

**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP**

**Guidance for the Plan for Sacramental Preparation
For School Age Children When They Register for Catholic Schools
And Religious Education Programs
And Other Notes**

ROMAN CATHOLIC STUDENTS

- All children are to have a baptismal certificate on file.
- School age children may receive the Sacraments of Christian Initiation once they are seven years of age.
- The typical course of sacramental preparation is followed, that is, after a minimum of two years of catechetical formation and instruction, a child is presented for First Penance and Reconciliation and then First Holy Communion. Likewise, the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place for 7th or 8th grade students who have received the proper catechetical formation and instruction.
- It is always the preference for the celebration of the Sacraments to take place in the proper parish of the candidate. Please see the norms for the place of the celebration of First Communion and Confirmation, especially for exceptions, on the website of the Office for Divine Worship.
- The reception of First Holy Communion and Confirmation are recorded in the parish where it occurred. Notice of the reception of Confirmation is to be sent to the parish of Baptism.

NON-CATHOLIC STUDENTS

If a child is not baptized as a Roman Catholic, the principal/DRE should, upon enrollment, ascertain if there is an intention on the part of the parents/guardians for their child to become a member of the Roman Catholic Church. The response of the parents/guardians should be noted on the child's registration form.

If the parents/guardians confirm that it is their intentions for their child to become a member of the Roman Catholic Church, there must be reasonable assurances that the child will be supported in the faith outside of the educational setting.

The principal/DRE then, in consultation with the pastor and the Parish Director of Religious Education, creates a catechetical plan in accordance with the *Order of Christian Initiation for Adults*.

For students baptized in another ecclesial (Christian) community, the baptism must be determined as valid, that is, with the use of water and the Trinitarian formula (consult the guidance on the website of the Office for Divine Worship).

The principal/DRE meets with the parents/guardians to present and confirm the catechetical plan.

- **For Non-Catholic Students baptized validly in another ecclesial community and under the age of 7:** The consent of the parents/guardians for the child to come into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church as well as the child's baptismal information is noted on the child's registration record. The child then follows the typical course for preparation and reception of the sacraments.
- **For Non-Catholic Students baptized validly in another ecclesial community and 7 years and older:** After two years of catechetical formation and instruction, the child is presented for First Penance and Reconciliation. Then the child is received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, with reception, Confirmation and Communion, according to the rite found in the *Order of Christian Initiation for Adults*. This order of the Sacraments cannot under any circumstances be inverted or separated. Reception into Full Communion can take place almost at any time and by the parish priest. Reception into Full Communion is recorded in the Register for Full Communion and not in the Register for Baptism at the parish where it occurred.
- **For unbaptized students under the age of 7:** If the child is unbaptized, the parents/guardians are to attend a baptismal preparation session(s) at the parish of baptism and is baptized according to the *Order of Baptism for Children*. The child then follows the typical course for catechetical instruction and preparation for the reception of the sacraments.

- **For unbaptized students 7 years or older:** If the child is unbaptized, with the consent of the parents/guardians, the child may be accepted as a catechumen. The *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* provides for the steps and periods adapted for school age children. Likewise, in this circumstance there is to be two years of catechetical formation alongside the steps and periods of Christian Initiation. The child can be fully initiated apart from the Easter Vigil, if desired, without any additional permission. After this, the newly initiated child is to be presented for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Acceptance into the Catechumenate is to be recorded in the Register for the Catechumenate at the parish where it occurred. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation are to be recorded in the Register for Baptism at the Parish where they occurred.
- **For Orthodox Christians:** If the child is baptized as an Orthodox Christian, then most likely Confirmation and First Holy Communion also took place at Baptism. Although these Sacraments are considered valid by the Roman Catholic Church, it is an offense to the Orthodox to immediately presume intercommunion. Before an invitation is given for intercommunion, the proper Orthodox pastor of the child is to be consulted, if possible, by the parents/guardians. This applies to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation as well. If there is a desire for the Orthodox family to become Roman Catholic, the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia must be contacted.

OTHER NOTES:

- If a child belongs to another faith, this circumstance is to be respected in every way possible without compromise to the Catholic Faith and the non-Christian faith.
- In the celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation, the Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, as well as the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy at other times, there is to be no simulation of the reception of the Sacrament in any form. This is especially the case with the reception of Holy Communion. Only those who are actually receiving Holy Communion are to enter the Communion Procession. The practice of giving a blessing at this time is to be positively avoided. The avoidance of simulation respects the sacramental circumstances of the child and the integrity of the Sacrament and its meaning to the community.