

DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER

Sacraments & Diocesan Policy

Diocesan Policy on the Baptism of Children

- a) For the first child there should be a minimum of two pre-baptism sessions. Where possible, this should be done by a team which includes lay people. Where practice is strong in a family, it is
- b) not always necessary for the parents to re-attend a baptism course, though their presence can help other parents.
- c) Baptism should never be refused, but might have to be delayed for pastoral reasons.

Diocesan Policy (RCIA and Children)

- a) Children presented for baptism or seeking baptism between the ages of seven and thirteen are regarded as children of catechetical age. They should be prepared for the sacrament following the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Children, part of the RCIA.
- b) Children under the age of seven presented for baptism by their parents should be baptised following the usual preparation appropriate for infants - see policy for Infant Baptism.
- c) Young people over the age of thirteen should be prepared for the sacrament following the normal RCIA process - see policy for Adult Baptism.

Diocesan Policy on the Baptism of Adults

The norm for adults seeking baptism is to follow the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults in their local parish and to be baptised at the Easter Vigil when it is discerned they are ready, following the scrutinies of the RCIA.

Diocesan Policy on Confirmation

Teenagers

Catechesis for Confirmation should normally take place within the parish community, which has an obligation to participate in the catechetical preparation of those to be confirmed.

- a) The policy is to offer teenagers the sacrament around Year 9 of secondary school. Where there are older or slightly younger year groups also being presented, it is good practice to prepare them separately.
- b) Where there is a small number of candidates, parishes should consider joining with each other. A deanery celebration ought to be considered where appropriate.

Adults

- a) Adults who are being baptised at the Easter Vigil may also be confirmed by a priest at the same ceremony. The faculty to confirm at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter season must be requested in advance via the Chancery Office. *

- b) Those who are to be received into full communion with the Church may be confirmed at the Easter Vigil or during the parish's normal celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation with the bishop. The faculty for a priest to confirm at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter season must be requested in advance via the Chancery Office. *
- c) Adult Catholics who, for some reason, were not confirmed as teenagers, should be prepared in the parish and may be confirmed at one of the regular Cathedral celebrations or during the parish's normal celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation with the bishop.*

** the new RCLA form (2008) from the Chancery Office has been amended to cover all three of the above situations.*

Diocesan Policy First Communion/Eucharist

- a) It is diocesan policy for the children to be prepared for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in the parish. This preparation should take place in school Year 3 (the year in which the child turns 8 years old). Parents are expected to attend a number of sessions; firstly, so that they can understand the process of preparation that the parish is providing for the children and secondly, to understand their own particular and important role in helping prepare their children for their first and continuing reception of these sacraments. This involvement of the parents in the catechesis, and in witnessing to the place of the sacraments in the life of Catholics is regarded as a critically important element in the parish-based preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.
- b) In accordance with the mind of the Universal Church, First Reconciliation precedes First Holy Communion. Holy Communion should be offered under both kinds at Mass. This includes the First Holy Communion Mass, including those children receiving Holy Communion for the first time. The catechesis provided for children should always be adequate ensuring that the children appreciate that Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is received under both kinds.

Eucharistic hospitality

As is indicated in Bishops' Conference teaching document One Bread, One Body, permission may be sought by non-Catholic Christians to receive Holy Communion at a Catholic Mass on special occasions. One Bread One Body gives good teaching on the framework, theology and pastoral practice in this area. For the present, permission for Eucharistic hospitality should be sought from the Archbishop by the parish priest, or another priest where he is more directly involved in the celebration in question. Orthodox Christians who seek Eucharistic hospitality may be admitted without application to the Archbishop though one must be sensitive to their own ecclesial disciplines in this matter.