



September 7, 2017

Dear Reverend Fathers,

The celebration of the sacraments is at the heart of the Church's life. Through the sacraments, the Church proclaims and celebrates the Good News of our salvation in Jesus Christ. "As actions of Christ and of the Church, they are signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about" (can. 840).

Much work has been done in our diocese in recent years to provide for consistent sacramental preparation. Such preparation should be a spiritually enriching time for the child and family alike. Sacramental preparation also allows the parish and Catholic school communities to publicly witness and share the faith in very intentional ways. The parish community supports the family by offering appropriate sacramental preparation programs and the Catholic school provides a remote preparation through Religious Education and Family Life Education programs. Sacramental preparation involves family, parish and school which enlivens and strengthens the entire faith community.

To support the effective collaboration of family, parish and school, I am providing these guidelines for the sacramental preparation programs. I hope they will serve as reminders of the important collective effort in which we are engaged when preparing children for the reception of the sacraments. Good communication and understanding of respective roles will optimize the experience of sacramental preparation for all. I take this opportunity to thank you for your pastoral work to prepare our children to receive the sacraments in partnership with their parents and schools.

Yours in Christ,

†Most Reverend Daniel J. Miehm, D.D.
Bishop of Peterborough

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GUIDELINES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

- Parents are the first educators of their children in the faith.

- The parish and school work together to help the parents to fulfil their task.
 - The parish will send out a letter about the upcoming Sacramental preparation program to parents with the June report card.
 - The parish will share the dates of the parish-based sacramental preparation program sessions with the school.
 - The parish will communicate the parish-based sacramental preparation program session dates through the parish bulletin, parish website, and the school newsletter/website.
 - The pastor will meet with the parish-based catechists, principals, and teachers (Grades 2 and 7) to plan for the coordinated delivery of remote and immediate sacramental preparation.

- All three groups will cooperate harmoniously to achieve the desired results.
 - The process for sacramental preparation does not need to be complicated with unnecessary or burdensome regulations. Deadlines and requirements should be administered pastorally and supportively.
 - Sacramental preparation is a time of special grace and expectation, and should not become a contest of wills among parents, pastors, or catechists. If disagreements occur, pastors should do their best to mediate them with loving concern for all parties. Most instances of disagreement can be resolved by recognizing that the Church's expectations for sacramental participation have been set out in Canon Law and the liturgical books.
 - Where good will is evidently present on the part of a family, pastors are urged to be generous in addressing exceptional or difficult situations.
 - Where a dispute is unresolved, it shall be referred to the Chancellor of Spiritual Affairs for resolution.
 - If approached by parents whose child is not a baptized Catholic for participation in the sacramental preparation program, pastors should meet with them to discuss what is most appropriate in their circumstance.

- The parents are to be integrally involved in the preparation of their children to receive the sacraments.
 - The parents will be invited to attend sacramental preparation program sessions designed for parents and specifically facilitated for them.
 - As parent sessions are invitational, a child should not be impeded from receiving

- the sacraments because of parents' absence from the sessions.
- These sessions will support the faith of the parents and help them to undertake their role as the first educators in the faith.

- The preparation and celebration of the sacraments are the child's initiation into the Church as manifested principally in the parish community.
 - The parishes will include the Rites (Welcoming and/or Enrollment) at a Sunday Mass.
 - The parish will provide the dates for the celebration of these Rites to the school so that this information may be communicated to parents through both the parish and the school.
 - Principals and teachers are invited to attend the Rites at the parish.

- Parishioners are encouraged to become involved in the remote and immediate preparation of the child.
 - Each parish will invite parishioners to serve in the ministries of catechist and facilitator
 - The children preparing to receive the sacraments will be included in the Universal Prayer offered at the parish Masses.
 - Parishes may invite parishioners to serve as "prayer partners" who will pray for the children preparing to receive the sacraments.

- The catechetical formation takes place in the parish under the direction of the pastor in accordance with the Parish-Based Sacramental Preparation Programs in the Diocese and these guidelines.

- The parish church is the usual place where all sacraments are celebrated, particularly Baptism, Confirmation, and the liturgies of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

Dated September 7, 2017