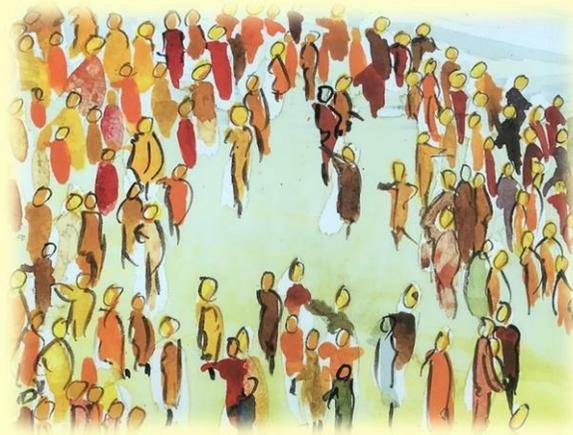


# ACCOMPANYING



# FAMILIES

Sacraments of Initiation Policy Dublin 2022

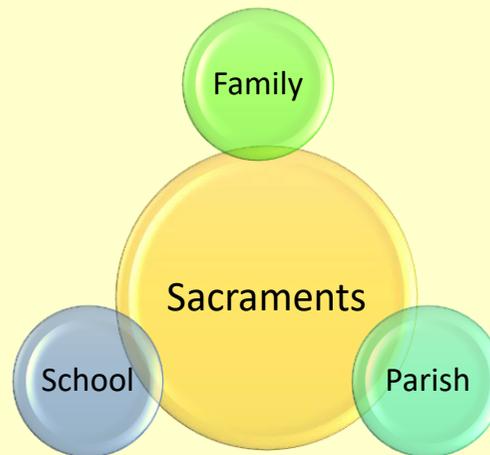


# INTRODUCTION

*The purpose of this policy statement is to highlight and strengthen the partnership between family, parish and school, supported by the Archdiocese in accompanying children and their families in developing their faith.<sup>1</sup>*

*Each has a distinctive part to play in building up this partnership, in supporting children and families and in cooperating with each other.*

*The initiation of children into the life of the Church is a gift their family seeks to share with them, supported by parish and school, and resourced by the Archdiocese of Dublin.*



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<sup>1</sup> This Sacramental Policy 2022 builds upon the work of the Sacramental Review Group 2019 and the Sacramental Implementation Group 2020 - 2021.

# 1. A vision informed by Accompaniment

*'The Church accompanies her children throughout their entire lifespan. She recognises however that some moments are decisive passages in which people more readily allow themselves to be touched by God's grace.'*

*DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 232*

- 1.1. The accompaniment of families provides the basis for faith formation and development.
- 1.2. Effective accompaniment expresses the mission of the Church both to include all who are open to the witness of the faith community, and to explain how followers of Jesus can respond to his call.
- 1.3. This accompaniment begins at Baptism, where building up the relationship with the family and parish starts.
- 1.4. Processes of accompaniment create opportunities for family engagement, especially with young parents.
- 1.5. Parents' central role of engaging with their children is at the heart of this process of accompaniment.
- 1.6. In order to build parish capacity to accompany families, it is essential that ongoing training of those who will accompany families becomes part of parish life.
- 1.7. Both parish and school seek to accompany parents in partnership, and support them in their respective ways.

*'Pope Francis speaks of parents passing on the faith, with a strong sense that this is about practices, where for instance moments of family prayer can be more powerful than any catechism class or sermon.'* SIG REPORT 2021:10

## 2. Baptism begins the journey

*'The catechesis of Christian Initiation connects missionary action, which issues a call to faith, with the pastoral action that continually nourishes it.'* DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 69

- 2.1. The family's request for Baptism begins a journey towards the completion of Christian Initiation with Confirmation and Eucharist along the way. The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation renews our commitment to love of God and love of neighbour begun at Baptism and ongoing through all of life. On this journey, there is strong emphasis on continually building parish relationship with families between the sacramental celebrations. Parental and parish preparation for and celebration of Baptism is evidenced as meaningful and helpful. It provides a basis for enhancing relationship with each family.
- 2.2. The relationship with the family beginning at Baptism will be continued and strengthened beyond the celebration through parish engagements and supports.
- 2.3. This family accompaniment leads into Reconciliation and Holy Communion for the first time and Confirmation, where the celebration of sacraments are highpoints in an ongoing encounter with Jesus and the local Church community rather than as isolated events.
- 2.4. All those involved in accompanying families are called to promote parish-family communication and encounter in an ongoing way. This enables the celebration of the sacraments to be viewed as moments in a continuous relationship rather than stand-alone events. The accompaniment of families ideally commencing in preparation for Baptism, develops a relationship with the parish before children commence the school Religious Education programme.

*'The family is not there for the Church project, but the Church is there for the family project. It seeks through the Good News of the Gospel to deepen the family project.'* SIG REPORT 2021:9

### 3. The Role of the Family/Parents

*'The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfilment of their educational mission to become above all the first catechists of their own children.'*

*DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 124, Amoris Laetitia 85*

- 3.1. Parents have an irreplaceable role as primary agents in their children's faith life. Parish and school seek to support the primary role of the parents in partnership with them.
- 3.2. Parents self-giving in living for their children reflects God's own self-emptying, the heart of Christianity.
- 3.3. Parents need practical support to grow in confidence and competence in accompanying their children on the path of faith.
- 3.4. Parents are encouraged to associate the sacraments with the parish by directly registering with their parish.
- 3.5. Parents are not a homogenous group, but most parents are open to engaging with the parish in a family friendly way.
- 3.6. Parents appreciate smaller, informal, conversational interaction in preparing to celebrate sacraments and in accompanying their children. Small group celebrations are also highly valued, making for a more prayerful personal experience.

*The Church looks for practical ways to give parents a sense of confidence and competence in accompanying their children on the path of faith.' SIG REPORT 2021:11*

## 4. The Role of the Parish

*'The dynamic of missionary conversion implies that the parish should examine the type of catechesis that it presents, above all in the new social and cultural contexts. DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 302*

- 4.1. The personal quality of the parish's interaction with parents and families is essential in generating a sense of welcome and affirmation of parents.
- 4.2. Families choose to celebrate the sacraments in the parish they identify with and come to belong to.
- 4.3. The parish, in partnership with the school, seeks to support parents in accompanying their children
- 4.4. The parish engages with parents in the registration of families for the sacraments.
- 4.5. The parish prepares families for sacramental celebrations by means of a blended approach, where there are in-person gatherings as well as making use of online technologies and other applications to connect with families at home.
- 4.6. The parish celebrates the sacraments in small numbers, mindful of the quality of prayerful celebration.
- 4.7. The parish develops a team approach to accompanying families, availing of regular training opportunities.
- 4.8. In building up this relationship with families, it is the role of the parish to organise all aspects of the celebration, this includes registration of children, establishment of parish sacramental teams, parent's catechesis and organising the Liturgy.

*'The parish interests itself in all families, not just those who might be already interested in the parish. In its sacramental practice, it seeks imaginative ways of finding points of connection with this larger constituency.' SIG REPORT 2021:13*

## 5. The Role of the School

*‘Catholic schools are a community of faith that have at their foundation an educational initiative characterised by evangelical values. This initiative entails the involvement of the whole school community, parents as well, always placing the students at the centre, who grow together respecting everyone’s pace.’ DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 310*

- 5.1. Catholic schools provide parents with a Religious Education and faith formation programme for their children. The promotion of Catholic ethos is the responsibility of the Board of Management.
- 5.2. Catholic schools educate children for the sacraments through the promotion of Catholic ethos and the provision of Religious Education and faith formation informed by The Catholic Preschool and Primary R.E. for Curriculum for Ireland 2015 [CPPRECI 2015] using the *Grow In Love* programme, in line with the Schedule for Catholic Schools.
- 5.3. Education for the sacraments in the school setting begins with Junior Infants and continues through the curriculum to Sixth Class.
- 5.4. Content specific to the first celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is a two-year process beginning in First Class.
- 5.5. Content specific to the celebration the Sacrament of Confirmation is also a two-year process beginning in Fifth Class.
- 5.6. The Catholic school is attentive to and supports the parents and the parish on this faith journey.
- 5.7. Teachers teach, witness to and encourage a lived relationship with Jesus Christ, by helping young people learn about their faith community, their faith journey and the meaning of the sacraments.
- 5.8. Teachers are supported in their role of teaching and preparing children for the reception of the sacraments by the Primary Diocesan Advisors.
- 5.9. The school is supportive of all parish and diocesan initiatives that enable children and families grow in faith.
- 5.10. Where parents have not opted for a Catholic school an alternative programme of religious education may be organised in the parish facilitated by parents using the approved Diocesan programme, informed by the current curriculum [CPPRECI 2015] and *Grow In Love*.

*‘The faith journey of each child is unique and special. The family, parish and school foster’s the child’s spiritual development in his/her relationship with God.’ SIG REPORT 2021:18*

## 6. Liturgical Celebration

*'Liturgy and catechesis are inseparable and nourish one another.'* DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 96

- 6.1. Liturgical celebrations are central to the life of the Christian family and parish. These are, therefore, an integral part of sacramental preparation that develop in-person encounters with families.
- 6.2. Start of year gatherings, communal liturgies and occasional rituals are part of the preparation journey.
- 6.3. Parents engage readily with rituals where their children take part, becoming active agents in developing the understanding of their young people for such celebrations.
- 6.4. In taking responsibility for organising the celebration of the sacraments, the parish builds on best practice identified during Covid time. This is in the form of small-scale liturgies, involving small numbers of families, making a more prayerful experience.
- 6.5. The parish takes on this responsibility in dialogue with and with the support of the school.
- 6.6. The timing of parish celebrations needs to honour the cycle of the liturgical year.
- 6.7. The ideal time in the liturgical year to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time is in the season of Lent.
- 6.8. The ideal time for the Sacrament of Confirmation is around the feast of Pentecost. Celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation within a Service of the Word are encouraged, as these often make for more focused prayerful experiences.
- 6.9. The ideal time for the celebration of the reception of Holy Communion for the first time is from the Easter season up to the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. Small group celebrations of this at Sunday Masses, or at another suitable time, enable a deeper sense that this is a parish gathering and a clearer sense of belonging to a parish community.

*'Parishes were delighted to see how intimately the small-scale celebrations touched parents' hearts, in a way that the familiar large scale events have not.'* SIG REPORT 2021: 14

## 7. The Role of the Archdiocese in continuous accompaniment of families

7.1. The Archdiocese is committed to supporting parishes to build new capacities for accompanying families, in particular by providing resources and training, developing an integral approach to sacraments for families.

7.2. The Archdiocese, through the services of the Education Secretariat and the Primary Diocesan Advisors, is also committed to supporting Catholic schools as they seek to develop Catholic ethos and teach the Religious Education Programme.

7.3. The development of new local parish capacities to accompany children and their families will take place gradually over time as parish and school dialogue and resources are continuously built up.

7.4. Crucial to this capacity building will be the development of sacramental teams and peer-based ministries, and training for these team ministries.

7.6. The Archdiocese animates the full development of this policy through the pastoral area and deanery structures, supported by the Office for Mission and Ministry and the Education Secretariat.

7.7. The pastoral vision for the Archdiocese is informed by the continuity between the Sacraments of Initiation fully expressed in a supportive ongoing partnership with families, the parish community and school.

*‘Accepting the challenge of evangelisation means bringing the word of God to the farthest reaches, opening oneself to all types of peripheries.’ DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 2020: 295*

## 8. The Role of the Archdiocese in providing resources and training

8.1. Appropriate training and resources will be provided for parish sacramental teams from the Archdiocese, aligning these with new approaches and significant online engagement with families.

8.2. The Archdiocese also commits to review processes that will enable parishes to develop this approach further.

8.3 In order to transform policy into practice it is important that each parish have its own development plan. The formulation of this parish development plan will be supported by the Archdiocese through the Office for Mission and Ministry, so that progress is made and goals set for each community, taking on board that we are now in a significant change of era.

8.4. In this vision, the Archdiocese will continue to affirm and strengthen such practices as family home based activities together, as well as parish programmes such as, Children's Liturgy of the Word, Family Masses, Godly Play, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and other Family seasonal activities. These and other activities can enable the parish to accompany families in a sustainable ongoing way.

*'The Sacraments of Initiation form a central element of the mission and ministry of the Archdiocese...it is appropriate that the approach to the sacraments should form a centrepiece of pastoral renewal.'* SIG REPORT