

About This Section

PART TWO • Prayer and Ritual

Prayer and ritual are at the heart of our faith and liturgical celebrations. This program provides rich experiences of ritual and prayer using primary symbols and ritual actions in order to prepare young people for their role as full, active, and conscious participants in the liturgy.

This section of the manual includes:

● Tips for Presiders

- Share the article “Tips for Presiders” with the pastor and pastoral staff. The reflection questions at the end of the article can be used for staff development.
- Use this article to help improve your own style of presiding at prayer.
- Share this article with catechists. (See “Catechist Training and Formation” in part five of this manual.)

● Opening Rituals for Large Groups

- Use the opening rituals for large groups if your program model includes families during the

preparation. These rituals can take place as the opening for each session. They were written and intended for intergenerational groups. (See “Parent and Child Sessions” in part four of this manual.)

- Use these rituals at regular parish family gatherings during the year.
- Use these rituals if you want to combine several groups of children and young people only for the celebration of the opening ritual and then have them return with their catechist to complete the session with their smaller group.

● Additional Prayer Celebrations

- Two additional celebrations, “Last Supper” and “Rehearsal,” are included in this section.
- These prayer celebrations can be used as a culmination to the sacrament preparation prior to the celebration of the sacrament, or they can be used anytime during the preparation period.

Opening Rituals for Large Groups

We Belong

CHAPTER
1

Blessing with Water

Large Group Ritual

In advance:

- Prepare a gathering space for the size of your group. You may be celebrating this ritual in the church or in another space conducive to prayer. Make sure there is a good sound system and people will be able to see and hear during the ritual celebration.
- Prepare the parents, catechists, and assembly for the ritual action (see below).
- Meet with the presider (see “Tips on Presiding” in this part of the manual).
- Provide the reader the Scripture reading. The reader will need time to prepare the reading.

You will need:

- *Eucharist* music CD or arrange for a musician to lead the music for the ritual
- A large bowl of water (if you do not gather at the baptismal font)
- Bible or Lectionary or Book of the Gospels

Gathering

Gather the assembly in the church around the baptismal font or in an alternative space around a large bowl of water. Welcome the assembly and invite them to settle themselves and to become aware of God's presence with and among them. Play an appropriate song from the music CD or have the musician invite those assembled to join in singing an appropriate hymn.

LEADER: Let us begin as we were baptized.

ALL: *Make the sign of the cross, saying,*
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
you are with us as we come together
in prayer.
Open our hearts to the Holy Spirit.
We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

The reader goes to the ambo or an appropriate place to proclaim the Scripture.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

ALL: Glory to you, Lord.

READER: *Reverently proclaim Matthew 3:13–17.*
Conclude the reading, saying,
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

LEADER: You will all be invited to come forward to the baptismal font (or to the bowl of water). When you do, thank God for the gift of your baptism. Dip your right hand into the water and bless yourself, making the sign of the cross.

As each child comes to the water, parents or catechists will place their hand on the child's shoulder and say his or her name aloud followed by the words:

(Name), be blessed by this water and remember the gift of your baptism.

During this blessing period it would be appropriate to play instrumental music in the background or to sing an appropriate song. After each child is blessed, they are to return to their seats or place in the assembly.

Closing Prayer

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
we thank you for the gift of our baptism.
You welcome us into your Church.
Send us the Holy Spirit
to help us live as children of God.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Conclude the ritual with the same song that was sung during the ritual gathering or another appropriate song.