

Cluster Sacramental Preparation of Children Policy

The Catholic Church recognizes that parents are the first and primary educators of their children in matters of faith. The faith formation of each child is a responsibility shared by the parent/guardian and the faith formation program of the parish/cluster* where the family is registered.

Baptism is the first sacrament we receive as Catholic Christians. It is the one sacrament that we share in common with other Christian denominations. Parents of infants and children under the age of seven who wish to have their child baptized should contact the Parish Office to schedule their child's Baptism and arrange to attend a Pre-Baptismal class.

Sacramental Requirements for Reconciliation, Eucharist & Confirmation

To receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation, a child must:

- Have been baptized in the Christian tradition.
- Demonstrate an active faith life, appropriate for their age
- Regularly attend Sunday Mass with their family
- Be enrolled and actively participating in the cluster Faith Formation Education program
- Demonstrate a readiness to receive the sacrament as evidenced, in part, by knowledge of specific prayers and doctrine
- Have participated in mandatory parent/child meetings and retreat days.

The sacramental preparation process for children necessitates active involvement on the part of the parents. Our Faith Formation Program is meant to assist parents in fulfilling their role as the primary educators in their children's faith. **Parents/guardians are required to attend meetings to assist in their child's sacramental preparation. Children will not be allowed to participate in the sacramental celebrations if the parents do not participate in mandatory meetings and retreat days.**

NOTE: Based on direction given by the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), it is the policy of the Archdiocese of Dubuque and our parish/cluster, that in addition to the above requirements, **children must, at a minimum, be enrolled in a faith formation program or attending a Catholic school in the year immediately preceding a sacramental preparation year.** For example, in order for a child to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist during their second grade year, they must have been enrolled in and regularly attended religious education classes while they were in

first grade. This requirement applies to the sacrament of Confirmation in addition to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Unbaptized children older than age 7

In the Catholic Church, children normally receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist in the second grade.

Children who have not been baptized in the Christian tradition and are older than the age of reason (usually recognized as 7 years old, taking into account the child's maturity and level of reasoning) must participate in a catechumenate process (RCIA) to prepare for the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist). Prior to entering the catechumenate process, the child must attend one year of faith formation with their peers.

Baptized, but uncatechized, children

If a child is older than the age of reason and has been baptized, but not catechized (i.e. has not attended faith formation classes) they may be placed in a lower grade and/or receive supplemental instruction before entering the preparation program for the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist. The decision to place the student in a lower grade and/or complete supplemental instruction will be discussed with the parents and the Coordinator of Faith Formation and will take into consideration the child's level of understanding and maturity.

Questions about any of the above policies should be directed to the Coordinator of Faith Formation.

**Families not registered in the Heart of Mary Cluster will be asked to pay an additional fee for their child/children to attend Faith Formation classes at any of the parishes in the Heart of Mary Cluster which include St. Mary, Urbana; Sacred Heart, Walker and St. Mary, Vinton.*