

Northern Diaconal Formation Partnership

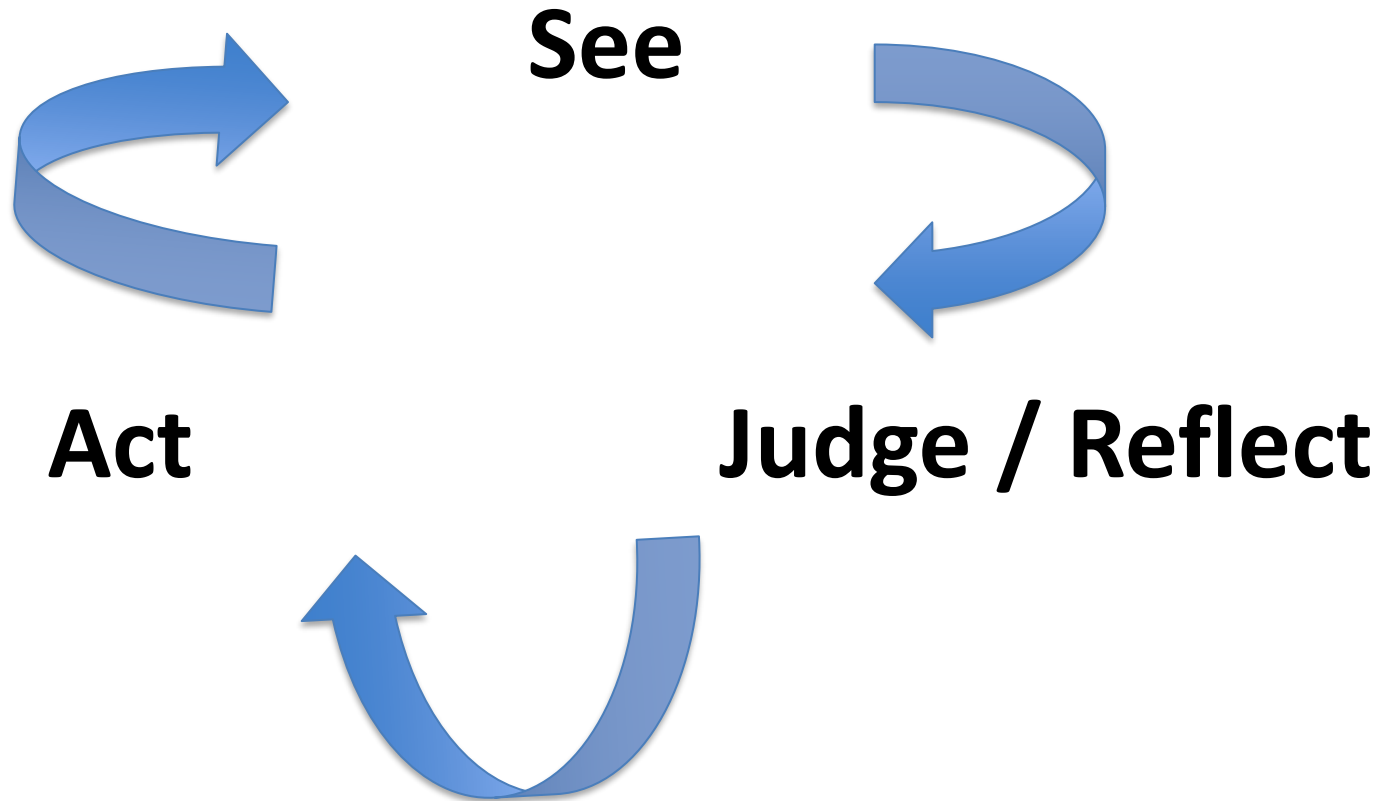
Preparing Families for Sacraments (1)

Baptism

Our purpose this session ...

- There is no single template – policy varies between dioceses! (get a copy of your diocesan policy)
- ***To consider some key issues*** and anticipate questions; collect essential information; suggest a timeline of events; consider the team you might need and suggest ways of maintaining the contact with families
- ***To suggest one example of one approach*** to prepare families: based on the “With You Always” Programme
- ***To try and devise helpful language*** to help explain key elements of the sacrament

Reflecting on current experience in relation to Baptism



Requests for Baptism & Preparation

- We encounter 3 broad categories of family:
 - a/ those who understand & take an active part in the life of their parish
 - b/ those who still feel they belong to the Catholic Faith but their participation is uneven
 - c/ those who appear to have little regular connection with the faith & practice of the Catholic community - we next see them for school applications & first Holy Communion!
- Q/ What issues arise? What guides our response?**

Some useful resources

- The Rite of Baptism for Children

(London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999 or online from the Congregation for Divine Worship)

– explains the **meaning & celebration** of the sacrament & the **pastoral issues** involved

- Instruction on Infant Baptism

(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1980)

– gives **guidelines on pastoral action**

- The Code of Canon Law (Canons 849-878)

- deals with baptism & outlines the **Church's regulations** for this sacrament

- The Catechism - Section 2 on Sacraments

Examples from the Rite of Baptism for Children:

WHAT we do: WHY we do it; HOW we do it

- Baptism pardons sins
- Joins us to Christ's death, burial & resurrection
- We receive the Holy Spirit
- Jesus told his apostles, "Go, make disciples, baptise ..."
(Matt 28:19-20) so baptism is our way of responding to Christ
- Through baptism we are incorporated into the Church
- It cannot be repeated – even if baptised as Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church
- Baptism is into the faith of the Church – so the community should be involved in the preparation e.g. Godparents

Examples from Rite of Baptism for Children:

WHAT we do: WHY we do it; HOW we do it

- Ordinary ministers of Baptism are Bishops/Priests/Deacons.
They should NOT confer baptism outside their own territory without permission (except in an emergency)
- Any member of the faithful may baptise (esp. in danger of death) & should be taught how to do so (or, in emergency, anyone!)
- Clean pure water should be used and the baptismal font should be clean & used for this purpose ONLY
- Immersion is a more suitable sign (death & resurrection)
- The words are: “N. I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- Pastors must record without delay the names of those baptised, the parents; the God-parents; the time and place in the baptismal register (go and look at yours!)

Instruction on Infant Baptism

(in Vatican II – Post Conciliar Documents)

Gives guidance on **pastoral action** in relation to baptism e.g.

- Should we delay baptism? (why are parents fearful of this?)
- Can we refuse baptism?
- The ancient tradition of the Church from C2nd
- The mission given by Jesus to the Church
- What part is played by faith in the decision to baptize?
- We live in a pluralistic society – should we allow the child the ‘freedom’ to choose when older?
- How should we proceed with uncommitted parents? (assurances; ongoing dialogue)

Brief task

- **LIST** What would you, as a parent, wish to know when asking to have your child baptised?
- **LIST** what information would the parish need from the parents who ask for Baptism for their child? (Application Form)

Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Huddersfield

Baptism Application Form: First Child / Subsequent Child*

(*Please delete as applicable)

PLEASE USES BLOCK CAPITALS

Full Name of Child		
Full Address (including postcode)	Male / Female	
Email address		Telephone Number:
Child's Date of Birth		
Father's Full Name		
Religion:		
Mother's Full Name		
Religion:		
Mother's Maiden Name		
Catholic Godparents full names (a Godparent must be a confirmed and practising Catholic)		
Witnesses (Godparents who are not Catholic)		
Which Church and Mass do you usually attend each weekend?	Church:	
	Mass:	
In which church do wish the baptism to take place?		
For Parish Office use only		
Baptism classes:		
Location of Baptism:		
Date of Baptism:		
Time of Baptism:		
Minister:		

NB You must now get the parents to sign an agreement that you may record, store and use this personal information for the purpose of helping them prepare to celebrate Baptism.

Some 'principles' ...

- A **warm welcome** to **EVERY** family who asks for Baptism
- The sacrament can be *deferred* until there is a well founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith – except in emergencies!
- There must be **adequate preparation and catechesis** for those bringing the child for baptism & this preparation should be **flexible** enough to be adapted to the needs of different families (remember in the early Church the catechesis took place **BEFORE** the baptism; now it is needed **AFTERWARDS** – **challenging!**)

Godparents (Canons 872-874)

- Be appointed by the parents (or parish priest)
- Be practising Catholics who have been baptised, confirmed and received the Eucharist
- Live a life consistent with faith
- Have the maturity to undertake the responsibilities (min. age 16 years)
- Not be either the father or mother of the person to be baptised
- A baptised & believing Christian of another denomination may act as a 'Christian witness'

Preparing for baptism ...

- Assume baptisms are celebrated after Easter (April).
DEVISE A SIMPLE TIMELINE showing when the following would happen:
Advertising the course / registering interest /
initial meeting with parents / a ? week pre-baptism course /
follow up contact
- THINK: What kind of 'team' roles you would need to bring together to deliver a baptismal preparation programme to a group of 6 families in your parish (**equip others** for ministry)

Baptism Prep. - Possible timeline

Advertise 3 / 4
weeks

Time to register:
3 weeks

Initial meeting
parents

4 meetings:
4 weeks

Baptisms

January

February

March

April

Welcomers	Enquiry Catechists	Sibling Creche	Formation Catechists	Co-ordinator
Hospitality	Welcoming	Responsible for working with siblings & organising activities	Ability to lead the session & understands the process	Leads in forming the team
Setting up the meeting space	Communicate with families, clergy & parish admin staff & co-ordinator,		Confident with flip chart & public speaking	Good communicator & sense of humour
Refreshments	Good listeners	Art, craft, songs, snacks	Encourages participation	Ability to enthuse & inspire & establish relationships
Identify & greet newcomers & initial chat	Explain the process	X2 DBS cleared adults if working in a different room to parents	Comfortable with silences & able to read body language	Understands the overall process
Warm personality – make people feel relaxed & valued	Comfortable praying with scripture		Gives affirming feedback	

Two basic approaches (1/3)

1/ To use the Rite of Baptism itself to explain the meaning of baptism – (the words & signs) – see card
BUT This suggests that the end of the process is the celebration of the baptism itself in which case the pattern is usually

a/Prepare – b/get the child baptised - c/don't see the family again until time for first Holy Communion

But in reality baptism is ***a point of entry into a life – long process into sacramental living*** so

Two basic approaches (2/3)

2/ The RC IA model: (Emmaus Road journey – reflect on lived experience)

Enquiry/ Formation/ Celebrating Baptism/ Mystagogy

This means getting parents to reflect on what it means to belong to the Body of Christ (the Church) then leading parents into a deeper understanding of their relationship with Jesus Christ.

This **awareness** will serve as a **witness** to the child – then they will be able to be... “the best of teachers” (Rite of Baptism)

Catechists are ‘companions on this journey.’

Two basic approaches (3/3)

Which approach takes seriously the *'Instruction on Infant Baptism'* which reminds us that infant baptism only makes sense to the Church when the **parents** of the child **want it**, and **are ready**, (with the help of the Church), to ensure that **the child will be formed & enabled to live** what has been signified in baptism?

HINT: you cannot 'pass on' what you do not possess

One possible model – the “**With You Always**” course

- Parents request baptism, **initial meeting** and discernment about the faith commitment of parents (NB will two pathways be needed?)
- Week 1 – a **Rite of Welcome** in Mass & reflecting together on parent’s ‘belonging’ to parish & other groups
- Week 2 – Mass & reflecting together on **Jesus’ baptism & identity as Son of the Father**
- Week 3 – Mass & reflecting together on the **mission of the Church & Eucharist as source of Christian living**
- Week 4 - **Baptism rehearsal** in the church

Sample Baptism preparation outline

Initial Enquiry	Parents ask for baptism	We explore their faith awareness	Collect basic information	Explain the 'next steps'	
Week One 'Baptism'	Welcome & introductions	Reflect / discuss today's experience of Mass & Rite of Welcome / gift of a family Bible	Recall & share memories of my baptism & baptism in mission of the Church What does it mean to belong to a parish?	Discuss scriptures on the baptism of Jesus & affirming his identity as Son of the Father Decision/Approval/Empowering	Closing prayers
Week Two 'Jesus, Son of the Father'	Welcome & introductions	Reflect / discuss today's experience of Mass - focus on the place of Scripture / homily	Recall & share on images we have of God & Jesus Think about the image of God you will pass on to your child	Discuss scriptures on 'Our Father' & links to baptism	Closing prayers
Week Three 'Eucharist – source and summit of Christian living'	Welcome & introductions	Reflect / discuss today's experience of Mass - focus on the Eucharist	Reflect on 'Do this in memory of me' & how Jesus strengthens us through the Eucharist	Discuss scriptures on handing on of the Eucharistic Tradition from the Apostles (our mission)	Closing prayers
Rehearsal in church					
Mystagogia	(Deepening faith) How do we ensure that this journey continues with the faith community?				

Finding helpful language

Look at the following terms which are referred to in the Rite of Baptism.

Devise an image or simple explanation to help the congregation understand what they mean:

Original Sin (BOWLS)

1. The sign of the cross
3. Oil of Chrism
5. Why use water?
7. White garment

Parents and Godparents (Wind)

2. Oil of Catechumens
4. Prayer of Exorcism
6. Baptismal/Paschal Candle

Q/ Would you favour using these explanations in your homily **OR** as you go through the baptismal liturgy?

Keeping in touch – deepening the relationship (1)

- REMEMBERING:

- Use the contact details to make a friendly visit / phone call
(remember you need their permission to record & use these details – GDPR)
- Arrange prayer partners for each family – let them know
- Mention those baptised in the Prayers of the Faithful
- Send a card on the anniversary of the Baptism
- Produce a card with groups / meetings that may be of interest to the families going through the course

Keeping in touch – deepening the relationship (2)

- INVITATIONS:

- **First Sunday of Advent / Lent** – invite all families to an Advent / Lent workshop on ways of preparing for Christmas / Easter
- **Send a Christmas card** to those who had a child baptised this year inviting them to come up to the crib with a lighted candle – thanksgiving for the gift of their child
- **Post-Baptism Mass for families** who celebrated Baptism this year. Involve the family in planning. Party afterwards

Keeping in touch – deepening the relationship (3)

- **BUILD NETWORKS:**

- Suggest that parents exchange contact details after week 3 of the course (voluntary)
- Highlight RCIA courses in the local area to help *partners* find out more about the Faith
- Prepare and give out a ‘Where to access support’ leaflet on parenting, credit union, marriage support etc. (Faith is concerned with helping to meet the earthly challenges too!)