

Using the Catechumenate with Parents (and Godparents) in Preparation for the Children's Baptism

Workshop NAAC 2001 Conference (Santa Fe)

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I. Prayer and Introductions

What is your name, faith tradition, responsibility, and experience with baptism of children?

II. Identifying Cases

Who are the people who present for infant or child baptism? (Write on board)

How do they come to your attention?

Recap

1. Parents want child "done now."
2. Grandparents, aunt, etc. want child baptized (as we always did it in this family.)
3. Archie Bunker baptism.
4. Children in weekday program hear others speak of baptism and communion and want same for themselves.

III. Possible Catechumenate Process

- A. Announce pregnancy or intent to adopt to congregation and ask for prayers. Include in intercessions. Begin meeting with parents to help them understand the role of the church and the opportunities that will be offered. (What is the church?) Catechists, pastor, sponsors, and godparents can all be involved at this time.
- B. Nurture family with reading and visits/meetings with others in the parish. (Couples of similar age and interests can meet and discuss baptism.)
- C. Sponsors could be chosen before the birth/adoption. (Service ministries encouraged although sometimes difficult with new parents. Prayer may be a good option.)
- D. Gift of Bible stories at birth.

- E. Rite of Welcome for those to be baptized. (Parents, sponsors, child)
- F. Sacrament of Baptism

- G. Reception on day of baptism — meet new members of the church. Take picture of child/family for bulletin board.

- H. Gift to parents on day of Baptism — Bible, cassette of hymns/songs for children, etc.

- I. Follow-up with sponsors after baptism. How will family be integrated into the life of the congregation?

- J. Content of discussion: Fellowship, parenting, sacrament of Baptism vs. joining a club.

- K. Make parents aware of ways their child can be catechized throughout their life.

- L. Questions to be considered at the beginning of the process:
 1. You must care very much for this new life that God has given you. Why do you think this child ought to be baptized? Will this fulfill a requirement for you or your families?
 2. Are you ready to turn this child over to God and put God's brand upon the child's head?
 3. Are you willing to take the risk of trusting God through the church to nurture him as you would allow the school to educate your child or the doctor to heal his illness, etc.?
 4. Willimon suggests that a representative of the congregation say to parents in the Rite of Baptism, "Guiding and nurturing this child of God is too tough and too important a job for you to do on your own, so we'll all do it with you."
(See Rite of Welcome and Enrollment that follows.)

IV. On-going Mystagogical Process — Christian formation for parents and child

What are the opportunities for Christian formation in your congregation?

- Sunday School
- Church
- pre-school
- Weekday school
- day care
- kindergarten
- Day school
- camps

- retreats
- youth organizations
- opportunities for children to be involved in worship, evangelism, Christian education, service, and stewardship.
- Catechetics (confirmation)

V. Questions

VI. Discussion of Biblical texts (Small groups)

See “Lessons Prior to All Saints Sunday — Baptism” for the three liturgical cycles that follow.

Could we develop baptismal emphasis on the texts leading up to the baptismal Sundays throughout the year?

VII. Wrap-up and close

Facilitator's Notes

I. Introduction

- A. What are the situations surrounding inquiry for infant or child baptism?
 1. Parents want child “done now.”
 2. Grandparents, aunt, etc. want child baptized (like we always did it in this family.)
 3. Archie Bunker baptism
 4. Children in weekday program hear others speak of baptism and communion and want same for themselves.

II. What is the role of the faith community?

- A. 80's Gobbel, Westerhoff, and others emphasized Christian congregation or faith community as an educating community.
- B. Signs of lessons being taught by actions of those in community of faith?
 1. Welcoming
 2. Many persons involved with tasks
 3. Word is rightly proclaimed and Sacraments rightly administered.
 4. The congregation will not fall apart when the pastor leaves.
 5. Decisions are made by the community.
 6. Stewardship and social ministries are alive and as well as other ministries.
 7. Christian formation is happening on every level.
- C. Assessing Christian formation in the parish
 1. What will the child's spiritual life look like as opposed to “What curriculum will we use this year?” See “*A Catechumenal Chart*” which follows.
 2. How does this integrate with catechumenal living?
 3. Questions to be asked:
 - A. How will you select sponsors?
 - B. What happens to the child beyond baptism?
 - C. What rites can we use?

- D. What ministries are appropriate for children?
- E. Can confirmation continue in the same mode when the catechumenate is in place?
- F. What are appropriate gifts along the journey?
- G. Can we always be uniform? How do we adapt under unusual circumstances?

III. Possible Processes

- A. Announce pregnancy or intent to adopt to the congregation and ask for prayers. Include in intercessions. Begin meeting with parents and help them understand the role of the church, and the opportunities that will be offered. (What is the church?) Catechists, pastor, sponsors, and godparents can all be involved at this time.
- B. Nurture family with reading materials and visits/meetings with others in the parish. (Couples of similar age and interests can meet and discuss baptism.)
- C. Sponsors could be chosen before the birth/adoption. (Service ministries encouraged) When children are involved, choose other children as sponsors. (Perhaps a family could sponsor a family of like configuration.)
- D. Gift of CD of hymns, classical music, congregational singing, or child's Bible stories
- E. Rite of Welcome and Enrollment for those to be baptized. (Parents, sponsors, child)
- F. Blessings and gifts on three or more succeeding Sundays. (*See "A Catechumenal Chart" which follows.*)
- G. Reception on day of Baptism to meet new members of the church.
- H. Gift to parents on day of Baptism — Bible, CD of hymns/songs for children, etc.
- I. Follow-up with sponsors after baptism. How will family be integrated into the life of the congregation?
- J. Content of discussion: Fellowship, parenting, sacrament of Baptism vs. joining a club. (Suggestions on development, making of toys, etc. in *Nurturing* leader guide, Augsburg.)
- K. Make parents aware of ways their children can be catechized throughout their lives. (See Christian Formation Personal Profile.)
- L. Questions

1. Why do you want the child baptized?
2. Is it for yourself or your child?
3. Are you ready to turn the child over to God and put God's brand upon the child's head?
4. Are you willing to take the risk of trusting God through the church to nurture the child as you would allow the school to educate, the doctor to heal, etc.?
5. Willimon suggests that a representative of the congregation says to parents, "Guiding and nurturing this child of God is too tough and too important a job for you to do on your own, so we'll all do it with you."
(See Welcome/Enrollment Rite.)

Three Situations

A. Parents present, asking for baptism for child, already born.

First meeting invite parents, grandparents, other family support persons.
Provide materials for family to take home and send/show to inquiring relatives/friends.

How will this new child, a gift from God, be initiated into the faith community?

What sort of questions might they ask?:

What do we have to do?

What do we have to say?

When will it occur in the service?

What do we do if he/she cries, is hungry, dirties diaper, etc.?

Can we leave after the baptism?

B. Parents announce pregnancy or intention to adopt (child has not yet arrived.)

Discuss naming of the child, sponsors of the child, Christian initiation and formation of the child.

Provide support for family through prayer, caring ministries, and understanding of the faith community.

Use the Rite of Welcome and Enrollment.

Present with gift of small catechism, questions and answers about Baptism, etc.

Involve congregation in preparation for Baptism and for the arrival of the child: Children, youth, and adults. (Make candles, white garment, shells, cross pendant, banners, books, etc.)

C. Grandparents ask that their grandchild be baptized.

Meet with pastor, catechist, and sponsor. (Include grandparents in the preparation for baptism.)

How do we welcome the child and family into the congregation? (Record suggestions.)

How do we engage them in the catechumenal process? (Record suggestions.)

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Lessons Prior to All Saints Sunday — Baptism

Sunday	Year A	Rites or Blessings
October 2 — 8	Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 (Common Lectionary) The Ten Commandments. <i>Of what use is the law?</i> Matthew 21:33-46 Parable of the landowner who planted a vineyard. <i>How can we practice good stewardship?</i>	
October 9 — 15	Matthew 22:1-14 Chosen: White garment (of Baptism?) “Many are called but few are chosen.” <i>What is the significance of symbolism?</i> <i>Why do we place a white garment on the newly baptized?</i>	
October 16 — 22	Matthew 22:15-22 “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” <i>What responsibilities do we have to the government?</i>	
October 23 — 29	Matthew 22:34-46 Love of God — love of neighbor “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <i>What is the great commandment?</i>	
Oct. 30 — Nov. 5	Matthew 23:1-12 Practice what you preach. “Therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach.” <i>What significance does this passage have for parents and children?</i>	

Use above as a discussion piece.

- How could you use this particular series of readings as introduction to baptismal preparation?
- Who should be involved in the discussion?
- What other questions could be discussed on the same text that would be helpful to parents, sponsors, grandparents, etc. of baptismal candidate?

Sunday	Year B	Rites or Blessings
October 2 — 8	Mark 10:2-16 “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” <i>Does Jesus want little children to be baptized?</i>	
October 9 — 15	Mark 10:17-31 “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.” <i>What is the power of God?</i>	
October 16 — 22	Mark 10:35-45 James and John ask a favor. “But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” <i>What is Servanthood?</i>	
October 23 — 29	Mark 10:46-52 Jesus heals the blind beggar. “Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’” <i>Did Jesus really heal people? What is faith?</i>	
Oct. 30 — Nov. 5	Mark 12:28-34 Which is the greatest commandment? “You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ After that no one dared to ask him any question.” <i>What relevance does the “Kingdom of God” have for us?</i>	

Use above as a discussion piece.

- How could you use this particular series of readings as introduction to baptismal preparation?
- Who should be involved in the discussion?
- What other questions could be discussed on the same text that would be helpful to parents, sponsors, grandparents, etc. of baptismal candidate?

Sunday	Year C	Rites or Blessings
October 2 — 8	2 Timothy 1:1-14 Faith is a gift from God. “Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.” <i>How can the Holy Spirit help me and my child?</i>	
October 9 — 15	Luke 17:11-19 Thanking God (Ten Lepers) “Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice.” <i>Why should we thank God?</i>	
October 16 — 22	Luke 18:1-8 Parable about prayer — the importuning woman. God grants justice to his children who pray to him. “And yet when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” <i>How often should you pray?</i>	
October 23 — 29	Luke 18:9-14 Parable of Pharisee and Tax Collector. “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” <i>How should we pray?</i>	
Oct. 30 — Nov. 5	Luke 19:1-10 The Zacchaeus story. “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.’” <i>What is salvation?</i>	

Use above as a discussion piece.

- How could you use this particular series of readings as introduction to baptismal preparation?
- Who should be involved in the discussion?
- What other questions could be discussed on the same text that would be helpful to parents, sponsors, grandparents, etc. of baptismal candidate?

A Catechumenal Chart

	Preparation of adults for Holy Baptism: The Catechumenate	Preparation of parents for the Baptism of infants and Young Children	Preparation of baptized Persons for Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant
Stage One Inquiry	Period of Inquiry	Pregnancy or Preparation for Adoption and Parental Inquiry into Baptism. Gift Baptism book.	Period of Inquiry
Welcome Rite and Gift	Welcome of Catechumens Gift of the Bible	Welcome and Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of Child. Gift of a child's Bible	Welcome of Baptized Christians into the Community. Gift of the Bible
Stage Two Catechumenate	The Catechumenate Lectionary Study	Preparation for Baptism. Baptismal and Lectionary Discussion	Deeper exploration of faith and ministry. Lectionary study/catechism
Rite Enrollment Rite	First Sunday in Lent or First Sunday in Advent. Gift of catechism	Rite of Welcome and Enrollment five weeks prior to Baptismal date. Parents and sponsors sign book for child.	Ash Wednesday or Christ the King Sunday: Call to continual conversion. Gift of catechism
Stage Three Baptismal Preparation	Candidacy for Baptism Discuss Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and Lord's Prayer	Preparation for Baptism four to six weeks preparation for parents and sponsors.	Preparation for Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. Catechism/lectionary study
Rite Blessings	Blessing of the Candidates Gift of Hymnal	Sundays three weeks prior to baptism. Blessings for child, parents, and sponsors. Gifts could include children's hymnal, Bible story book, prayer book, (book, tape, cd, etc.) Congregation could sing hymn to child and offer service commitments to family.	Blessing the Candidates: Second Sunday in Lent or Advent and Fifth Sunday in Lent (Sun. After Christmas). Gift of hymnal
Rite	Holy Baptism at Easter Vigil Gift of lighted candle, white garment.	Holy Baptism at All Saints, Baptism of our Lord, or Easter Vigil. Gift of lighted candle, white garment, shell, or banner.	Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant at the Easter Vigil or at the Epiphany or on the Baptism of Our Lord. Gift of Prayer book
Stage Four Baptismal Living	Call to Mission Reflection on the sacraments	Call to Mission Reflection on the sacraments for parents and sponsors. Introduction to Christian Parenting.	Call to Mission Reflection on the sacraments
Rite	Pentecost Sunday or Transfiguration Sunday: Affirmation of Vocation in the World	Rites at various stages of child's Christian formation such as First Communion, enrollment into catechetical studies, Affirmation of Baptism.	Pentecost Sunday or Transfiguration Sunday: Affirmation of Vocation in the World

Rite of Welcome and Enrollment for Baptism of Infant or Small Child

The Rite of Welcome and Enrollment of infants and children for Holy Baptism normally takes place four or five weeks prior to the baptismal date. Most appropriate times would be All Saints Sunday, Baptism of our Lord, and the Easter Vigil or Easter day.

A large and visually sacramental book lies open at a place in the midst of the congregation where it can be easily seen and used. The book can remain near the book of prayer concerns for the congregation to view as they write or read other prayer concerns.

A catechist or sponsor presents each child with these or similar words:

- A. [Child's name] is presented by his/her parents, [name of parents], to make public the intention for this child to be baptized into Jesus Christ and His Church of which this congregation is a part on [All Saints Sunday, or Baptism of our Lord, or Vigil of Easter, or Easter Day, etc. (time of Baptism)]. "Guiding and nurturing this child of God is too tough and too important a job for you to do on your own, so we'll all do it with you."

The presiding minister asks the parents and sponsors on behalf of the baptismal candidates:

- P. What do you ask of God's church for your child?
R. **To be shaped and formed by God's Holy Word and sacraments.**
- P. Baptism is the foundational Sacrament for the Christ-life. In and through Baptism, we die with Jesus and rise to live new lives in the grace and strength of our Lord (Romans 6:1-11). Or, as Luther said, we are drowned daily in the waters of Holy Baptism and arise from the holy Bath cleansed and renewed by the grace of God alone for the sake of Christ alone. Will you as parents model the Christian life, hear God's Holy Word and bring [him/her] to the waters of Baptism?

Each parent responds in turn:

- R. **I will, with the help of God.**

The presiding minister addresses the sponsors and congregation:

P Sponsors and all of you assembled here are called to welcome and support these children and their parents as they prepare for [this child/these children] to enter into the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the waters of Holy Baptism. Will you help [them] hear the gospel of Christ and come into the household of faith?

C **We will and we ask God to help us.**

P The presiding minister addresses the parents of the child(ren):
Having heard the holy and saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will you present [name of child] to receive the sign of that gospel on [his/her] body and in [his/her] heart, that [he/she] may know the Lord and the power of his resurrection?

R **We will and we ask God to help us.**

The sponsor traces a cross on the child's forehead. (Using the thumb to make the sign may be helpful).

P Receive the + cross on your forehead, a sign of God's endless love and mercy for you. Learn to know and to follow Christ.

One of the following or another response may be sung or spoken by the congregation.

C **Praise to you, O Christ, the wisdom and power of God. Or
Glory and praise to you, almighty and gracious God.**

The presiding minister may continue, with a sponsor or catechist tracing a cross on each part of the candidate's body as it is named.

P Receive the + cross on your ears, that you may hear the gospel of Christ, the word of life.

Response.

P Receive the + cross on your eyes, that you may see the light of Christ, illumination for your way.

Response.

P Receive the + cross on your lips, that you may sing the praise of Christ, the joy of the church.

Response.

P Receive the + cross on your heart, that God may dwell there by faith.

Response.

P. Receive the + cross on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

Response.

P. Receive the + cross on your hands, that God's mercy may be known in your work.

Response.

P. Receive the + cross on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ.

Response.

A catechist or representative of the congregation presents a children's Bible or other appropriate gift. As each name is read, the parents will sign the name in the enrollment book. After the name is read aloud, and while the names are inscribed in the book, one of the following or another response may be sung.

C. **Lord Jesus, you call your own by name, and lead them to waters of life.**

Or

God calls you to be one with Jesus Christ our Lord.

P. The Lord be with you.

C. **And also with you.**

P. Let us pray.

Merciful and most high God,
creator and life-giver of all that is,
you have called all people from darkness into light,
from error into truth,
from death into life.

We ask you: grant grace to [names] and bless them.

Raise them by your Spirit.

Revive them by your Word.

Form them by your hand.

Bring them to the water of life

and to the bread and cup of blessing,

and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. **Amen.**

P. Merciful God,

we give you thanks for placing in our midst these your children.

You have called them by your Holy Spirit

and through their parents and sponsors they have answered you in our presence.

We praise and bless you, Our Lord and Savior.

The liturgy continues with the Creed, the prayers and the passing of the peace of the Lord.

Blessing for Proper 23 — Sunday between October 9 and 15
(First Sunday after Rite of Welcome and Enrollment)

Prayer:

As you healed the lepers from their life threatening disease, so bring this child to the waters of baptism that he/she may be cleansed of the life threatening disease of sin and death. Send your holy Spirit to strengthen this family as together they praise and thank you as Lord and Savior. We invite the guardians of this chosen child of God to join all the people of God in confessing the faith of the church.

The Apostles' Creed:

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

A gift is presented by the sponsor or assisting minister to the parents of the child with the following or other appropriate language.

A: [Names], we present you with this prayer book, that you might use them with your young child now and teach them to [him/her] as they grow in years. Help them always to know that God hears the words of his chosen ones.

Gift: Child's Prayer Book

Blessing:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray.

Merciful and most high God,
creator and life-giver of all that is,
you have called all people from darkness into light,
from error into truth,
from death into life.

We ask you: grant grace to [names] and those entrusted with their care.

Bless them and the church into which we baptize.

Raise them by your Spirit.

Revive them by your word.

Form them by your hand.

Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing,
that with all your people they may bear witness to your grace
and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing for Proper 24 — Sunday between October 16 and 22
(Second Sunday After Rite of Welcome and Enrollment)

Prayer:

Lord God you have told us that you will grant justice to your chosen ones when we come to you in prayer. Send your blessings upon this family as they prepare for [name's] baptism. Open their hearts and minds to know you as their Lord and Savior and drown this child with you in the waters of Baptism. Help us all to remember the power of prayer in our lives and that God has chosen us through our Baptism. We invite the guardians of this chosen child of God to join all the people of God in confessing the faith of the church.

The Apostles' Creed:

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

A gift is presented by the sponsor or assisting minister to the parents of the child with the following or other appropriate language.

A: [Names], we present you with this prayer book, that you might use them with your young child now and teach them to [him/her] as they grow in years. Help them always to know that God hears the words of his chosen ones.

Gift: A small cross can be presented to remind the child of their dying with Christ in his great act of Salvation.

Blessing:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray.

Merciful and most high God,
creator and life-giver of all that is,
you have called all people from darkness into light,

from error into truth,
from death into life.

We ask you: grant grace to [names] and those entrusted with their care.

Bless them and the church into which we baptize.

Raise them by your Spirit.

Revive them by your word.

Form them by your hand.

Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing,
that with all your people they may bear witness to your grace
and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note: Put announcement in the bulletin to ask for gifts for the family of the child(ren) to be baptized for next week. Small slips of paper can be used to list items and they can be put in the offering plate and saved for presentation next Sunday. (Items like prayer, baby sitting, a casserole, cleaning, washing clothes etc. for the family of the child to be baptized, would be appropriate.)

Blessing for Proper 25 — Sunday between October 23 and 29
(Third Sunday after Rite of Welcome and Enrollment)

Prayer:

Lord humble us and [this child, these children] that we might be exalted at your coming. In Christian love you gave your Son to die for our sins. Help us to share this great love with others and to always ask forgiveness as we err. Teach us to pray, Lord, as you taught your disciples. Refresh us again with the memory of your marvelous work as we confess together the faith of the church.

The Apostles' Creed:

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

A gift is presented by the sponsor or assisting minister to the parents of the child with the following or other appropriate language.

A: [Names], we present you with these gifts of the congregation that you might experience the love and support of this congregation through their gifts of service. As your young child grows in years, teach them the love of Christ and how [he/she] might reach out to others in Christian love.

Gift: *Pledges of service by members of the congregation are presented to the family. (These are received in the offering of the previous Sunday and include such items as prayer, baby sitting, a casserole, cleaning, washing clothes etc. for the family of the child to be baptized.)*

Blessing:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray.

Merciful and most high God,
creator and life-giver of all that is,

you have called all people from darkness into light,
from error into truth,
from death into life.

We ask you: grant grace to [names] and those entrusted with their care.

Bless them and the church into which we baptize.

Raise them by your Spirit.

Revive them by your word.

Form them by your hand.

Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing,
that with all your people they may bear witness to your grace
and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord.