

CHILDHOOD

In addition to regular, ongoing formation, young children should be welcomed into the life, mission, and ministry of the parish community. True, these youngsters are likely not suited to be lectors, but there are ways to include them. Consider asking adult volunteers to invite their children to serve beside them, where appropriate. Create opportunities for young children to hold doors, distribute programs, straighten the chairs and/or pews when Mass is ended. The earlier young children are invited to be at home in a parish, the more likely these same children will feel at home.



Indicators for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Childhood

- ☐ We offer opportunities for children to encounter Christ through Vacation Bible Camps and other large church experiences. (1,5,6) (see *Encounter* section)
- ☐ We provide opportunities and environments to teach children how to pray, learn different prayer styles and encourage community prayer experiences. (1,4,5)
- ☐ We help children to understand scripture through reading and picture. (1)
- ☐ We offer service opportunities for both families and children, to begin to understand what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. (1,5,6)
- ☐ We appropriately prepare children and their families to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation. (2,3) (see section on *Reconciliation*)
- ☐ We appropriately prepare children, and their families, to receive their First Holy Communion. (2,3) (see section on *First Holy Communion*)
- ☐ We provide events where parents and their children can learn and share their faith together. (1,5,6)
- ☐ We accompany children on their journey of faith and introduce them to a life of following Jesus. (1,2,3,4,5,6) (see *Accompaniment* section)
- ☐ We introduce children to the moral life by teaching them to model themselves after Christ. (1,3)
- ☐ We celebrate the contributions of children and their milestones in the larger parish community. (5)

Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Childhood

Provide opportunities for children and families to learn about and experience their faith

- ☐ Incorporate children and their families into the celebration of Mass, i.e. bringing up the gifts, lecturing, etc.
- ☐ Announce and welcome any new families that are attending/have joined the parish community
- ☐ Have regular gatherings for children and their families other than Faith Formation Sessions for building community, i.e. movie nights, potlucks, breakfasts, etc.
- ☐ Have regular Family Faith Sharing times to show where God is present in their lives
- ☐ Provide family service events at the parish and in the community, i.e. serving/assisting meals at a local shelter, food/clothing drives, writing letters/drawing pictures for the home bound/nursing homes, etc.

“ Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* ”

Indicators for Effective First Reconciliation Preparation

(National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), 36.B.2)

- ☐ We help children understand God's unconditional love for us.
- ☐ We help children recognize the presence of good and evil in the world and their personal capacity for doing good or bad.
- ☐ We help children recognize their need for forgiveness, not only from their parents and others close to them, but from God.
- ☐ We help children to understand the experience of sorrow for their sins.
- ☐ We help children to memorize and understand the Act of Contrition.
- ☐ We help children to understand the basics of going to Reconciliation.

Indicators for Effective First Communion Preparation

(National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), 36.A.3a)

- ☐ We see celebration of First Communion as an opportunity to catechize the whole community on the sacrament and to invite all to regular reception of the Eucharist.
- ☐ We help children to understand the Eucharist as a sign of the Father's love for all of us.
- ☐ We help children to understand that what appears to be bread and wine are actually the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Jesus Christ.
- ☐ We help children and families to actively participate in the Mass through an understanding of its different parts.
- ☐ We help children to receive Christ's Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner.
- ☐ We invite children and their families to attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation and to pray daily.

Recommendations for Effective First Reconciliation Preparation

Educate children, their families and the faith community on the meaning and benefits of the Sacrament

- ☐ Help them to distinguish between what is good and evil according to Church teachings
- ☐ Define what sin is and how it breaks our relationship with God who loves us
- ☐ Show how to express sorrow for our sins by a good examination of conscience
- ☐ Experience the steps of making a proper confession and why this is necessary
- ☐ Show why frequent confession is important to our spiritual health
- ☐ Have and promote additional times to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Recommendations for Effective First Communion Preparation

Educate the children, their families and the parish community on the meaning and benefits of the Sacrament

- ☐ Show why the Sacrament of Communion is the ultimate sign of God's love for us
- ☐ Explain why we need to receive Communion often and in a state of grace
- ☐ Provide children and families proper formation on the Mass, its parts and its importance for us
- ☐ Explain when and how basic bread and wine becomes the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus and how it nourishes us spiritually
- ☐ Instruct the children and review with their parents the proper way to prepare and receive the Sacrament
- ☐ Promote and encourage Mass attendance weekly and on Holy Days of obligation