



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

## Models for Immediate Sacramental Preparation in the Parish

Diocese of Hamilton  
Revised, 2024

### **Special Situations:**

#### **1) Full Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age:**

The Sacramental Guidelines state that, in accordance with Canon Law, once a child has completed grade two, they are to be prepared by their participation in the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults* as adapted for children for the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist at the same celebration.

We encourage you to see the Rite itself (*Part II, Chapter 1*), and to contact the Diocesan Liturgy Office for training opportunities for catechists in your parish.

As the Rite of Initiation is a process, rather than a program, it is difficult to map the faith journey of any one person. The Office for Evangelization and Catechesis has a variety of materials that may be appropriate depending on such factors as:

- The needs and age of the child,
- The needs of the child's family, and
- The experience of the catechists in your parish and their confidence with the process.

Parishes will want to take into account whether a child has attended or is attending a Catholic School, thereby receiving ongoing religious education. In the case of a child who has had several years of instruction in Catholic School, that child may be presumed to have had the benefit of certain foundational catechesis; whereas a child who has had no formal religious education may need more basic catechesis to begin.

Although materials from the Catechetical Correspondence Courses may be helpful, children require a more personal accompaniment with a catechist that this program does not provide. Therefore, the Catechetical Correspondence Courses are not an option for the Rite of Christian Initiation.

### **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

*“Journey of Faith for Children”* and *“Journey of Faith for Teens”*: A series of bulletin-type pamphlets each dealing on a separate topic. May be used in its entirety or parishes can pick and choose which topics are most needed. There is a leader guide that accompanies this program as well as an at-home component.

## 2) Adaptive Catechesis for Special Needs:

One of the great gifts of the Church is our diversity. As a welcoming Church, we celebrate our unity and diversity, embracing the gifts of each one of our members, and striving to meet the needs present among us. In some instances, an adaptive or modified catechesis may be necessary to support children preparing for the Sacraments who have special needs. These needs may be physical, emotional or psychological and can take many forms. When we talk about accommodations in catechesis for children with special needs, we are talking about two things:

- 1) Instructional (how the child receives information, who the child receives information from, what the child receives and his/her capacity, the tools used for success)
- 2) Environmental (where and with whom the child is most comfortable learning)

In these situations, it is of utmost importance to lean on the expertise of the parents/guardians of these children who are the experts on their child. These cases require an abundance of pastoral sensibility, empathy and welcome for both the parents and the child to ensure that Sacramental Preparation is an opportunity for the family and the child to meet Jesus. It is the job of the catechist to remove barriers for persons with disabilities so that they can experience the fullness of God's grace.

Parishes will want to consider some important questions to ensure their full accommodation of children with special needs:

- Are there any particular sensory needs of the child that we may need to take into consideration? What environments might be overstimulating for your child that we may need to take into consideration? Both for preparation experiences and the celebration of the Sacrament.
- How does your child like to learn? Are there any adaptive tools we can utilize to our benefit? (i.e. Ipad, speech to text pen, social stories, etc.)
- Could your child benefit from a helping hand in these preparations? (i.e. EA, a catechist with experience working in special education, a parent)

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

[Called in Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation:](#) An informational brochure for parents, priests and catechists preparing children with special needs for the sacraments. This resource is free and available online via the Diocesan Website.

[Meeting Special Needs: Tested Tips for Catechists and Teachers:](#) This booklet teaches catechists how to teach Special Needs children using the Divine Pedagogy -- the way God teaches.

[Adaptive Kits for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation:](#) An educational resource in support of children with autism and other special needs to participate fully in their faith. These are particularly helpful for non-verbal children in preparation of the Sacraments. These kits are available for purchase or loan from the Diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechesis.

### **3) Sacramental Preparation and *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ***

Children attending publically funded Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Hamilton have the benefit of daily religious education through the program, *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ*. This program provides ongoing sacramental catechesis from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The Grade Two and Seven programs in particular pay special attention to preparation for the Initiatory Sacraments of First Eucharist and Confirmation, respectively. Every parish has access to a digital portal through their Religion and Family Life Consultant at the local Catholic School Board. All resources are free and available for your use and exploration. These come in very helpful during class visits, sacramental retreats and planning for immediate preparation of the Sacraments. To access your log-in, please connect with your School Board's Religion and Family Life Consultant.