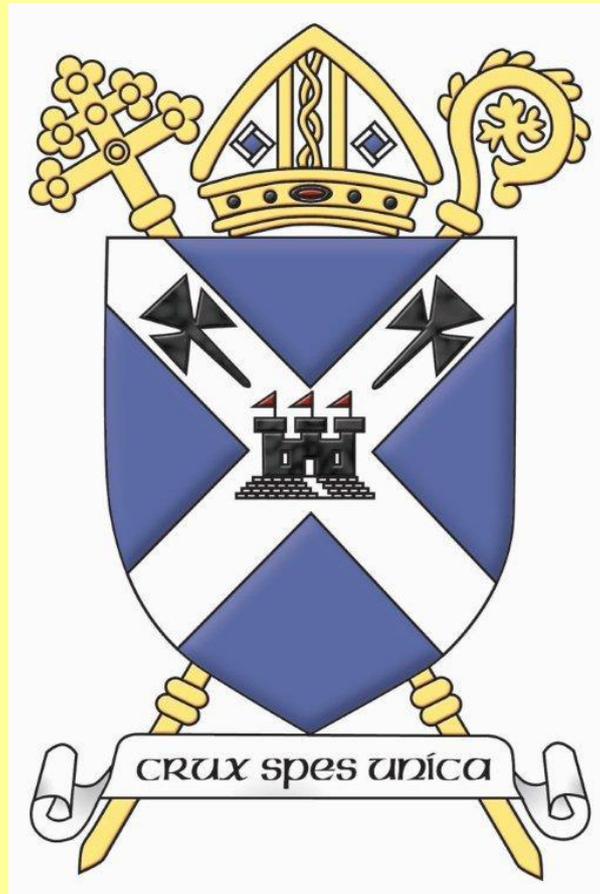


POLICY STATEMENT
for the
SACRAMENTAL INITIATION of CHILDREN



Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh

1. Parents role as first educators in the ways of faith.

1.1 Parents are their children's primary educators into the life long journey of faith. This is why the *Rite of Infant Baptism* reminds them of their profound and irreplaceable role:

- *You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of bringing them up in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to see that they are brought up to observe the commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?*¹

This serious responsibility is strongly highlighted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church,² where family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith.

Parents are called to teach their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.³

1.2 The parish and school communities of the Archdiocese are committed to supporting parents in this important role by:

- Providing faith formation opportunities for adults and children to grow in faith in the parish
- Delivering a full and comprehensive religious education syllabus in primary and secondary schools
- Training parish catechists and catholic teachers
- Putting in place support for parents as they journey in faith with their children by means of regular gatherings and annual celebrations
- Enabling parents who have lapsed in the practice of their faith to return to it.

2. The necessity of Sunday Participation in the Eucharist.

2.1 As the Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacrament of Penance prepare and strengthen children to be life-long active members of the Church in a parish community, it is important that parents and their children are committed to gathering for the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist.

2.2 In all sacramental preparation it is important to emphasise the necessity of gathering weekly for the Sunday Eucharist in the parish, as this is the 'source and summit of our Christian way of life.'

¹ Rite of Infant Baptism

² Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) CCC2221, CCC2223

³ CCC 2226

This is especially important in our present culture where there can be a pick and choose approach to essential aspects of Christian living. *Participation in the Sunday Eucharist is not one option among many others but intrinsic to our way of life as Christians.*

2.3 As regular participation in the Sunday Eucharist feeds, fosters and nourishes growth in faith, priests, teachers, catechists and all who support parents in their role of passing on faith must continually encourage them to participate in a full, active and conscious way in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist.

2.4 Since the Sunday gathering is so important for nourishing our way of life it is also the preferred place for both the celebration of the Preparatory Rites on the way to completion of initiation and the Sacraments.

3. The relationship between each of the Sacraments, the completion of initiation and the purpose of Confirmation.

3.1 The Sacrament of Baptism is the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which opens up the sacramental life of the Church.⁴

3.2 Our Christian Initiation into the life of the Spirit is accomplished by three Sacraments together where Baptism initiates us into the beginning of new life, Confirmation strengthens this new life and the reception of the Eucharist nourishes this life in the Spirit.⁵ The unity of these Sacraments of Christian Initiation must be safeguarded.⁶

3.3 The reception of the Holy Eucharist completes Christian Initiation.⁷

3.4 From the time of the apostles, becoming Christian has been accomplished by a journey of initiation in several stages. These stages are mapped out in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.⁸

3.5 In the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh the completion of initiation of children also takes place in stages, where Confirmation and the reception of First Holy Communion normatively occurs at the Primary 4 stage and after the child has been provided with a suitable catechesis.

⁴ CCC1213, 1983 Code of Canon Law c. 675:1

⁵ CCC1275

⁶ CCC 1285

⁷ CCC1322

⁸ CCC1229

3.6 Children who are not yet baptised and have reached the age of discretion in Primary 4 and above should take part in a process similar to the RCIA called the Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age (CICCA) and receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.⁹

4. The Sacrament of Penance and how it fits into the whole process.

4.1 Baptised children who have reached the age of discretion should be encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and suitably prepared for this.

4.2 The Sacrament of Penance gives all the baptised the opportunity to respond to the call to conversion. Christ's call to conversion resounds even in the hearts of children.¹⁰

4.3 Children are to be prepared for the celebration of this sacrament in such a way that the connection with baptism is strongly emphasised.

4.4 The celebration of the Preparatory Rites of Signing with the Cross and the Rite of Illumination helps children, parents, catechists and teachers to make the connection with baptism more clearly.

4.5 The first celebration of the Sacrament of Penance precedes the reception of First Holy Communion.¹¹

4.6 In our Archdiocese a full year of formal preparation and catechesis for this takes place in Primary 3, leading to its celebration in the Easter season.

4.7 For children and parents the experience of a communal celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, in the context of the parish community, provides a formative experience when this is celebrated well and prayerfully.

4.8 The parish provides a range of opportunities for children to celebrate this sacrament at the post communion stage, so that they can grow in and deepen their conversion to Christ.

5. Preparatory Rites on the way.

5.1 In the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults there are a series of Preparatory Rites celebrated on the way to the completion of initiation. In our Archdiocese this is mirrored in the journey of children towards completion of their initiation.

⁹ RCIA 243

¹⁰ CCC1427

¹¹ c. 914

5.2 As the children prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance in Primary 3 the connection with baptism is recalled through the celebration of the following Preparatory Rites:

- The Signing with the Cross
- The Rite of Illumination

5.3 As children journey towards the completion of initiation by celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation with the reception of First Holy Communion in Primary 4 the following rites are celebrated:

- The Rite of Enrolment
- The Presentation of the Gospels
- The Presentation of the Creed
- The Presentation of the Our Father

5.4 As in the RCIA, these Preparatory Rites affirm the gradual spiritual growth of the child as they journey towards full membership of the Church.

6. The role of the parish in sacramental preparation and celebration.

6.1 To facilitate the formation of children and parents Parish Sacramental Support Teams should be formed to work in conjunction with the parish priest and compliment the work of our schools. This form of parish support is particularly important where children do not attend a Catholic school.

6.2 The Archdiocese offers a range of opportunities for formation of sacramental teams and parish catechists, including retreats and regular support meetings.

6.3 The celebration of the Preparatory Rites takes place in the midst of the parish community, where the parish journeys with the children and their parents by prayer and support.

6.4 The parish priest in collaboration with the parish sacramental team and school promotes the conditions that enable a prayerful celebration of the Preparatory Rites and Sacraments of Initiation.

6.5 The conditions which promote prayerful celebration include:

- preparation of parents and children for each liturgical celebration
- participation of parents and children in the liturgies
- celebration in the parish Church
- focusing on small group celebrations where appropriate when numbers are large
- connecting to existing parish celebrations

7. The role of the school in sacramental preparation and celebration.

7.1 Our Catholic Primary Schools support the primary role of parents and parish in the preparation of children for the celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist.

7.2 This work is primarily undertaken through the delivery of the 'This is Our Faith' Syllabus which provides the pupils with an initial understanding of the sacraments which will be further developed in P5, P6 and P7.

7.3 In P3 pupils will be prepared for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance by reflecting on the material in the Strand of Faith entitled 'Signs of God' and will be encouraged to relate this to their overall faith development both within the other 7 Strands of Faith, and within home and parish life.

7.4 In P4, pupils will be similarly prepared for the celebration of Confirmation and Holy Communion.

7.5 Teachers expect and need the support, co-operation and involvement of parents and parish personnel to ensure that the experience offered in school bears fruit outside the classroom.

7.6 All staff engaged in Sacramental Preparation should ensure that they avail of regular CPD opportunities available from the Archdiocese.



+ Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien
Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh

Easter Sunday 8th April 2012