

Sacraments of Initiation for Older Children

Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation

For a child under 7 years old, Infant Baptism is scheduled after the family attends a preparation class (and an older child has appropriate preparation). First Communion and Confirmation can be received with peers at the appropriate age.

For a child that is 7 years old, Infant Baptism can occur after the family attends a preparation class. First Reconciliation and First Communion might be delayed an appropriate amount of time to allow for adequate preparation (a child cannot be both an infant and at the age of reason simultaneously). Confirmation could be received along with peers (after age 16 and adequate preparation).

For an unbaptized child 8 years old or older, Infant Baptism is not an option. Instead, the child would participate in the following process:

1st stage: Inquiry - Faith Exploration within the church community
The child should be enrolled in Catholic school or religious education class. The parents support the child and an appropriate **sponsor/godparent** is chosen. A **support team** (teacher, classmates, friends, family, etc) is assembled to help the child explore the Catholic faith. This stage may last weeks or months, depending on the age and faith of the child. When the child expresses a firm desire to receive the sacraments, an **interview** takes place. The child will talk about the Catholic faith and demonstrate an eagerness to grow closer to God. The **Rite of Welcome** is scheduled to celebrate the child moving to the next stage.

2nd stage: Catechumenate - Learning from the support team
The family attends **weekly mass** and is apprenticed by the rest of the support team. The child participates in **catechesis and experiences** developed by the support team. The team develops a unique plan for each child; ideas include service projects, weekly discussions about mass readings and book studies. **Communication** between the child, parents and team is very important!

3rd stage: Lent - Final Preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation

The family attends **Ash Wednesday** mass and decides how they will fast, pray and give during Lent. A **retreat** experience will be provided by the support team. Some participation in **rituals** may be appropriate. The child receives Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion at the **Easter Vigil** mass. There is a practice earlier in the day that should be attended by the child and an adult.

4th stage: Mystagogy - The weeks after Easter until Pentecost

The child will attend and **participate fully in the Sunday masses**. Preparation for First **Reconciliation** will be given and that sacrament will be offered on the weekend of Pentecost. The support team will **celebrate** with the child afterwards.

What should I be doing?

- Your family should be attending weekend mass every week!
- Make sure that you are attending your religion classes and doing all your work.
- Every day, you should be praying to God!
- Read about God in the Bible or watch videos about Jesus to learn His story.
- Think about the questions you have and ask your parent / teacher / sponsor
- Spend time helping others in your family and community.

What comes next? (use the space below to outline the next steps!)

Contact Ellie Schultz with any questions!

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