

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

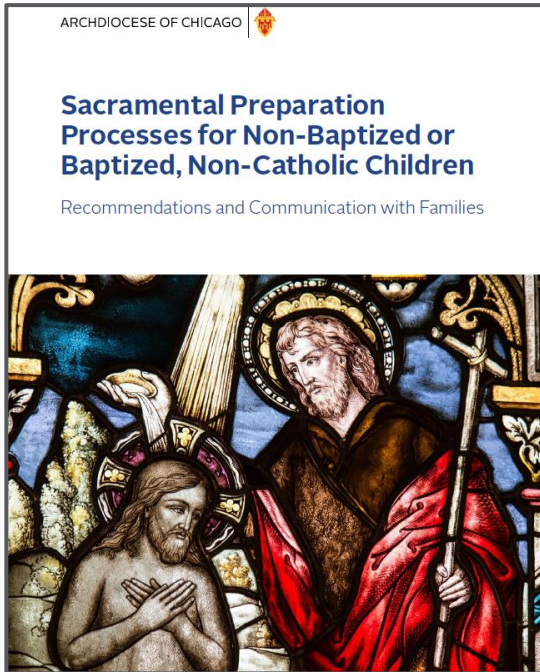


# Sacramental Preparation Processes

February 28, 2022

Office of Catholic Schools    Office of Divine Worship  
Office of Lifelong Formation

# Opening Prayer



Faithful and ever living God,  
In baptism you make us a chosen race,  
a royal priesthood, a Holy Nation, a  
people for your own possession!

Be with us as we look to this ministry of  
initiation, and bless us with an  
openness to your Holy Spirit.

Fill us with zeal, passion and love for  
accompanying your people in their  
journey of falling in love with your Son.  
For you live and reign for ever and ever.



# Sacramental Preparation Processes for Non-Baptized or Baptized, Non-Catholic Children

## Two Groups of Children

1. Non-Baptized
2. Baptized, Non-Catholic

## Includes

1. Recommendations for Parish and School Leaders
2. Communication with Families

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## Sacramental Preparation Processes for Non-Baptized or Baptized, Non-Catholic Children

Recommendations and Communication with Families



# Development & Approval Review

## Collaboration between:

- Tim Weiske - Director, *Department for Parish Vitality and Mission*
- Melissa Link - Director of Catholic Mission and Culture, *Office for Catholic Schools*
- Todd Williamson - Director, *Office for Divine Worship*
- Kevin Foy - Director, *Office of Lifelong Formation*
- Deborah Breakey - Sr. Coordinator of Children and Family Ministry, *Office of Lifelong Formation*

## Reviewed and Approved by:

- Episcopal Council
- Office for Canonical Affairs

# Pre-Survey Registration Questions



What challenges have you faced in ministering to non-baptized or baptized, non-Catholic children?



What have been your successes in ministering to non-baptized or baptized, non-Catholic children?



What questions do you have about sacramental preparation processes for non-baptized or baptized, non-Catholic children?



# Some Challenges (from registration survey)

- Differences between parishes (program format, number of classes, “requirements”)
- How to explain importance to parents – helping them understand WHY
- Parents’ sense of urgency, they want short programs, they lack commitment and engagement
- Challenges identifying these children - “they keep popping up all year long”
- We are finding more and more students who are unreligious entering the school which teachers are voicing as a challenge
- Each case is unique and requires particular pastoral care
- Involving/including children and families who are not preparing for a Sacrament
- Pastor didn’t want an initiation process, would baptize anytime
- Finding appropriate materials
- New guidelines are making me nervous



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2. **Introduction**
3. **Parish Roles and Responsibilities**
4. Recommendations for Principals, Catechetical Leaders and Pastors
5. Determining the Proper Process
6. Guidance on How to Make Catechesis Inclusive and Relevant for Children Who are Not Preparing for a Sacrament
7. For Children and Families Who Are Participating in the Children's Catechumenate
8. Policies and Procedures



# Letter

## Many & Increasing Instances in which

- Children who have not been baptized in the Catholic Church enter the traditional grade-levels for sacramental reception
- These children/families desire reception of the sacraments of holy Eucharist, penance, or confirmation with their peers prior to being baptized and without proper formation

## We Offer These Recommendations

- To help parish and school leaders anticipate and prepare for such situations in a pastoral manner and with a uniform process and pathway for reaching out to families early
- These recommendations are consistent with current archdiocesan policies and procedures for sacramental preparation





# Introduction

The Archdiocese Policies and Procedures for The Sanctifying Office of the Church offers clear guidance for sacramental preparation and reception.

***These recommendations offer practical considerations with reference to the applicable policies to help parish and school leaders easily navigate the situations they encounter.***

At the center of a uniform process for sacramental preparation and reception is *the goal of helping families of children who desire the sacrament of baptism or to be received into the Catholic church.*



# Roles & Responsibilities

## Parents

- To fully prepare and arrange for their child to receive the sacrament of baptism

## Principal, Pastor, CL

- To help families by anticipating the needs of non-baptized children
- To provide clear communication to parents
- To offer appropriate formation for children and parents through a parish sacramental preparation process



# Roles & Responsibilities

## Pastor & CL (Parish)

- To be aware of and follow the Archdiocese Policies & Procedures
- To provide a clear process for a child's baptism or reception into the full Communion of the Catholic Church
- To make the parish process known to the parish school (if applicable)

## School & Faith Formation Programs

- To review the sacramental background of children when they enroll
- To seek direction from the parish regarding the baptismal and catechumenal process for children who seek such sacramental preparation
- Accompany families through proper discernment and sacramental preparation



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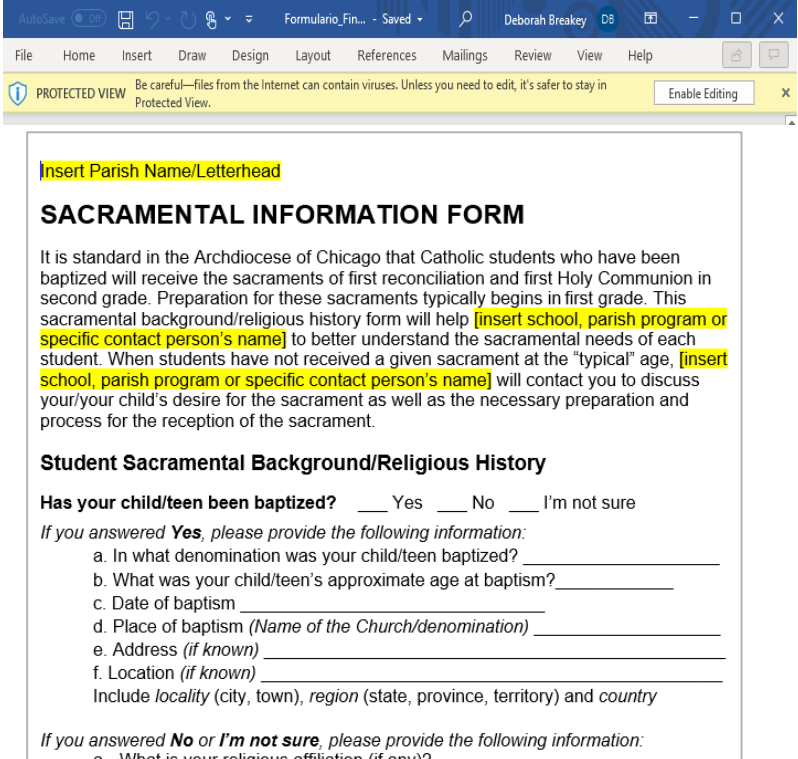




# Recommendations for Communication & Program Planning

Work with families to help them fully understand both the process and the nature of the sacraments as **sacred, discerned moments** on a lifelong journey of faith.

1. **Sacramental Information Form**  
– include in program registration packets
2. **Contact Parents** – discuss the family’s spiritual and formation needs; inform them of the parish sacramental preparation process
3. **Refer Parents to the Parish**



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document in Protected View. The document is titled "Formulario\_Fin... - Saved" and is opened by "Deborah Breakey DB". The document content includes:

**Insert Parish Name/Letterhead**

### SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION FORM

It is standard in the Archdiocese of Chicago that Catholic students who have been baptized will receive the sacraments of first reconciliation and first Holy Communion in second grade. Preparation for these sacraments typically begins in first grade. This sacramental background/religious history form will help **insert school, parish program or specific contact person's name** to better understand the sacramental needs of each student. When students have not received a given sacrament at the "typical" age, **insert school, parish program or specific contact person's name** will contact you to discuss your/your child's desire for the sacrament as well as the necessary preparation and process for the reception of the sacrament.

#### Student Sacramental Background/Religious History

Has your child/teen been baptized? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ I'm not sure

If you answered **Yes**, please provide the following information:

- a. In what denomination was your child/teen baptized? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What was your child/teen's approximate age at baptism? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Date of baptism \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Place of baptism (Name of the Church/denomination) \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Address (if known) \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Location (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Include *locality* (city, town), *region* (state, province, territory) and *country*

If you answered **No** or **I'm not sure**, please provide the following information:

- a. What is your religious affiliation (if any)? \_\_\_\_\_



# Recommendations for Communication & Program Planning

- 4. Discern Means of Documented Communication** – printed overview of the parish process is recommended
- 5. Communicate to Parents** – readiness for the sacrament of baptism or reception into the Church is more important than a hurried reception of the sacrament in hopes of grade-level reception of additional sacraments with peers
- 6. Pastors are Ultimately Responsible** for helping families and assessing the readiness of older children for the reception of the sacrament of baptism
- 7. Baptism or Reception Info Full Communion** is to take place at the home parish after suitable formation for children and their parents



# Determining the Proper Process

For children who **have not yet reached the age of reason** (approx. 7 years old), parents are to:

- Attend parish baptismal preparation classes
- Follow the parish procedures for baptism of infants
- The child may then receive the sacrament of baptism without additional faith formation

Once a child **has reached the age of reason** (approx. 7 years old), a catechumenal process for full communion with the Catholic Church is to take place. Refer to the Archdiocese Policies and Procedures (Book IV) for more information.

# Catechumenal Process for Full Communion with the Catholic Church:

- ❖ **Unbaptized children of a catechetical age** should be welcomed into a children's catechumenate, following the RCIA framework which takes place in addition to the school/parish faith formation program
  - a. The sacramental celebration is full initiation in which the child is baptized in conjunction with their confirmation and reception of the Eucharist
  - b. What that catechumenate process looks like may vary. There is a lot of room for adaptation according to the needs and resources of the parish.





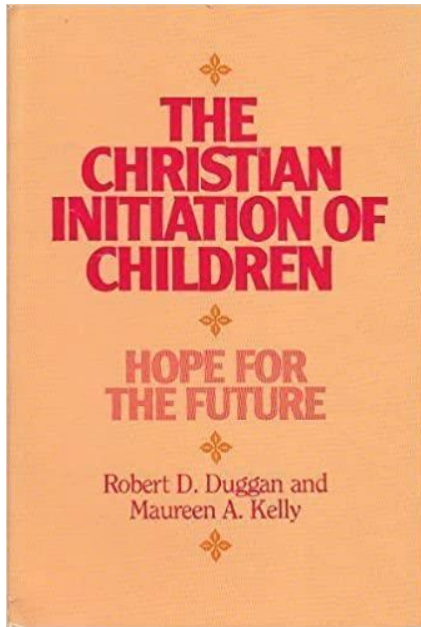
# Catechumenal Process for Full Communion with the Catholic Church:

## BAPTIZED, NON-CATHOLIC CHILDREN

- ❖ Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church  
(*Not* "Making a Profession of Faith")
- ❖ This is a *Sacramental Celebration!*
- ❖ It is a celebration within Mass
- ❖ The candidate professes the Creed with the Assembly
  - ❖ There is an added line that the candidate(s) must say
- ❖ The priest formally and *ritually* receives the candidate(s) into the Catholic Church – there is an *Act of Reception*
- ❖ The candidate's baptism is *Confirmed* (Confirmation)
- ❖ The candidate culminates, *ratifies* his/her Reception by receiving the Eucharist



# RCIA Framework - Resources



Young Apprentices –RCL  
Benzinger



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# How to Make Catechesis Inclusive & Relevant

**Providing an inclusive and relevant catechesis** for children who receive their sacraments outside of the typical school and faith formation program timelines, will help them to:

- Feel welcomed into the school and/or parish community
- Engage in sacramental preparation and formation activities with their peers
- Be encouraged in ongoing spiritual maturation outside of the catechumenate

## **Recommendations:**

1. Discuss with families that readiness for the sacraments is more important than simply receiving sacraments with peers
2. Communicate the value of the catechumenate process and that participation does not mean exclusion from grade-level experiences with peers





# For Children and Families Who Are Participating in the Children's Catechumenate

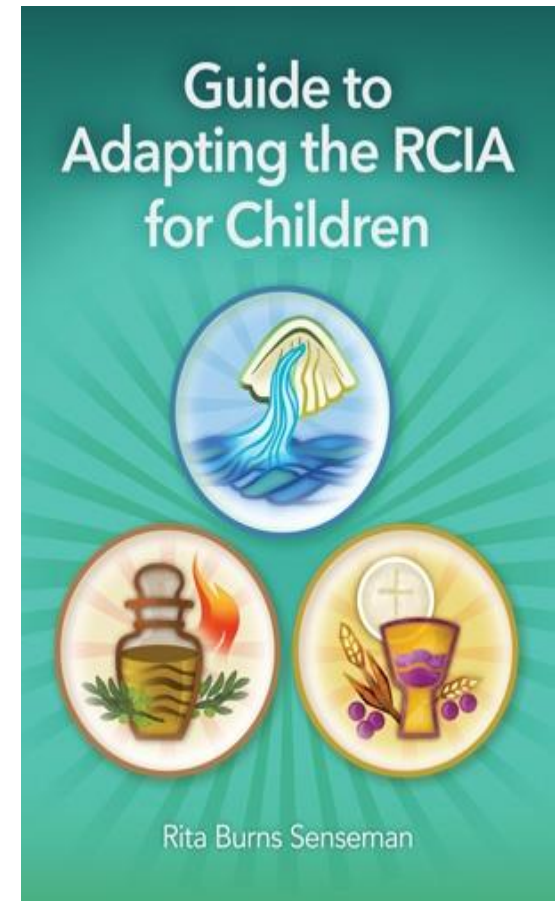
## To ease concerns:

1. Engage families as early as possible
2. Outline for parents the ways that children will be included as full members of the class during sacramental preparation years
3. Discuss special efforts that will be made to make content relevant to the child's faith journey and how their faith journey will be honored and celebrated even when there is not a "first-time" sacramental reception component
  - Fully initiated children can participate in first reconciliation and Eucharist liturgies alongside their peers
4. Invite parents and children of the children's catechumenate process to all parish sacramental preparation events to build community



# Best Practices & Tips

- ❖ Engage and involve parents in the process - when they cannot be involved, they should indicate their consent and their place should be taken by sponsors
- ❖ Invite some already-baptized peers to participate in some initiation sessions for activities, service opportunities, or retreats
- ❖ Include “sponsoring families” in the process to foster relationships in the parish
- ❖ Adapt the catechumenate model to your parish’s needs
- ❖ The catechumenate is more than a “catch-up” class – it’s a process of forming children in a way of life and showing them how to be followers of Jesus Christ



# Some Successes (from registration survey)

- Great teamwork with catechists
- Creating a specific set of guidelines and a timeframe for the reception of sacraments
- Clear communication
- Flexibility – welcoming attitude – lots of “on ramps”
- Instituted a family oriented Baptismal instruction program
- I’ve noticed an enthusiasm for wanting to learn about the faith
- One-on-one and small group discussions and relationship building (for children & parents)
- Success comes from really being able to walk with a family
- Rituals work, walking them through the mysteries of faith and the Mass
- Greatest achievement has been to provide formation to parents, godparents and unbaptized children at the same time



# Policies & Procedures

## Book IV Hyperlinks

- Ministry to Children of Catechetical Age
- Confirmation of Children of Catechetical Age
- Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

## *BOOK IV THE SANCTIFYING OFFICE OF THE CHURCH*

### PART I SACRAMENTAL LIFE

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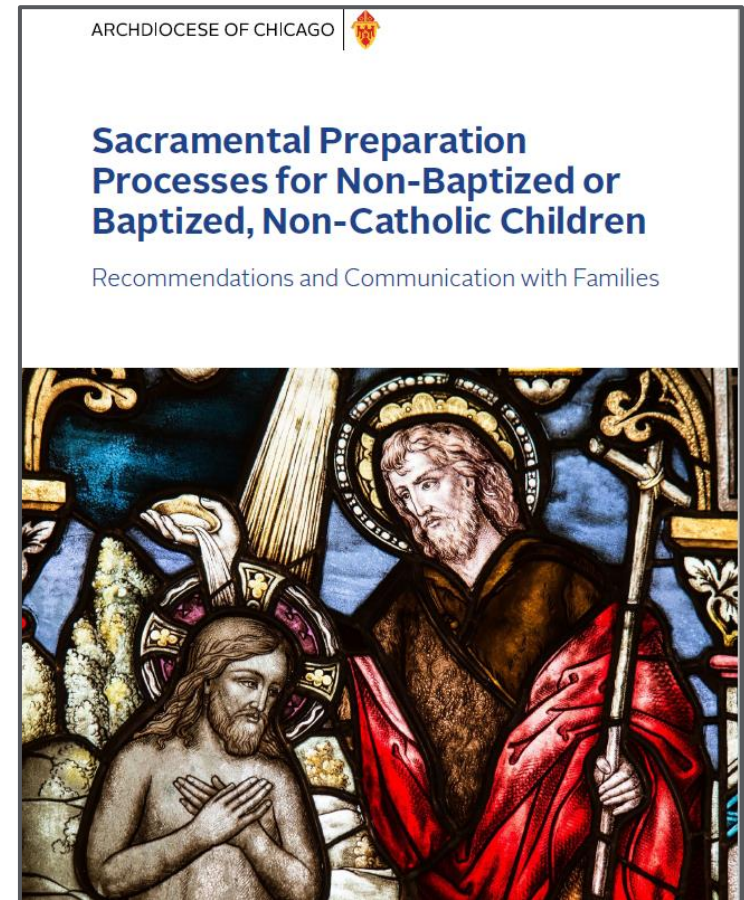
# Spanish Webinar & Contact Info

- Translating the document to Spanish
- Walk-through webinar in Spanish in mid-late March

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([dbreakey@archchicago.org](mailto:dbreakey@archchicago.org))



# Some Questions (from registration survey)

- We need clarity on what the actual "age of reason" is.
- What are the formats and processes for tracking students?
- Will the Archdiocese continue the requirement of two years for sacramental preparation?
- Does the Archdiocese have a suggested model for children and teens who fall in this category? How closely does it mirror the RCIA model?
- Is there a better adaptation of the RCIA framework for children?
- Is it mandatory to implement the new formation process for unbaptized children in all parishes?
- I need some recommendations on what materials to use and who should be facilitating the formation.
- Need understandable guidelines for clergy, staff, and families (FAQ sheet)
- Will the bishops be prepared for First Communion for older students at their Confirmation Mass?

