along with other parish members need to be intimately involved. Parents are an essential part of the discerning which needs to precede presentation of their child for sacramental celebrations.<sup>26</sup>
- There is faith, example, motivation, devotion, zeal and other gifts that have an important bearing on initiation. These must come first from the parents, then from the parish community.

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<sup>18</sup> Sacramentum Caritatis (SC) 18

<sup>19</sup> CIC 914

<sup>20</sup> CCC 2225; cf. Familiaris Consortio (FC) 38

<sup>21</sup> CCC 2223

<sup>22</sup> CCC 2226

<sup>23</sup> CCC 2204

<sup>24</sup> Rite of Confirmation 3

<sup>25</sup> FC 2

<sup>26</sup> cf. RCIA 43

## PARISH

The parish supports the home by providing a more systematic catechesis through parish-based family-centred, school-supported programs of sacramental preparation.

- *The parish is the place where the Christian community is formed and expressed. It is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God.*<sup>27</sup>
- Whether we speak of the initiation of adults or children, *initiation is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful.*<sup>28</sup> The parish community is the vital instrument in this process by which *God's people, the Church, hands on and nourishes the faith received from the apostles.*<sup>29</sup> *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.*<sup>30</sup>
- The parish sees itself as a community committed to conversion, to Gospel discipleship, shared faith and the on-going Christian formation which should precede and follow initiation. *In the various circumstances of daily life, even as in the apostolate, all the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading their faith according to their abilities.*<sup>31</sup> *The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.*<sup>32</sup>
- For the initiation of the child the sacramental preparation process is properly situated in the evangelizing parish community, since this is the community into which the candidate is being initiated. *Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community.*<sup>33</sup> This is the community which expresses joy<sup>34</sup> at welcoming the infant to be baptised and which, through its involvement in sacramental preparation is able to live out the implications of that welcome.

## SCHOOL

The school complements these endeavours by focusing on particular sacramental celebrations, and by including a systematic study of the Sacraments in its Religious Education program.

- The Catholic School Religious Education curriculum and the SRE curriculum complement and highlight the parish-based, family-centred, school-supported programme.
- In a similar manner, SRE teachers provide support to parents of children in the State schools by focusing on the Sacraments of Initiation at opportune times during the year.
- By recognising the gifts of the Religious Education Coordinatorø and the Religious Education Teachers as experts in catechesis, our hope and expectation is that they will assist in the preparation and the liturgy.

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<sup>27</sup> cf. General Directory for Catechesis 257

<sup>28</sup> RCIA 4

<sup>29</sup> Ad Gentes (AG) 14

<sup>30</sup> RCIA 9

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 9

<sup>32</sup> CCC 1255

<sup>33</sup> Rite of Baptism for Children 4

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 79

# PASTORAL PRACTICE

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### Presentation

- Children should be presented for baptism soon after their birth.<sup>35</sup>
- Parents presenting children for Baptism are to be made aware of Diocesan policy regarding subsequent sacramental preparation of their children and the expectation that they participate in the parish-based, family-centered, school-supported sacramental preparation.
- Parents of children who have been Baptised and have reached the age of discretion are invited to present their child as a candidate for the Sacrament of Penance, the First Eucharist and later the Sacrament of Confirmation.
  - I. Catechesis on the Sacrament of Penance and the celebration of the First Confession will normally take place at the age of 7 or 8.
  - II. Catechesis on Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist and reception of First Holy Communion will normally take place in the following year at the age of 8 or 9.
  - III. Catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation and completion of initiation by reception of Confirmation will normally take place at the age of 10 or 11.
- Such an invitation will originate from the parish priest and members of the sacramental team.
- Responses to such invitations should be directed to the parish priest and members of the parish sacramental team.
- Responsibility for the acceptance of candidates lies with the parish priest or his delegated representative.
- Presentation of candidates for immediate sacramental preparation normally takes place within the parish Sunday Eucharist.<sup>36</sup>
- Only for a grave reason will a parish priest deny or postpone reception of any of the Sacraments of Initiation to a child whose parents seek that sacrament for their child. When in doubt priests should always err in favour of giving the sacraments. Parents have a right in such cases to appeal to the Bishop.

### Celebration

- Responsibility for overseeing the preparation of liturgical celebrations, Baptism, First Confession, First Eucharist and Confirmation belongs to the parish priest. Those preparing the liturgies should do so in accordance with the norms issued by the local Bishop.

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<sup>35</sup> CIC 867

<sup>36</sup> cf. RCIA 41 - 47

## **Sacramental Team**

- A sacramental team is to be established by the parish priest to assist in co-ordinating the preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation. This team will be developed with a balance of personnel according to local needs. The parish priest should ensure opportunities for the ongoing formation of all members of the team.
- The role of the sacramental co-ordinator is to support the parish priest in the sacramental catechesis in the parish.

## **Sacramental Preparation and Ongoing Catechesis**

- The parish-based, family-centred, school-supported process is to provide opportunities for parents to come together to inquire and reflect upon the faith into which their children are being initiated.
- The parish priest is responsible for providing ongoing catechesis for the community, parents and children before, during and after the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation. It is appropriate that this happen during the Sunday Eucharist and at other appropriate times.
- Opportunities should be taken to involve members of the parish community in the process of preparation.<sup>37</sup>

## **Reflection on the Process**

- The parish-based, family-centred, school-supported process is to be regularly evaluated and assessed by parents, pastors, sacramental teams, teachers and catechists.

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<sup>37</sup> cf. CCC 1255; cf. RCIA 9

# SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

## PASTORAL PRINCIPLES FOR BAPTISM

### Preparation

- *It is the duty of the priest to prepare families for the Baptism of their children and to help them in the task of Christian formation which they have undertaken.*<sup>38</sup> He is to involve members of the parish community to assist parents in their preparation. The whole parish community is expected to support families in their ongoing faith journey.<sup>39</sup>
- Godparents are to prepare for the Baptism along with the parents.<sup>40</sup> They represent the wider community and as such are expected to help the parents in their Christian duty as mothers and fathers.<sup>41</sup>

### Celebration

- Parts of the Rite of Infant Baptism may be celebrated during Sunday Eucharist, for example, naming of the child, blessing of parents, welcoming into the community through signing with the cross or Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens.<sup>42</sup>
- For an infant to be baptized lawfully it is required:
  - I. that the parents, or at least one of them, or the person who lawfully holds their place give their consent;
  - II. that there be a founded or reasonable hope (*spes habeatur fundata*) that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion. If such hope is truly lacking, the baptism is, in accordance with the provisions of particular law, to be deferred and the parents advised of the reason for this.<sup>43</sup>
- *As a rule and unless a just reason suggests otherwise, an adult is to be baptised in his or her proper parish church, and an infant in the proper parish church of the parents.*<sup>44</sup>

### Post-Baptismal Catechesis

- The parish priest and Baptismal team are to provide a *post-Baptismal catechesis*<sup>45</sup>, where the parents are given a fuller and more effective understanding of the sacrament their child has celebrated. Post baptismal catechesis is ongoing in the life of the family and the community of the faithful.
- *For the grace of baptism to unfold, the parent's 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. Their task is a truly ecclesial function. The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.*<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> RBC 7:1; cf. CIC 843:2

<sup>39</sup> cf. RCIA 9; cf. RBC 7:1; cf. Instruction on Infant Baptism (IIB) 33

<sup>40</sup> cf. CIC 851:2; cf. CCC 1255

<sup>41</sup> cf. Rite of Baptism for Children (RBC) 2, 40; cf. CIC. 851:2; cf. CCC 1255

<sup>42</sup> cf. RCIA 41-55; 90-93; 98-100

<sup>43</sup> CIC 868

<sup>44</sup> CIC 857:2

<sup>45</sup> cf. CCC 1231

<sup>46</sup> CCC 1255

## LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR BAPTISM

### Reception of the Children

- *If possible, Baptism should take place on Sunday, the day on which the Church celebrates the paschal mystery. It should be conferred in a communal celebration of all the recently born children, and in the presence of the faithful, or at least of relatives, friends, and neighbours, who are all to take an active part in the rite.*<sup>47</sup>

### Procession

- *The celebrant invites the parents, godparents, and others to take part in the liturgy of the word. If circumstances permit, there is a procession to the place where this will be celebrated, during which a song is sung.*<sup>48</sup> *The celebration of baptism is greatly enhanced by the use of song. It stimulates a sense of unity among those present, it gives warmth to their common prayer, and it expresses the joy of Easter.*<sup>49</sup>
- To move everyone from the reception toward the sharing of the word, the rite envisions a procession with accompanying song at this point. The rite calls for a procession with accompanying song to begin each of its four stages:
  1. to the door or entrance of the church for the reception.<sup>50</sup>
  2. to the ambo or seating area for the liturgy of the word.<sup>51</sup>
  3. to the baptistry for the baptism.<sup>52</sup>
  4. to the altar for the concluding prayers.<sup>53</sup>

### Baptism within Mass

- *If baptism takes place during Sunday Mass, the Mass for that Sunday is used, and the celebration takes place as follows.*<sup>54</sup>

*The rite of receiving the children takes place at the beginning of Mass, and the greeting and penitential rite are omitted.*

*In the liturgy of the word:*

- The readings are taken from the Mass of the Sunday or, for special reasons, from those provided in the baptismal rite.*
- The homily is based on the sacred texts, but should take account of the baptism which is to take place.*
- The creed is not said, since the profession of faith by the entire community before baptism takes its place.*
- The general intercessions are taken from those used in the rite of baptism (Nos. 47–48, 217–220). At the end, however, before the invocation of the saints, petitions are added for the universal Church and the needs of the world.*

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<sup>47</sup> RBC 32

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* 42

<sup>49</sup> RBC 33

<sup>50</sup> *cf.* RBC 35

<sup>51</sup> *cf.* RBC 42

<sup>52</sup> *cf.* RBC 52

<sup>53</sup> *cf.* RBC. 67

<sup>54</sup> *Intro.* RBC 29

- *The celebration of baptism continues with the prayer of exorcism, anointing, and other ceremonies described in the rite (nos.49–66).*
- *Either the rite of immersion, which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, or the rite of infusion may lawfully be used in the celebration of baptism.<sup>55</sup>*
- *After the celebration of baptism, the Mass continues in the usual way with the offertory.*

*For the blessing at the end of Mass, the priest may use one of the formulas provided in the rite of baptism (nos.70, 247–249).<sup>56</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup> RBC 22

<sup>56</sup> Intro. RBC 29

# SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

## PASTORAL PRINCIPLES FOR PENANCE

### Preparation

- It is the responsibility of the parish priest and parents to ensure that children be presented for the Sacrament of Penance prior to the reception of First Eucharist.<sup>57</sup>
  - It is recommended that the parish-based, family-centred, school-supported sacrament approach be used in preparation for the first reception of the Sacrament of Penance.
  - Parents and children participate together in small group gatherings.
    - (a) Such a process provides opportunities for faith sharing between parents and children. It is important that the children experience their parents passing on the faith rather than the group leader.<sup>58</sup>
    - (b) This process provides opportunities for child-to-child and adult-to-adult faith sharing and support.
- Pastoral needs may necessitate other forms of preparation. This will be discerned by the parish priest.
- The formation process is to include detailed guidance and suggestions regarding activities outside of group sessions. This would include prayer, reflection and sharing between parents and child to provide a lived family faith experience.

### Celebration

- The Sacrament of Penance may take place in the form of either the First or Second Rite.
- The Sacrament of Penance is ordinarily celebrated in a church or oratory.<sup>59</sup>
- As with all sacraments, Penance is a liturgical action. The elements of the celebration are: a greeting and blessing from the priest, reading the word of God to illuminate the conscience and elicit contrition, and an exhortation to repentance; the confession, which acknowledges sins and makes them known to the priest; the imposition and acceptance of a penance; the priest's absolution; a prayer of thanksgiving and praise and dismissal with the blessing of the priest.<sup>60</sup>

### Ongoing Catechesis and Pastoral Care

- It is the responsibility of the parish priest, family and parish community to assist those who have received the Sacrament of Penance for the first time. For they should be encouraged to frequently approach the sacrament. This will enable them to grow in the love of God and understand the need for forgiveness and conversion in their lives.

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<sup>57</sup> cf. CIC 914

<sup>58</sup> cf. CCC 2226

<sup>59</sup> Rite of Penance 12

<sup>60</sup> CCC 1480

# FIRST EUCHARIST

## PASTORAL PRINCIPLES FOR FIRST EUCHARIST

### Preparation

- For the administration of the sacrament of the First Eucharist to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.<sup>61</sup>
  - It is required that children, before receiving First Eucharist, have been prepared for the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>62</sup>
  - It is the responsibility of parents in conjunction with the parish priest and sacramental team to assess the readiness of the child for the sacrament.<sup>63</sup>
  - The process for sacramental preparation is to be tailored to local needs, for example, language and cultural groups, children with intellectual disability or other special needs.<sup>64</sup>
  - Under ordinary circumstances all eligible children participate in the same preparation for the sacraments.
  - Parents and children participate together in small group gatherings.
    - (a) Such a process provides opportunities for faith sharing between parent and child. It is important that the children experience their parents passing on the faith rather than the group leader.<sup>65</sup>
    - (b) This process also provides opportunities for child-to-child and adult-to-adult faith sharing and support.
- Pastoral needs may necessitate other forms of preparation. This will be discerned by the parish priest.
- The formation process is to include detailed guidance and suggestions regarding activities outside of group sessions. This would include prayer, reflection and sharing between parents and child to provide a lived family faith experience.
  - Candidates should be encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance in the weeks prior to the receiving the First Eucharist. This can be according to either the First or Second Rite of Penance. Parents should be invited to participate also, as their witness is of great importance.

### Celebration

- Responsibility for overseeing liturgical celebrations belongs to the parish priest.
- First Eucharist should be celebrated within the parish Sunday Eucharist. This enables involvement of the wider parish community and also highlights the importance of Sunday.

### Ongoing Catechesis

- The parish community needs to create ongoing opportunities for the newly initiated; that they will develop a closer relationship with each other, a greater understanding of God's Word and of the sacraments.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> CIC 913

<sup>62</sup> CCC 914

<sup>63</sup> cf. RCIA 43; cf. FC 60

<sup>64</sup> cf. GDC 189-192

<sup>65</sup> cf. CCC 2226

## LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

### Importance and dignity of the Eucharistic celebration

- *The celebration of Mass is the action of Christ and the people of God hierarchically assembled. For both the universal and the local Church, and for each person, it is the centre of the whole Christian life.*<sup>67</sup>
- *The purpose of these rites will be accomplished if the celebration takes into account the nature and circumstances of each assembly and is planned to bring about conscious, active, and full participation of the people, motivated by faith, hope, and charity. Such participation of mind and body is desired by the Church, is demanded by the nature of the celebration, and is the right and duty of Christians by reason of their baptism.*<sup>68</sup>
- *The presence and active participation of the people show plainly the ecclesial nature of the celebration.*<sup>69</sup>

### Music

- *Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song, with the ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the people participating in it.*<sup>70</sup>
- *In order that the faithful may actively participate more willingly and with greater benefit, it is fitting that the format of the celebration and the degree of participation in it should be varied as much as possible, according to the solemnity of the day and the nature of the congregation present.*<sup>71</sup>
- *One cannot find anything more religious and more joyful in sacred celebrations than a whole congregation expressing its faith and devotion in song. Therefore the active participation of the whole people, which is shown in singing, is to be carefully promoted as follows:*
  - It should first of all include acclamations, responses to the greetings of the priest and ministers and to the prayers of litany form, and also antiphons and psalms, refrains or repeated responses, hymns and canticles.*
  - Through suitable instruction and practices, the people should be gradually led to a fuller – indeed, to a complete – participation in those parts of the singing which pertain to them.*<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> cf. RCIA 234

<sup>67</sup> GIRM Introduction 1

<sup>68</sup> ibid 3

<sup>69</sup> ibid 4

<sup>70</sup> Music Sacrum (MS) 5

<sup>71</sup> MS 10

<sup>72</sup> MS 16

## **Introductory Rites**

É*The parts preceding the Liturgy of the Word, namely, the entrance song, greeting, penitential rite, Kyrie, Gloria, and opening prayer or collect, have the character of beginning, introduction, and preparation.*

É*The purpose of these rites is to make the assembled people a unified community and to prepare them properly to listen to God's word and celebrate the Eucharist.*<sup>73</sup>

## **Entrance Song**

É*The entrance song is sung alternately by the choir and people or by the cantor and the people; or it is sung entirely by the people or the choir alone.*<sup>74</sup>

É*The purpose of this song is to open the celebration, deepen the unity of the people, introduce them to the mystery of the season or feast, and accompany the procession.*

## **Gloria**

É*The Gloria is sung or said on Sundays outside Advent and Lent, on solemnities and feasts, and at solemn local celebrations.*<sup>75</sup>

## **Liturgy of the Word**

É*Readings from scripture and the chants between the readings form the main part of the liturgy of the word.*<sup>76</sup> *In the readings the treasures of the Bible are opened to the people; this is the table of God's word.*<sup>77</sup>

## **General Intercessions**

É*In the General Intercessions or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in a certain way to the Word of God which they have welcomed in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is fitting that such a prayer be included, as a rule, in Masses celebrated with a congregation, so that petitions will be offered for the holy Church, for civil authorities, for those weighed down by various needs, for all men and women, and for the salvation of the whole world.*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> GIRM 24

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* 26

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.* 31

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 33

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.* 34

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* 69

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

### Preparation of the Gifts

É *In the preparation of the gifts, bread and wine are brought to the altar, the same elements which Christ used.*<sup>79</sup> *The procession with the gifts is accompanied by the offertory song, or music which continues at least until the gifts are placed on the altar. The rules for the offertory song are the same as those for the entrance song.*<sup>80</sup> It need not speak of bread, wine nor of offering. Instrumental music or silence may often be more effective.

### Eucharistic Prayer

É *The Eucharistic Prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification, is the centre and high point of the entire celebration.*<sup>81</sup>

É *Final doxology: the praise of God is expressed in the final doxology which is confirmed and concluded by the acclamation of the people. All should listen to the Eucharistic Prayer in silent reverence and share in it by making the acclamations.*<sup>82</sup> These are the (Sanctus) Holy Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation and Amen, and should always be sung.

### Communion Rite

É *During the breaking of the bread, and the commingling, the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) is ordinarily sung by the choir or cantor with the people responding or it may be said aloud.*

É *It is most desirable that the faithful should receive the body of the Lord in hosts consecrated at the same Mass and should share in the Chalice when it is permitted.*<sup>83</sup>

É *The song during the communion of the priest and people expresses the spiritual union of the communicants who join their voices in a single song. This song begins when the priest receives communion and continues as long as convenient. The communion song should be concluded in time if there is to be an additional hymn after communion.*<sup>84</sup>

### Concluding Rite

É *The concluding rite consists of:*

- (a) the priest's greeting and blessing which is on certain days and occasions expanded by the prayer over the people or other solemn form.*
- (b) the dismissal which sends each member of the congregation to do good works, praising and blessing the Lord.*<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* 48

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* 49

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* 54

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 54

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.* 56 (h)

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* 56 (i)

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.* 57

# LITURGICAL NORMS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF FIRST EUCHARIST

## Vestments

- Colour of vestments: When First Eucharist is celebrated during Easter, Holy Days and Solemnities, the colour of the day or season takes precedence. If First Eucharist is celebrated at a Mass on a Sunday during Ordinary Time the colour should be white, even though the readings are those of the Ordinary Sunday.

## Music

- Since music should enable the participation of the whole Assembly<sup>86</sup>, it needs to be familiar.
- The Acclamations of the Mass should be sung before all else, e.g. Gospel Acclamation; Holy Holy Holy; Memorial Acclamation; Great Amen. The Responsorial Psalm: at least the response should be sung.
- The use of a cantor and choir will assist the participation of the Assembly.
- The use of music which has a strong pattern of verse and response is a help to participation.
- Appropriate hymns texts should be used.
- Taped music used to lead the assembly in song, should be avoided.

## Photography

Under no circumstances is any form of photography, by the amateur or the professional, permitted during the celebration of the liturgy.

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<sup>86</sup> GIRM 26

# CONFIRMATION

## PASTORAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONFIRMATION

### Preparation

- It is the responsibility of parents in conjunction with the parish priest and sacramental team to assess the readiness of the child for the sacrament.<sup>87</sup>
- Candidates for Confirmation must not only have the use of reason, but be *suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises*.<sup>88</sup>
- The process for sacramental preparation is to be tailored to local needs, for example, language and cultural groups, children with intellectual disability or other special needs.<sup>89</sup>
- Under ordinary circumstances all eligible children participate in the same preparation for the sacraments.
- Parents and children participate together in small group gatherings.
  - (a) Such a process provides opportunities for faith sharing between parent and child. It is important that the children experience their parents passing on the faith rather than the group leader.<sup>90</sup>
  - (b) This process also provides opportunities for child-to-child and adult-to-adult faith sharing and support.

Pastoral needs may necessitate other forms of preparation. This will be discerned by the parish priest.

- The formation process is to include detailed guidance and suggestions regarding activities outside of group sessions. This would include prayer, reflection and sharing between parents and child to provide a lived family faith experience.
- Candidates should be encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance in the weeks prior to the receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. This can be according to either the First or Second Rite. Parents and sponsors should be invited to participate also, as their witness is of great importance.

### Celebration of the Sacrament

See: Liturgical Principles of First Eucharist

### Celebration

- *When Confirmation is celebrated separately from baptism, its connection with Baptism is expressed among other ways, by the renewal of baptismal promises. The celebration of Confirmation during the Eucharist helps underline the unity of the sacraments of Christian initiation.*<sup>91</sup> *The newly confirmed should participate in the Eucharist. Therefore the Sacrament of Confirmation will take place within Mass.*
- Responsibility for overseeing liturgical celebrations belongs to the parish priest, whilst adhering to the Diocesan guidelines. The prepared ceremony needs to be approved by the Office for Worship.

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<sup>87</sup> cf. RCIA 43; cf. FC 60

<sup>88</sup> CIC 889.2; Rite of Confirmation 12

<sup>89</sup> cf. GDC 189-192

<sup>90</sup> cf. CCC 2226

<sup>91</sup> CCC 1321

Those preparing the liturgies do so in accordance with the directives issued by the local Bishop.

- *The ordinary minister of Confirmation is a Bishop. A priest can also validly confer this sacrament if he has the faculty to do so, either from the general law or by way of a special grant from the competent authority.*<sup>92</sup> In the Parramatta Diocese the diocesan Bishop, a retired Bishop or a Vicar-General shall normally confer the Sacrament of Confirmation. Episcopal Vicars or parish Priests will only be delegated to confer the sacrament when no date can be secured with any of these three.
- For the anointing of the candidates the Bishop will be seated in a chair at the centre of the sanctuary in front of the altar. Coming to the altar emphasizes the connection between Confirmation and the other two sacraments of initiation, Baptism and the Eucharist; it also allows the Church to fulfil its promise at Baptism to bring the candidates back again to the altar for the Eucharist and Confirmation. This central position should also ensure that the whole congregation witnesses the Confirmation of every candidate.
- In order to avoid drawing out the anointing unnecessarily, the candidates and their sponsors may come forward in two rows, so that two candidates kneel in front of the Bishop at a time. The sponsor stands a little behind the candidate, placing the right hand on the candidate's shoulder. The Parish Priest stands on the Bishop's left to introduce the candidates by their Confirmation names (written on their cards), unless they are wearing their Confirmation names in large clear print on name-badges etc. An assistant stands on the Bishop's right and holds the Chrism.
- The candidates should be well rehearsed to respond to the bishop when he anoints the candidates with the words "I, be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit" with the response "Amen" and to respond to "Peace be with you" with the words "And with your spirit". The Bishop will then shake hands with the newly confirmed and say a few words of encouragement to them before the candidate moves away to allow the next in line to take their place. It would be of help to have someone marshal the procession of the candidates so that there are not long delays or confusion.

### **Importance and dignity of the Eucharistic celebration**

- *The whole rite has a twofold meaning. The laying of hands on the candidates by the bishop and the concelebrating priests express the biblical gesture by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked. This is well adapted to the understanding of the Christian people. The anointing with Chrism and the accompanying words express clearly the effects of the giving of the Holy Spirit. Signed with the perfumed oil, the baptised person receives the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Spirit, which confirms him/her more closely to Christ and gives him/her the grace of spreading the Lord's presence among people.*<sup>93</sup>
- The laying of hands on the candidates by the bishop and the concelebrating priests express the biblical gesture by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked.<sup>94</sup>
- *It is fitting that the minister of Confirmation preside at the Mass.*
- *Emphasis should be given to the celebration of the Word of God which begins the Rite of Confirmation. It is from the hearing of the Word of God that the diverse power of the Holy Spirit flows upon the Church and upon each one of the baptized and confirmed and it is by this word that God's will is manifest in the life of Christians.*

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<sup>92</sup> CIC 882

<sup>93</sup> Intro. Rite of Confirmation 9

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.* 9

# LITURGICAL NORMS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

## What readings and prayers to use

- The Prayers and Readings of Sundays of Easter, Holy Days and Solemnities must always take precedence over Readings and prayers from the Ritual Masses for Confirmation.
- When the celebration of Confirmation is on a Sunday in Ordinary Time, the readings and prayers may be of the Sunday or from the Confirmation rite. However the Gospel should be of the Sunday.

## Vestments and Chrism

- The Bishop will provide his own vestments and the Sacred Chrism. If the Mass is celebrated by someone other than the Bishop, the minister of Confirmation as well as any priests joining him in administering the sacrament should wear: alb, stole and chasuble.
- Colour of vestments: When Confirmation is administered during Easter, Holy Days and Solemnities, the colour of the day or season takes precedence. For Sundays of Ordinary Time and weekdays, the colour should be red.

## Music

- Since music should enable the participation of the whole Assembly (GIRM art.26), it needs to be familiar.
- The Acclamations of the Mass should be sung before all else, e.g., Gospel Acclamation; Holy Holy Holy; Memorial Acclamation; Great Amen. The Responsorial Psalm: at least the response should be sung.
- The use of a cantor and choir will assist the participation of the Assembly.
- The use of music which has a strong pattern of verse and response is a help to participation.
- Appropriate hymns texts should be used.
- Taped music used to lead the assembly in song, should be avoided.

## Photography

Under no circumstances is any form of photography, by the amateur or the professional, permitted during the celebration of the liturgy.

## Introductory Rites

### RITUAL

*Sign of the Cross*

*Greeting*

*Penitential Rite/ Sprinkling Rite,  
Gloria, Opening Prayer.*

### RITUAL ACTIONS AND MUSIC

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉProcession from church entrance to sanctuary. Mitre and crozier bearers immediately behind the Bishop.

ÉChildren may join the procession (if not too many in number). They should enter immediately in front of the Bishop.

ÉThe Oil of Chrism may be brought up in the entrance procession by one of the candidates.

ÉIf a Deacon is present he carries in the Book of the Gospels, if not the reader carries the Book of the Gospels or Lectionary.

ÉBefore the Bishop genuflects he gives mitre and crozier to MC (or immediately to bearers).

ÉAfter the Bishop reverences the altar the incensation of the altar may take place. MC accompanies Bishop.

ÉBishop begins Mass from presidential chair.

ÉIf there is a Deacon he sits to the right of the Bishop.

ÉMitre and crozier bearers should stand to one side of the Bishop's chair, as close as practicable and slightly forward so that the Bishop can catch their attention when necessary. Normally, the MC will pass mitre and crozier between the Bishop and bearers as required.

ÉThe server should hold the book in such a way that he/she does not obstruct the Bishop's view of the assembly and yet not making it necessary for the Bishop to turn his head to the side

#### **Music**

É**Entrance Hymn** is about the gathering of the Assembly and needs to be well known.

É**Sprinkling Rite:** Consider using this in preference to the Penitential rite during Easter.

É**Penitential Rite:** Lord have mercy (optional)

É**Gloria**

## Liturgy of the Word

### RITUAL

*First Reading*

*Responsorial Psalm*

*Gospel*

*Presentation of Candidates*

### RITUAL ACTIONS AND MUSIC

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉIt is the adult faith community which engages in the completion of the Sacraments of Initiation of its children. Those adults who are designated to read at the Liturgy of the Word should fulfil their usual ministry.

ÉProcession of the Gospel Book

ÉDuring the Gospel acclamation the Bishop remains seated and puts incense in the thurible. Thurifier and candle bearers precede the priest or deacon to the pulpit. Meanwhile, the Bishop takes off the mitre, stands and takes the crozier.

ÉAt the conclusion of the Gospel, the Bishop sits with mitre and crozier in preparation for presentation of the candidates.

#### **Music**

É**Responsorial Psalm:** sung, or at least the response.

É**Gospel Acclamation** must be **sung**. It may be repeated after the reading of the Gospel, instead of the usual spoken response.

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉAfter the Gospel the candidates are normally presented by the Parish Priest or a catechist. It is desirable that the names of the candidates be individually read out even when there are a large number of candidates. The candidates stand when their name is called.

ÉSuggested formula: Bishop í õI present to you the children of í parish who wish to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.ö

## Sacrament of Confirmation

### RITUAL

#### *Baptismal Promises*

#### *Laying on of Hands*

#### *Anointing with Chrism*

### RITUAL ACTIONS AND MUSIC

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉThe formula for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises must be the text that comes from the Rite of Confirmation and not the hybrid form that appears in some catechetical material.

ÉWhere the renewal of Baptismal promises has taken place, the Profession of Faith is omitted.

ÉBishop removes mitre after Baptismal promises and replaces it when he sits for the signing with Oil of Chrism.

ÉThis takes place according to the rite.

ÉIf there are more than twenty candidates the Laying on of hands and Prayer will be conducted from the chair at the centre of the sanctuary in front of the altar. If there are fewer than twenty candidates the Bishop and parish priest will lay hands on each candidate, in which case the candidates should come forward and stand in a line at the entrance to the sanctuary.

ÉFor the anointing of the candidates the Bishop will be seated in a chair at the centre of the sanctuary in front of the altar.

ÉThe amice is spread over his lap and tied securely.

ÉThe Deacon or server brings the Oil of Chrism to the Bishop.

ÉIt is important that the candidates come in procession to the sanctuary for Chrismation as this marks the link to the procession to the altar in the Rite of Baptism.

ÉThe candidates and their sponsors may come forward in two rows, so that two candidates kneel in front of the Bishop at a time.

ÉThe candidates are to wear a name tag with the Confirmation name printed clearly.

ÉSponsors are to be reminded that they are to place their right hand on the right shoulder of the candidate during the Chrismation. Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of saying the ðAmenö and ðAnd with your spiritö at this point of the rite.

ÉAfter the conclusion of the anointing the Bishop cleanses his hands with lemon and then water. The amice is removed, the mitre removed and the Bishop stands.

## Sacrament of Confirmation (cont)

### RITUAL

### RITUAL ACTIONS AND MUSIC

#### Music

ÉAnointing: Hymns appropriate to the action of the liturgy at this moment need to be sung.

ÉThe use of a cantor /choir assists participation of the assembly.

ÉRepeating hymns/chants assists participation of the assembly.

### *General Intercessions*

#### Ritual Action

ÉIt is important the general intercessions be included in all celebrations of Confirmation.

ÉAs with the Readings, the adults who are designated to lead the General Intercessions should fulfill their usual ministry.

ÉAs a rule the sequence of intentions is to be:

- (a) for the needs of the church
- (b) world leaders, world needs.
- (c) special needs
- (d) for the local community

ÉIn particular celebrations such as Confirmation some of the intercessions may refer more specifically to the occasion.

ÉThe General Intercessions are not addressed to God in the form of a prayer.

ÉIntentions are stated as follows e.g., ðThat all Church leadersí . ö or ðWe pray for Pope Benedict XVI, our bishops and priests, thatí . ö

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

### RITUAL

#### *Preparation of the Gifts*

#### *Eucharistic Prayer*

#### *Communion Rite*

#### *Prayer after Communion*

### RITUAL ACTIONS AND MUSIC

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉSome candidates should be involved by being in the procession of the gifts.

ÉThe Bishop receives the gifts and then goes to the altar where he takes off his mitre.

ÉIncensation takes place immediately before washing of hands.

ÉCare should be taken in the choice of the Eucharistic prayer. The Eucharistic Prayers for Children cannot be used at the celebration.

ÉConcelebrants recite *sotto voce*

#### **Music**

É**Eucharistic Prayer:** Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen are to be sung.

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉCommunion under both kinds is desirable if it is the custom of the Parish.

ÉHosts consecrated at that Mass should be used for as many as persons as possible (*GIRM 56*).

ÉAfter communion the Bishop sits without mitre.

#### **Music**

É**Lamb of God:** sung during the fraction rite.

É**Communion:** Hymn/s appropriate to Eucharist and community are sung during this time.

É**Thanksgiving:** Period of silence or hymn may be sung.

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉThe Bishop stands for Prayer after Communion

## Concluding Rite

### RITUAL

*Final Blessing*

*Dismissal*

### RITUAL ACTIONS AND MUSIC

#### **Ritual Action**

ÉThe Bishop takes both mitre and crozier for the Final Blessing.

ÉThe Blessing in the Rite is used.

ÉThe Bishop kisses the altar. Those in the procession reverence the Altar and process out.

#### **Music**

É**Recessional hymn:** If a recessional hymn is sung it should be well known and reasonably short.

ÉAlternately, instrumental music may be played.

## **CHECK LIST**

- Pastors are to provide the official liturgical books rather than booklets for use by the confirming minister. It is expected that the parish priest would always be present at the celebrations in his parish.
- There needs to be a chair for the Bishop during the anointing.
- The requisites for celebration of Mass and for Communion under both kinds, if it is to be given.
- Requisites for washing of hands after anointing, e.g., lemon or soap.
- Servers required: thurifer, (if incense is used), cross bearer, mitre bearer, crozier bearer, candle bearer.

## **Certificates**

- Certificates are not to be distributed during the Mass, but if so desired, may be distributed following the Mass. Consultation with the Bishop would be appreciated re the distribution of certificates.

## **Photos**

- A group photograph of the candidates with the Bishop may be taken after the ceremony is over.

## **Sponsors**

- Canons 874, 892 and 893 outline the requirements and functions for sponsors. In summary: It is desirable that the Confirmation sponsor be the one who was sponsor at Baptism, in any case it should be a confirmed Catholic normally not less than sixteen years of age and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken. There is to be only one Sponsor, but if both godparents are present they may both present the candidate.

## **Parents**

- Parents may not be sponsors for their children.

## **Confirmation Name**

- The Confirmation names be those of recognized saints in the Roman Martyrology. If the Christian name of the candidate is a saint's name, they may choose to use that name. Nevertheless they too, should be encouraged to learn about this particular saint's life.

## DOCUMENTS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

AG Second Vatican Council, Decree on missionary activity in the Church, *Ad Gentes*, 1965.

CIC *Codes Iuris Canonici*: The Code of Canon Law. Collins Liturgical Publications, 187 Piccadilly, London.UK, 1983.

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church* St Paul Publications, Homebush, NSW, Australia, 1994.

FC Apostolic Exhortation: *Familiaris Consortio; the role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, John Paul II, St Paul Publications, Homebush, NSW, Australia, 1982.

Charter of the Rights of the Family: presented to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today's world, October 22, 1983.

GDC Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, Libreria Editrice, Vatican, 1997.

IIB Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Infant Baptism*, Vatican, 1980.

RBC *The Rite of Baptism for Children*, E.J.Dwyer, Sydney, 1971.

RC *Rite of Confirmation*, E.J.Dwyer, Sydney, 1973.

RCIA *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, E.J.Dwyer, Sydney, 1987.

