



Policies of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Policy # 120

Sacramental Policies

Approved By: Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, DD

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These words, taken from the National Catechetical Directory, focus on the sacraments as the primary way of participating in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. In celebrating the sacraments, we celebrate Christ sharing His own life with us, His call to be His disciples, His outpouring of His own Spirit upon us. Sacraments, then, are not mere recollections of past activities of Christ. Because the Church is able to participate in the mystery of Christ's Passover through the sacraments, the sacraments are, first and foremost, the actions of Christ, the means to and the very signs of our salvation. Because they are the means to our salvation, they need to be celebrated in an appropriate manner. Because they are signs of our salvation, the faithful must be educated and prepared for not only their celebration but for the response of faith and spiritual growth which the sacraments bring about.

These Sacramental Norms and Policies are directed to priests, deacons and other parish leaders, as well as parents, religious educators and parish liturgists -- in short, to all who are involved in preparing for and celebrating the sacraments. They are intended to address common pastoral needs, all the while recognizing that these needs reflect the different cultures, size, socio-economic factors, history and traditions that make each parish and specialized ministry unique, and which together make this Diocese a true mosaic of faith. In addressing these common pastoral needs in the complex circumstances of everyday life, special reference should constantly be made to the teaching of the Magisterium and, in particular, to the moral and theological foundations of our faith as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, the Catechism should become a veritable *vade mecum* to assist in the intellectual, moral and spiritual conversion of all the faithful of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph but, especially, for those who serve in various aspects of pastoral ministry.⁽²⁾

Every parish is bound to implement the Sacramental Norms and Policies, both for the celebration of the sacraments as well as for preparation programs. This is particularly necessary when current parish practice differs from that which is presented in these Sacramental Norms and Policies. Pastors and others responsible should also provide for adequate explanation to the faithful of the reasons which underlie changes in current parish practice as required by the Sacramental Norms and Policies. It goes without saying that in danger of death, a particular sacrament will be celebrated in an abbreviated form and without the preparation which normal celebration of the sacraments calls for.

Ongoing theological reflection, pastoral practice and the revision of liturgical books will continue to deepen our understanding of the sacraments and the manner in which they are to be prepared for. Therefore, these Sacramental Norms and Policies will be reviewed periodically. This will insure that they always maintain the purpose for which they are issued: to deepen our appreciation for the sacraments as the means and signs of our salvation in Christ -- Christ who has died, Christ who is risen and Christ who will come again.

General Guidelines for Sacraments

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4_5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work.

Yet it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and undertake to give instruction about it.(3)

The parish community is the most fitting and proper place for the preparation and for the celebration of the sacraments.(4) Catholic schools and catechetical programs for both adults and children assist by helping to provide catechesis. The responsibility for preparation for a sacrament belongs to the pastor. He is assisted in this responsibility by associate pastors, deacons, parents, catechetical leaders and other parish leaders.

In celebrating the sacraments, the prescriptions of the Sacramentary and of the official rites of the Church, and other laws pertaining to them, are always to be followed. Where options are permitted, the celebration should reflect the simplicity, practicality and dignity characteristic of the Roman Rite.(5)

Catechesis is to be provided for adults and parents of children prior to the celebration of a sacrament.(6) Every parish has the responsibility of assisting the parents of candidates as well as the candidates by providing: catechesis for all parents; programs and materials which enable parents to participate as fully as possible in the sacramental preparation of their children;(7) parental programs and involvement adjusted to the particular pastoral concerns of individual children and parents with special needs (one-parent families, families with foster children, etc.).

Special instruction and pastoral guidance are necessary when the candidate for a sacrament does not regularly practice the faith. In particular, instruction and guidance must also be provided for non-practicing parents who present their child for baptism, confirmation, penance, or first communion. Such instruction and guidance is to enable the parents / candidate[s] to give assurances that this gift of grace "will be able so to grow through a general education of faith and in Christian living, that the Sacrament may attain its full truth. As a rule these assurances are given by the parents or relatives, although they can be supplied in various ways within the

are given by the parents or relatives, although they can be supplied in various ways within the Christian community. If, on the other hand, these assurances are not in reality serious, that fact can be reason for postponing the Sacrament. Finally, if it is certain that there are no assurances, the Sacrament must be postponed."⁽⁸⁾ In doubt, give precedence to the spiritual need of the recipient.

Special attention is to be given in the catechesis and celebration of the sacraments to the pastoral needs of minorities and of transients who reside within the Diocese. Parishes should make persons with disabilities truly welcome and be particularly sensitive to their needs in preparing them for the sacraments. Their regular participation in liturgies and liturgical ministries is always to be encouraged.

The liturgical year often gives directives for the appropriate times to celebrate the sacraments. Particular sensitivity to the liturgical year is to be kept in mind in Catholic school and parish religious education programs. The norms of the liturgical year, as addressed especially in the Sacramentary and in the Praenotanda (introductions) to the respective rites, are to be specifically respected in the preparation and celebration of Sunday Masses, especially when such Sunday Masses occur during Advent and Lent. Prior to planning particular liturgical celebrations, it is also advisable to consult the approved Ordo for the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph, The Order for Celebration of Mass and Divine Office in Churches of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph.

The function of music in sacramental celebrations is to enhance a spirit of prayer and to enable the participants to lift their hearts and minds to God. Music should be well chosen and fully integrated as required and/or suggested by the liturgical rites.

In general, the use of recorded music is unacceptable in liturgies, since it contributes to an atmosphere of artificiality. It can lead to the performance of music as entertainment, and leave the assembly in the role of spectator. ⁽⁹⁾ One exception may be in Masses with children; ⁽¹⁰⁾ however, even then, it is not to be preferred to the human voice or live instrumentalists.

In the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph, dance in Eucharistic liturgies is prohibited. Liturgical gesture for the sake of inculturation is acceptable.

¹ CCC, 11-12.

² "Looking to Christ in Faith," Pastoral Letter on Implementation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Washington, September 14, 1994.

³ CSL, 14.

⁴ NCD, 119; RCIA, 13-14. And see CCC, 1136-1209.

⁵ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [CSL], 34.

⁶ NCD, 117, 119; CSL, 10.

⁷ NCD, 119

⁸ "Instruction on Infant Baptism", Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, December, 1980, 28. For the catechetical context, see CCC, 1213-1228.

⁹ CSL 48. The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator (38), they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.

¹⁰ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Directory for Masses with Children, November 1, 1973.