

About This Section

PART FOUR • For the Family

The role of the family is woven throughout this entire program—in the child’s book, in the older children handouts, in the *Eucharist Family Guide*, and in the notes for parents. This part of the program director’s manual supplements and further develops these resources. It includes:

- **Orientation Meeting with Parents**

This orientation meeting can be held at the beginning of the preparation for sacraments period.

- **How to Use the *Eucharist Family Guide***

—As the program director there are various ways you can incorporate the family guide into your sacrament preparation program. This article highlights many of those ways.

—The features and function of the family guide are described in this piece.

- **Parent and Child Sessions**

—These sessions provide two options for the parent and child sessions: first, the parents stay with their child for the entire session; second, the parents are with their child for the opening and closing period with an adult-focused session held while children are in age-appropriate groupings.

—The adult-focused sessions can be used as a parish adult formation program. Invite all interested adults to participate.

—The adult-focused sessions can be used as an adult confirmation program for those Catholic adults who were never confirmed but were baptized, catechized, and celebrate Eucharist.

—The adult-focused sessions can be incorporated into a process for Catholic adults who are returning to the Church.

- **Celebrating the Mass**

Families with older children preparing for the sacraments will find these pages helpful. “Celebrating the Mass” can also be found on pages 62–71 of the *Eucharist* child’s book.

- **Readiness for the Sacrament**

This handout can be used at parent meetings.

- **Godparents and Sponsors**

This handout can be used with catechists and parents, or reproduced for the parish bulletin or the parish or school newsletter.

Readiness for the Sacrament

The question of children and readiness for the sacraments is always a concern for catechists and teachers, as well as for parents. For you, as program director, the question focuses on what constitutes appropriate requirements and how to measure or assess readiness.

The Church puts forth the basic requirements for a child's understanding in the *Code of Canon Law*. Canon 913.1 states that the child is required to have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with devotion. This requirement would seem to have two parts:

- First, the child must know that this bread and wine have indeed become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and that Jesus is truly present.
- Second, the child must be sufficiently prepared to allow for reception of the Eucharist with appropriate devotion and reverence.

Whether a child preparing for Eucharist is seven, eight, or eleven years old, the child is only capable of age-appropriate readiness. A seven-year-old can only understand and experience the Eucharist as a seven-year-old. As the child grows in knowledge and faith, understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist will naturally deepen.

Additional requirements may be particular to your individual parish, such as learning specific prayers or sharing in service activities. However, whatever standard of readiness your parish requires, be

certain that children are never led to believe that they must earn the privilege of sharing in the Body and Blood of Jesus. The Eucharist can never be earned; it is Jesus' gift to us.

As director of your sacrament preparation program, it becomes your responsibility to determine basic requirements and some reasonable measure of readiness. Here are some suggestions of reasonable expectations:

- It is reasonable to expect that the child has been participating in Sunday Mass on a regular basis.
- It is reasonable to expect that the child has been participating in an ongoing religion program and will continue to do so.
- It is reasonable to expect that the child is beginning to know the responses and the prayers of the Mass, in particular the Our Father, the Holy, holy, holy acclamation, the memorial acclamation, and the Great Amen.
- It is reasonable to expect that prayer is a part of the child's life and is experienced within the family as well as within the church community.
- It is reasonable to expect that the child has the capacity for reverence that is necessary for sharing in the eucharistic banquet.

In the final analysis, the family and the community of the faithful will continue to provide guidance for the child's spiritual journey. It will be the action of the Holy Spirit in the child's life that will prompt continuing growth in understanding and faith.