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BECOMING CATHOLIC

A leader's guide to Baptism,
Confirmation, Eucharist &
Reconciliation

KATHY HORAN





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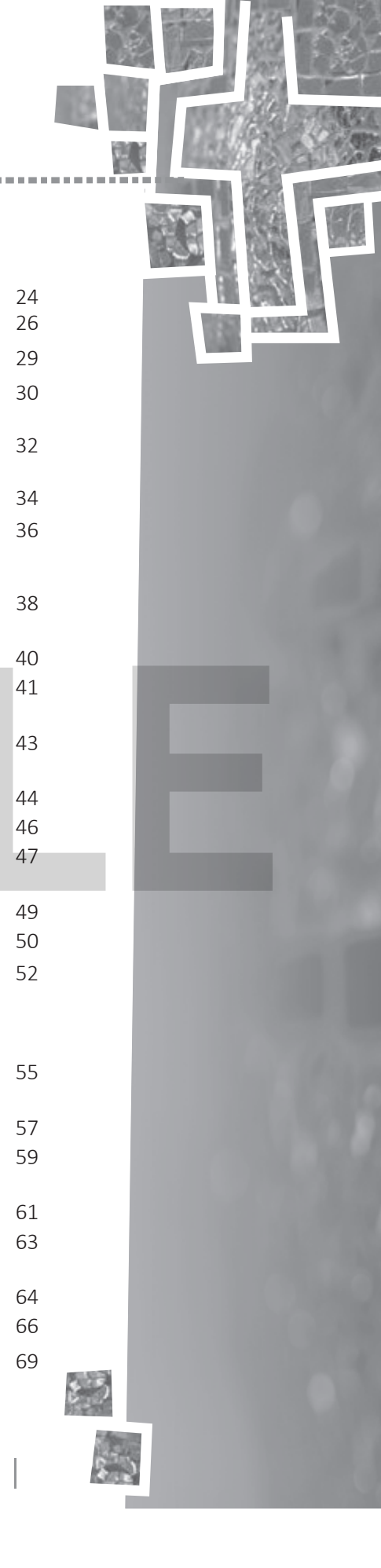
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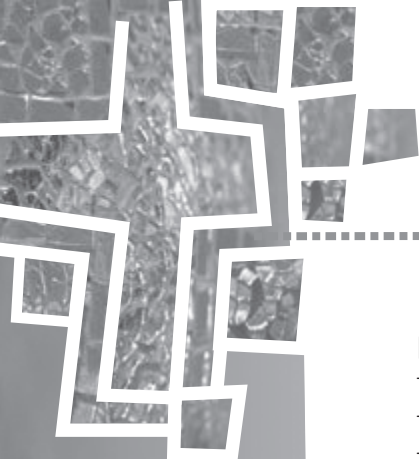
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INTRODUCTION

This book is aimed at leaders who may be volunteers, and lay educators who are working with children in after-hours school Sacrament preparation programs. These leaders are not necessarily trained classroom teachers and may or may not have the support of a Religious Education coordinator dedicated to this role.

This book is designed to be used in conjunction with the 'Becoming Catholic' series, which includes the following titles by Kathy Horan:



A parent's guide to Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist & Reconciliation

Baptism – A practical guide for parents and godparents, Fr Geoffrey Plant

Eucharist – A practical guide for families

Reconciliation – A practical guide for families

'Big Books' series:

Baptism & Confirmation

Reconciliation & Eucharist

Sacred Objects & Symbols



Purpose of this Leader Guide

The purpose of this Leader Guide is to assist new teachers, catechists and group leaders to make effective use of the 'Becoming Catholic' series by providing background theology of the sacraments, a learning process, skills, and classroom-based activities designed to assist the students in their preparation for the celebration of the sacraments.

The learning process used throughout this series is based on naming and understanding the human experience and then reflecting on this in the light of the gospels. Throughout each theme there are references to the story of Jesus: this is highly important because as Christians we are initiated into the community of believers who are followers of Jesus. We are also initiated into the Christian story. Therefore, it is important as educators that we nourish the lives of young people with many of the rich stories of Jesus.

In addition to hearing and reflecting on the stories of Jesus in the gospels, we need to lead children to a deeper relationship with Jesus in prayer and help them to make connections between the human experience and what it means to be Christians who live as Jesus lived. When the Catholic community gathers together to pray, Scripture or the Word of God always forms a central part of the Mass and sacrament celebrations.

IT IS THE
WORD OF
GOD THAT
CONTINUES
TO NOURISH
US, AND
CHALLENGES
US TO
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE
IN OUR
WORLD.

Catholic Identity

The content, teaching and learning approach used in the *Becoming Catholic – a leader’s guide to Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist & Reconciliation* are consistent with and sit alongside the approaches promoted in the Leuven Catholic Identity project. The Leader guide invites educators, leaders, families and students to engage in a process of reflection on the local school context, naming and understanding human experience, engaging and dialoguing with the Catholic tradition, particularly the Scriptures, and imagining a way forward that calls the whole community to action on behalf of the gospel message. This is a process that calls us to ‘do theology’ in our local context, mindful of the challenges, the signs of our times and the complexities of each local community.

It is the Word of God that continues to nourish us, and challenges us to make a difference in our world.

Introduction to the theme

In this section, the leader is provided with a summary, at an adult level, of the content and theological meaning of the theme.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

At the beginning of each theme, you will find some learning intentions. These represent objectives to assist you in your teaching of the theme, and are designed to focus on what it is about that theme that you wish the children to experience and understand by its conclusion. As they move closer to the celebration of each sacrament, there are some key ideas

for them to grasp. These key ideas are also useful for your own reflection and self-evaluation at the conclusion of your teaching of this theme.

SHARING MY STORY

This part of the learning process begins with a focus on the human experience as the basis for further discussion and reflection. A leader may choose to draw on a real-life story, a scenario that has been developed for exploring the topic, or a story from a picture book that is relevant to the topic. The purpose of this aspect of the learning process is to engage the children and introduce them to the theme.

EXPLORING MY STORY

This part of the process seeks to explore the human experience a little more by asking further questions about the original experience, for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of the experience, and later making connections with the story of Jesus.

PRESENTING THE CHRISTIAN STORY

This is the central part of the process, together with the introduction at the head of the theme, which provides some background knowledge and theology for the leader. Gospel stories relating to the topic are explored to help lead them to an understanding of the meaning of the gospel story for the Christian community. Further questions allow for deeper insights into how Jesus lived and what that might mean for his followers today.

 **MAKING CONNECTIONS**

In this section, the leader draws together the already shared reflections on the human experience. The insights gained reflect on Jesus and the gospel message and an understanding of the wisdom of the Christian community enables students to make connections for their daily lives. Possible activities are provided to help students make these connections.

 **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

In this final section of the learning process, the challenge is to think about the topic or theme in terms of addressing the following questions: what does this mean for me as a Christian living in today's world and learning to be a faithful follower of Jesus? How can I make a difference in the world today?

 **PRAYER TIME**

At the end of each theme there are some suggestions for prayer with the class. It is good practice to have a prayer focus in the classroom or wherever the children gather. This could consist of a table with a cloth, a crucifix, candle and a Bible. The suggestions for prayer in this section would normally include a prayerful reading of the gospel passage used in the lesson; other aspects of the prayer time could include prayers of petition or thanksgiving, or prayers that reflect the needs of the community.

Sometimes incorporating a simple Penitential rite during prayer time draws our attention to what God invites us into – that is, into the family of God and a relationship with God. When we attend

Mass, we hear this same form of prayer in the Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass.

Suggestions for using Scripture in prayer**Lectio Divina**

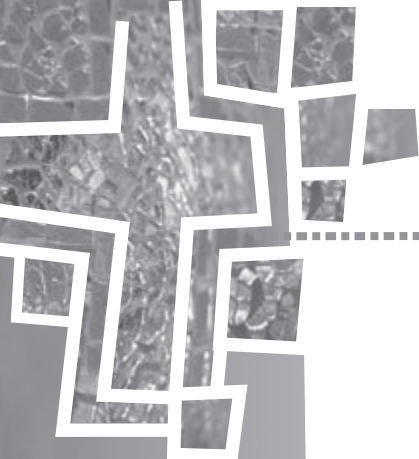
This is an ancient form of prayer that has a focus on the Word of God from Scripture. A passage is read and participants are invited to listen.

The passage is read again and this time participants are encouraged to focus on a word or phrase that means something significant to them.

Sometimes people name the word or phrase they have chosen, but often it is enough for individuals to simply repeat that word or phrase to themselves.

Christian meditation

Christian meditation is a way of engaging children in Scripture. For this exercise, it is good to read a gospel story to the children and then to have a chat with them about the story and what it might mean to them. Following this, re-read the gospel story and invite children to imagine themselves in the scene, taking part. At the end of the reading, encourage them to share what they heard, saw, felt, or were thinking, as a result of meeting Jesus in the telling of the story. Sometimes this exercise can be followed up by journal writing.



There are many strategies for developing mindfulness in children. They begin with a focus on breathing and a slowing down of breathing. This enables children to become calm and focused and therefore open to prayer. Introducing children to the notion of a mantra, which is a word or phrase that can be repeated over and over, silently, is a way of developing greater consciousness and awareness.

Sometimes the use of reflective music can be a signal that it is time to slow down, to become calm and aware of our breathing and to take time to become mindful of what is happening inside us and around us. This can be a good exercise to lead into a time of prayer, or simply as a way of becoming focused.

Journalling

Journalling is a good way of promoting further reflection on a gospel story, a real scenario from the student's daily life, or on issues that affect our world. Students may like to record their thoughts freely in response to a story or a class discussion. Sometimes it is useful to provide some structure or scaffolding to guide their reflections, such as in the following outline:

- What did you hear?
- What did you learn?
- What did you like – or not like – about this story/lesson/discussion?
- How do you feel about what you have learned and shared with others?

Additional gospel stories

Stories of healing

Royal official's son John 4:46-54
Peter's mother-in-law Mark 1:29-31

Healing a paralytic Mark 2:3-12
Blind man at Bethsaida Mark 8:22-26
Two blind men Matthew 9:27-31

Nature miracles

Feeding of 5000 Matthew 14:13-21
First catch of fish Luke 5:1-11
Jesus stills the storm Matthew 8:23-27

Parables

Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37
Lost son/forgiving Father Luke 15:11-32
Lost sheep Luke 15:3-7
Pharisee and tax collector Luke 18:9-14

Working with parents

The Second Vatican Council of the '60s affirmed the role of parents as first and on-going educators in faith for their children. The Council also named the family as the 'domestic Church'.

In the light of this, leaders and Catechists are called to work in partnership with parents to support them in the formal religious development of their children, particularly with reference to sacrament preparation.

Families come in all shapes and sizes; in this important ministry of religious education, communication and on-going relationship with families is essential. In practical terms, this may mean the Catechist or leader ensures all communications reach both parents, particularly when family arrangements are complex.

SACRAMENTS TODAY

Looking back . . . important messages

During the '60s, the Catholic Church underwent significant changes in all areas of its life and ministry so that it could recapture a deeper understanding of the spirit and mission of Jesus as one who came to share, in a special way, God's hopes and dreams for the world. Between 1962 and 1965 the Pope and the bishops of the Church gathered in Rome for what is known as the Second Vatican Council. The work of this important Council was to renew the rituals and practices of the Church so that all members could become more engaged and involved in the life of the Church.

A very important insight emerging from the Council is that the laity, that is, all of the baptised who are not ordained priests or members of religious orders, are called to share in the mission of Jesus in their daily lives. In addition to this, the role of parents as first educators in the faith of their children was affirmed. Indeed, the Church named the family unit as the 'domestic Church' and at the present time, as educators, the Catholic community continues to seek ways to support the important role of parents. The parents take seriously their need to bear witness to their faith and to support their children as they, in their turn, prepare to take further steps in their life journey within the religious community that we name Church.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis has taken up the challenge of calling all baptised to live as missionary disciples of Jesus, to take seriously our

Baptism and our commitment to Jesus through the Church. He builds on the work of renewal of the Council by affirming the importance of families growing in love together, and together making a difference in the world by the way we live and experience family life. Pope Francis acknowledges that family life can be difficult and challenging at times, and yet it is through sharing these times together and also by rejoicing in the life-giving and joy-filled experiences of family life that we can build up the community of God on earth.

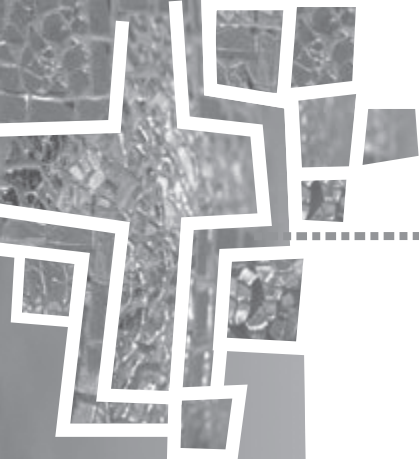
According to Pope Francis we meet Jesus in the sacraments. The Pope says that he goes to the sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis and confesses his wrongdoing because he believes that Jesus is waiting to shower him with tenderness, love and forgiveness.

For Pope Francis, human life is beautiful and simple in that we must love as we are loved; we must care for the poor and needy; we must pray that our hearts and minds will be moved to make a difference; we must seek peace and justice, and we must learn to live in peace and harmony with the whole of creation.

Jesus at the centre

The Scriptures provide the Christian community with insight into living as people of God. They show us the person Jesus, who lived his whole life in deep relationship with God and was guided by God's Spirit. The Jesus of the gospels is a human person who loved, laughed and lived the ordinariness of human life in his family, extended family and religious community. Just as Jesus had to learn about the ways of his religious

FOR POPE FRANCIS, HUMAN LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL AND SIMPLE IN THAT WE MUST LOVE AS WE ARE LOVED; WE MUST CARE FOR THE POOR AND NEEDY; WE MUST PRAY THAT OUR HEARTS AND MINDS WILL BE MOVED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE; WE MUST SEEK PEACE AND JUSTICE, AND WE MUST LEARN TO LIVE IN PEACE AND HARMONY WITH THE WHOLE OF CREATION.



THE REIGN OF GOD IS ABOUT THE WAY JESUS SPOKE TO THE PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AS ONE WHO LOVES US ALWAYS, IS ALWAYS MERCIFUL AND READY TO FORGIVE, WHO IS TENDER AND COMPASSIONATE, AND WHOSE WISH FOR US IS TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL.

community, and learn from the example of Mary and Joseph the importance of becoming involved in the life, prayer and work of the community, so, too, the children in your care bring to their classes a wealth of family and life experiences. It is our role as Catechists to deepen their understanding of such experiences and to make connections with the Jesus story and what we are invited into as members of God's family.

Jesus and the Reign of God

From Jesus' experience we learn that he, too, belonged to and enjoyed family life and the company of friends and extended family. For Jesus, relating to other people and especially to God was the heart of his mission.

Jesus began his public ministry by announcing the Reign of God. In the past we have spoken of the Kingdom of God, but Reign of God is the preferred term, now, as it is a more inclusive term.

The Reign of God is about the way Jesus spoke to the people about God as one who loves us always, is always merciful and ready to forgive, who is tender and compassionate, and whose wish for us is to live life to the full.

The God Jesus spoke of includes everyone, welcomes everyone, cares for each person and desires the happiness and well-being of each and every person. Jesus came to share God's dream for the world and to invite people into a loving, faith-filled and life-giving community whose task is to carry on Jesus' mission to the world. Everyone willing to respond to the call to be part of the Reign of God is invited into the story of Jesus, into a relationship with an all-loving and compassionate God and

into making a difference in the world by living the values Jesus taught.

BAPTISM

Becoming Catholic is a process of initiation into the Catholic community, the Church. Because initiation is a process, it takes time and is often expressed as a journey. This journey is a journey to faith in Jesus, the risen Lord; it is about sharing a vision of life and committing oneself to the mission and message of Jesus, as expressed in the Scriptures. It is a journey that unfolds as we grow and develop, not only in life but also in faith and appreciation of the call to be immersed in the life of Jesus.

Baptism brings us into the community of God and assures us of the support of the community as we move through life.

Baptism is the first of the sacraments of initiation into the Catholic faith community. When a person is baptised, their life as a Christian has begun; the journey of a life-time within a faith community represents hope for the future of the community and a wonderful opportunity for the person being baptised to find a place and a deep sense of belonging that promises to support, encourage and provide good witnessing to the message and mission of Jesus.

When children are baptised into the community as infants, their parents state publicly to the community that they want Baptism for their child. Parents choose godparents who are also members of the Catholic community and their role is to support the child and the parents and to provide witness of living a good Christian life.



‘I baptise you . . . ‘

At Baptism, the priest pours water over the head of the person to be baptised and he prays the words: *‘I baptise you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’* The priest also anoints the person being baptised with the Oil of Chrism. This is a sign of the person being sealed and strengthened to live a good Christian life. When a child is born, parents choose the name for their child, and we call this their Christian name – that is, the name by which they will be known both in the Christian community and in the world. Our name is our identity; just as our parents gave us our name when we were born. This name is repeated at Baptism and it means that we have become a new creation in God’s family, the Catholic community in which we are initiated.

The journey of initiation into the Catholic community has begun. Growing into the life of the community is the task of parents, along with godparents and other members, so that, over time, the Baptised can learn, develop a prayer relationship with Jesus, join with the community for prayer and religious celebrations including the weekly celebration of the Eucharist and become involved in the mission of Jesus.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA) FOR OLDER CHILDREN

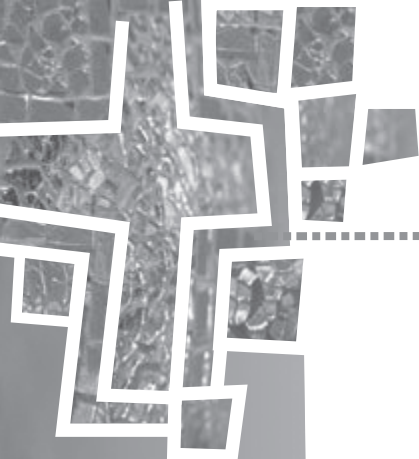
Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church reclaimed what is known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as the process of initiation for those seeking membership in the Catholic Church.

There is an increasing number of children of Catechetical age, (usually around the age of seven, or older) who come along seeking Baptism and full initiation into the Catholic community.

The RCIA process includes these children. Pastoral practice varies, but the stages still reflect the journey towards full initiation. Children of Catechetical age are able to make known their wish, with the support of their parents, to become fully initiated members and to take part in faith, and involvement, in the life of the parish community. They are able to express their willingness to learn about Jesus and also to develop a personal relationship with Jesus through daily prayer, reflection on the gospels and participation in the Sunday Eucharist in the parish church.

In their time of preparation, which may be in the context of parish sacrament preparation with other children already baptised, or may be in a small group if others of similar ages express a desire to undergo this formation, children of Catechetical age will spend time reading, hearing and reflecting on the Christian story. They will hear about the teachings of Jesus and will explore the faith of the Church, expressed in the Apostles’ Creed. They will also be encouraged to think about and look to future involvement in the mission of Jesus in the local community.

After their time of preparation, these children will celebrate the sacraments of initiation. They will be baptised, confirmed and then celebrate the Eucharist. The time following their initiation will also involve further reflection on the Scriptures and participation in the weekly



Sunday Eucharistic celebration, since the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.

CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation has received particular renewal following the Second Vatican Council. Originally, when people were initiated into the Christian community, they were baptised, confirmed and then received First Communion all in the one celebration. These three sacraments, in this order, make up the sacraments of Christian initiation. For various reasons, over time the sacrament of Confirmation became separated from Baptism and this has made it difficult for us to understand that becoming a Catholic is a process that takes time.

In addition, there have been many different ways of explaining and understanding Confirmation, but the Church has affirmed the place of Confirmation as confirming Baptism and of being the second formal step in the process of becoming initiated into the Christian community. Baptism and Confirmation are thus closely linked and relate to the initial stages of the initiation process. Receiving Holy Communion within the celebration of the Eucharist completes the process of initiation.

Ordering of the sacraments

This ordering of the sacraments helps us to understand the present move to restore this process by celebrating the sacraments in their original order. However, there is still a lot of debate about the need for some ritual to signify a move towards adult commitment in faith. This debate

results in a wide variety of practices: some dioceses celebrate Confirmation before Eucharist. Whatever the practice, the essential meaning remains: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist together complete the process of initiation into the Catholic community.

Confirmation is the second part of the initiation process and confirms Baptism. This process invites us into a deeper way of relating to God, to Jesus, to one another, and to becoming more actively involved in the life of the community through the on-going presence of the Holy Spirit.

At his Baptism Jesus had a strong sense of being the beloved child of God and that God had something special in mind for him. Jesus became aware of God's Spirit leading and guiding him in his life's journey.

When we celebrate the Baptism of a child, or adult, this signifies that that person's journey in faith has begun within the Christian community. Initiation into the Christian community means becoming a part of the life and work of the community: gathering to celebrate Eucharist, to listen to the Word of God, to pray together and care for the poor.

This ordering of the sacraments helps us to understand the present move to restore this process.

The Holy Spirit

The story of Pentecost shows us how the disciples, gathered together in fear but also to support one another, came to an understanding that Jesus' Spirit was with them and gave them the power and courage to go out and spread the good

BAPTISM BRINGS US INTO THE COMMUNITY OF GOD AND ASSURES US OF THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY AS WE MOVE THROUGH LIFE.



news about Jesus to the whole world. From then on, the disciples grew in their understanding of all that they had shared with Jesus and knew that the Spirit would be with them always, enabling them to keep alive in the world the mission and message of Jesus. It is into this mission that we are called through Baptism.

Confirmation confirms us in living this new way of life according to the gospels, and is an invitation to each one of us to renew the Baptismal promises first made on our behalf by our parents and godparents when we were baptised.

EUCCHARIST

Eucharist is the sacrament of nourishment. We come to the table of the Lord to be fed and nourished by the body and blood of Christ. In the gospels we hear of the many times Jesus spent in family homes with friends, relatives and even sinners, enjoying good company and food. We hear stories of Jesus feeding huge crowds of people and encouraging his disciples to do the same – that is, use their resources to assist those in need.

For Jesus, it was absolutely important that the disciples grew an understanding that for them to be involved in the mission of Jesus, they must be involved in the lives of the most needy people in society and support them. In the early days of the Christian community, widows, orphans and children in general were among the most vulnerable members of society. Eucharist, for the Catholic community, is always closely linked with working for justice and being in solidarity with the poor.

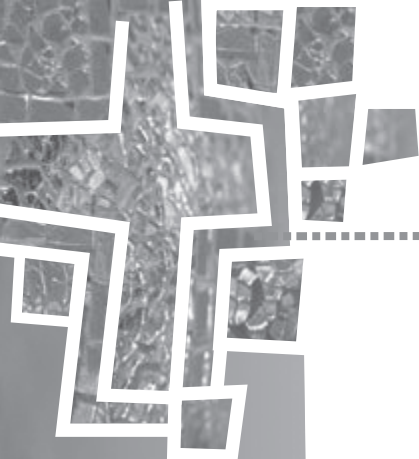
Nourishing the world

This calls us to be mindful of the suffering of others, particularly in third-world countries but also closer to home, where we are confronted on a daily basis with the reality of millions in our world who are starving, while we throw away tons of unwanted or slightly damaged food; as Eucharistic people, we need to be aware of and speak up about the injustices experienced by millions of women and children, by refugees and asylum seekers, and the issues affecting many of our indigenous people in Australia.



We are invited to the table of the Lord to be nourished for our daily lives; at the end of Mass, or the celebration of the Eucharist, we are told to go forth, back into our day, with a deeper awareness of our local and world community, and in turn nourish the world.

For Catholics, the Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives as Catholics. It is the touchstone we need to refer to as we grow and develop into faithful followers of Jesus who are engaged in bringing about the Reign of God on earth.

At the present time, as a Church we continue to hold firm to these values and to seek ways of promoting and supporting family life almost as a mini-church community. The family is the most basic form of community. It is this rich context of people living and sharing together that forms the backdrop of any more formal education in faith leading to the celebration of the sacraments and growing involvement in the Catholic community.



WE ARE INVITED TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD TO BE NOURISHED FOR OUR DAILY LIVES; AT THE END OF MASS, OR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST, WE ARE TOLD TO GO FORTH, BACK INTO OUR DAILY LIVES, WITH A DEEPER AWARENESS OF OUR LOCAL AND WORLD COMMUNITY, AND IN TURN NOURISH THE WORLD.



Stories of Jesus

As Christians, we take inspiration from the Scriptures and our belief is that God continues to be revealed to us in our daily lives through our reflections on the life of Jesus and the God Jesus showed to us. The stories of Jesus in the gospels tell us a lot about Jesus' relationship with God: it is that of a child to a loving parent. Throughout these pages, you will find the gospels offered provide a way to get in touch with the *person* Jesus. He was born into and grew up in a loving family and friendship circle. He showed us what it was like to be in a relationship with a loving God who continues to care deeply for each human being.

These stories and reflections are useful for helping each one of us develop a personal relationship with Jesus and grow in our understanding of how Jesus developed – physically, emotionally and spiritually – within his environment and with the support and example of his parents.

RECONCILIATION

Along with the other sacraments, the sacrament of Reconciliation underwent significant changes after the Second Vatican Council. In the renewal of the sacraments, Reconciliation was named as a 'sacrament of healing'. What has been reclaimed and re-affirmed in this sacrament is the constant truth of God's love and forgiveness for the times when we fail. God's love for us is expressed in mercy, compassion, forgiveness and peace. For this reason, we can truly talk about celebrating Reconciliation: what we celebrate is God's love and delight in us, even when we make poor choices that result in sinfulness.

Another aspect of Reconciliation is the social or relational aspect. This means that because we are human and created in God's image and likeness, we belong to the community of God – God's family. When we are born, we are born into a family with the possibility of developing a network of relationships. God created us to live in peace and harmony, to enjoy the wonders of creation, to relate personally to a loving God who is close to us and wishes us to be free, to be happy and fulfilled, and to build up the faithful community. The Book of Genesis speaks of God delighting in all of creation and wanting to be in a relationship with humankind.

We are unique

Of all the creatures on earth, human beings have the capacity to think and to choose. Our thoughts, words and actions have an effect, not only on ourselves but on our relationships with God, others and our environment. Poor choices, or sinfulness, damage these relationships; good choices strengthen relationships and build a strong and healthy community. This is what happens in family life when someone upsets the balance by unkind actions, thoughtless words and lack of care and understanding for other members of the family.

As with family life, so the community of God suffers when the poor choices we make affect the well-being and happiness of the whole community. For the Catholic community, the sacrament of Baptism signifies a new beginning in which we become a new creation as a member of the Church. The sacrament of Reconciliation provides us with an

opportunity to restore relationships and the original state of blessing created by God. This is necessary to rebuild balance and harmony in our relationships with ourselves, with God, with others, and the whole of creation.

Called to make peace

Reconciliation is about acknowledging and naming those times when we know we have done wrong, and then making peace and restoring relationships. When we acknowledge our need for forgiveness, there is a way we can become reconciled and begin again. Reconciliation reminds us of our status as a new creation in God's family and of the fact that God delights in us.

The renewal of the sacrament of Reconciliation reflects both the personal and social nature of our need for forgiveness and restores what has been broken, lost or damaged.

As human beings we stand in need of God's forgiveness, and we also need to acknowledge the times when we have sinned against others by our thoughts, words and actions.

The sacrament of Reconciliation is a 'sacrament of peace and healing' because it restores us to our true selves, and enables us to make peace with those who have been affected by our poor choices that have resulted in sinfulness.

At the heart of the sacrament is the constant truth of God's gracious and constant love for us, forgiving and restoring us even before we recognise our need for forgiveness. For this reason, we can truly claim to celebrate

the sacrament of Reconciliation because we are acknowledging God's great and compassionate love, and making a fresh start to live in God's community as God's new creation.



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION IS A SACRAMENT OF PEACE AND HEALING BECAUSE IT RESTORES US TO OUR TRUE SELVES, AND ENABLES US TO RESTORE AND MAKE PEACE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY OUR POOR CHOICES THAT RESULT IN SINFULNESS.

SYMBOLS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Some symbols used during sacramental celebrations

The cross

Jesus died on a cross. This cross is also referred to as the 'tree of life' because, although Jesus died on it, he also rose from it to a new life.

Christians bless themselves with the Sign of the Cross and they say these words: *'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'* These words often begin times of prayer with groups or the community, and are used at Baptism.

Candle

Candles are used as symbols of Christ's presence among us as the light of the world. Whenever Christians gather to pray, the lighting of candles is a simple way of acknowledging the presence of Christ among us.

Water

Water is a symbol of life. When people are baptised into the Catholic community, water is poured over their head and the words prayed by the priest are, *'I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'* When this happens at Baptism, it is a symbol of the new life a person is entering into as a Christian. As people go into the Church, you will often see them place their hand in a font of water and then bless themselves with the Sign of the cross. This, too, is a reminder of Baptism.

Oil

Oil is used as a sign of strengthening. When a person is baptised, the Sign of the Cross is made with oil, and this signifies that the

person is being strengthened to live as a Christian and a follower of Jesus. The Oil of Chrism is also used at Confirmation to confirm Baptism.

Scriptures

The Bible, or the Scriptures, presents the Word of God still speaking to us today. Jesus grew up in a family and religious community where he heard the Word of God proclaimed in the temple and the synagogue, and where he prayed the psalms and heard the words of the prophets.

When the Catholic community gathers together at Mass, the Word of God is proclaimed from the Scriptures and when we think about what we hear, the Word of God nourishes our lives and gives us direction.

White garment

At Baptism the person being baptised is clothed with a white garment. This signals becoming a new creation as a Christian within the Catholic community.

Bread and wine

These are symbols of everyday life, nourishment and enjoyment. At Mass when the bread and wine are consecrated and received by the congregation, it is the body and blood of Christ that Catholics receive into their lives.

Purple stole

When the priest celebrates the sacrament of Reconciliation, he wears a purple stole. Purple is the colour used in the Church as a sign of forgiveness, and when the priest wears it for this purpose he is ministering God's forgiveness and peace.