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Baptismal Catechesis: Helping New Parents Develop Good Faith Practices

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By

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Baptismal Catechesis: Helping New Parents Develop Good Faith Practices

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During the baptism of an infant, parents commit to raise their child in the Catholic faith. In light of historically low Mass attendance rates and an increase in the number of Catholics who stop practicing their faith, the preparation of parents for the baptism of their child is essential. The theology, words and actions of the Rite of Baptism provide the foundational material for catechesis of the parents before the celebration of the sacrament. The Rite also directs the parents, with the godparents and the Christian community, to bring the child's baptism to fruition by leading him or her to a mature adult Catholic faith. Central to this task of parents are the witness of their own faith and a home environment conducive to the faith formation of the child. Baptism preparation provides an opportunity to help parents develop or deepen good faith practices so they can better lead their child to conversion and faith.

This project included the design, implementation and evaluation of a baptism preparation program for fifteen couples at Resurrection Parish in Maryland. Elements of the program were an initial survey, online and take-home resources, a group preparation session, the baptism of the child, a home visit after the baptism for mystagogy, an event at the parish, and a closing assessment survey. During implementation, the parents experienced multiple instances of prayer, learning and sharing faith in the home.

The fifteen subject couples provided positive feedback regarding their experience. The assessment survey demonstrated that, as a result of the intervention, the faith practice of parents grew, as did their commitment to raise their children in the faith. In a particular way, the use of mystagogy after the baptism proved useful to the program objectives, as did the take-home materials and overarching focus on the Rite of Baptism. This project prepared parents for the baptism of their child and helped them develop good faith practices beneficial to raising their newly baptized child in the Catholic faith.

This treatise by Thomas W. Burnford fulfills the treatise requirement for the doctoral degree in ministry approved by Dominic Serra, S.L.D, as Director, and by Donald Heet, D.Min., as Reader, and by Leonard DeFiore, Ed.D., as Dean's Delegate.

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Angela,
and my children Lucy, Samuel and Molly.

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Introduction

When Catholic parents bring their infant to their parish for baptism, the parish has the responsibility to provide them with good preparation for the sacrament. A parish baptismal preparation program should equip parents to fully celebrate the rite of baptism for their child and also prepare the parents to live out the promises they make at the baptism in the years following. The introduction to the *Rite of Baptism for Children* states that parents are “to assist the child to know God.”¹ During the baptism itself, parents commit to “training him/her in the practice of the faith.”² While the Church assists parents in this task, what happens in the home – the lived faith life of the parents themselves – has lasting and significant impact on the child’s faith development. The elements of regular participation in Mass, engagement in the life of the parish, reflection on liturgical experience, family prayer, ongoing adult faith learning in the home, and sharing the impact of faith on daily life come together to provide an environment conducive to the faith development of a child over time, thereby helping to bring his or her baptism to fulfillment.

The goal of this project was to design, implement, and assess a new parish baptism preparation program. With at-home components that effectively prepared parents for the baptism of their child, the program sought to help the parents understand the commitments made at baptism to raise their child in the faith after the baptism, and to deepen their commitment to this essential task. The program sought to give parents multiple concrete experiences of prayer,

¹ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, 5,5 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 367. Hereafter RBC and *Rites*.

² RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 1:377).

learning, and faith sharing in their own home and to encourage their faith life through an at-home session of mystagogy to reflect on their experience of the Rite of Baptism. Additionally, the program was designed to build commitment to daily prayer and weekly Mass on the part of the family. It sought to respect the busyness of new parents by utilizing take-home and online resources. Each family received a pastoral visit to the home.

The program was implemented at Church of the Resurrection parish in Burtonsville, Maryland, with fifteen young Catholic couples seeking baptism for their infants or young children. Couples met in a group and individually with the present author for catechesis and formation and were provided with specially designed resources for self-directed prayer, learning, and faith sharing in their home. The program included an at-home visit for mystagogical catechesis, an event at the parish for relationship building with parishioners, and a post-program assessment. The program had six distinct elements:

1. Introduction and at-home preparation. After a welcome and introduction by the pastor and the present author, parents were sent a link to an online pre-assessment survey that determined the initial level of faith knowledge and intentional faith activity in the home. They also received a link to an online catechetical video on baptism.
2. Group catechesis on the Rite of Baptism. The parents participated in a catechetical session on the Rite of Baptism. This took place on the third Sunday of each month.
3. The baptism was scheduled and celebrated in the weeks following the class.
4. Postbaptismal home visit. After the baptism of the child, the present author visited the parents' home for a sixty-minute session that included structured reflection on their experience of their child's baptism with mystagogical catechesis on the words and actions of the rite.
5. Meeting others at the parish. Parents attended a parish event that included prayer, faith sharing, and a simple presentation on a practical parenting topic useful to young parents. Social time and a meal allowed for the building of relationships.
6. Program evaluation. After completing the program, parents were sent a link to an online survey that provided assessment data useful for an evaluation of the program.

Chapter One describes the goals of baptism preparation, the role of parents, data regarding baptism, and recent historical trends so as to show the need for the project. Chapter Two investigates the theology and history of the Rite of Baptism, liturgical catechesis, mystagogy, and the role of parents, along with current adult learning methodologies useful for the project. Chapter Three describes the design of the program and the specific plans for each stage of implementation. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the initial survey data and an account of specific happenings during the implementation of each stage of the program. Chapter Five provides an evaluation of the project based upon the post-intervention assessment survey and other data gathered during implementation.

Chapter One

Baptism Preparation Today

This chapter describes the goals of parish baptism preparation and the role of parents both in the baptism and in the raising of their children in the faith. A review of national statistics and trends regarding Catholics, sacraments, and general expressions of faith provides reasons for a new baptism preparation program. The program design takes into account the current reality of Catholic parents to the greatest extent possible. The chapter ends with a review of existing programs and resources.

The Goals of Baptism Preparation and Parental Initiative

The baptism of infants is common, but not technically normal. Adult baptism is both historically and theologically normative because the sacrament presumes conversion. The Introduction to the *Rite of Baptism for Children* (RBC) states, “To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptized.”¹ Specifically, this formation following the sacrament, “seeks to lead them gradually to learn God’s plan in Christ, so that they may ultimately accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptized.”²

With adult baptism and all the other sacraments, it is the individual receiving the sacrament who comes with faith, but in the case of infant baptism the order is changed – the

¹ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, 3 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 366. Hereafter RBC and *Rites*.

² Ibid.

sacrament comes first and the conversion or acceptance after. (This will be fully explored in Chapter Two.) This conversion of the infant after baptism, while ultimately God's work, is the result of ongoing formation in the faith through catechesis. As Berard Marthaler states in *The Nature, Tasks and Scope of the Catechetical Ministry*, effective catechesis “depends to a great extent on the vitality of the Christian community in which it is given...that the community is a clear living, and authentic sacrament of Christ.”³ Additionally, the “Christian family is the primary environment for growth in faith.”⁴ Through infant baptism preparation, parents must encounter or more fully embrace the vibrant life of the parish as a living sacrament that communicates grace. The parents should also develop or refine a faith life in the home that is itself formative for their children. Given that faith is, by definition, ecclesial, there is no distinction between these elements.

Parental initiative is at the heart of infant baptism preparation. Parents ask the parish to baptize their child, they make public commitments during the Rite of Baptism, and then they must make choices every day to raise their child in the faith after baptism. A parish baptism preparation program, therefore, can have two distinct yet related goals. First, as the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy says, the program prepares the parents for “full, conscious, and active participation”⁵ in the Rite of Baptism at which they make specific commitments – a commitment (or profession) of faith and a commitment to catechize their child in the faith. Second, the

³ Berard Marthalar, O.F.M. Conv., *The Nature, Tasks and Scope of the Catechetical Ministry* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2008), 179. Hereafter Marthaler, *Nature, Tasks and Scope*.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1987), 7. Hereafter SC and Flannery.

program seeks to give the parents the practical training and resources necessary to fulfill these commitments as they raise the child after baptism. Both goals build upon the reality that the baptism not only transforms the infant or child, but also gives grace to the participating parents to help them spiritually with their commitments. This will be fully discussed in Chapter Two.

Parental initiative during the process of baptism is manifest in some of the following ways:

- The parents approach the parish/pastor and request baptism for their child.
- The second opening question of the RBC asks parents, “What do you ask of God’s Church?”⁶ The parents respond, usually, by saying “Baptism.”
- During the rite, the parents are asked to publicly commit to bringing their child up in the faith. “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” They reply “We do.”⁷
- Before the baptism, the parents and godparents profess faith, an essential ingredient of the sacrament.⁸

The RBC states that parents should “prepare to take part in the rite with understanding,”⁹ which includes understanding the responsibilities that result from the commitments they make. This is reflected in the *Code of Canon Law* which states the need for parents to be instructed in and to understand the “obligations”¹⁰ attached to their actions in the rite. Through the liturgy, the Catholic Church communicates that parents are responsible for the faith formation of their

⁶ RBC, 37 (*Rites*, 1:377).

⁷ RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 1:377).

⁸ RBC, 57 (*Rites*, 1:385).

⁹ RBC, 5,1 (*Rites*, 1:367).

¹⁰ Can. 851, 2, *Code of Canon Law* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1984), 323. “The parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be instructed properly in the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it.”

children after their baptism.¹¹ In the rite, parents publicly demonstrate their intent to raise their child in the practice of the faith. This includes teaching them, witnessing to them, and engaging them in the full and active life of the parish as a sacramental community. As will be shown below, however, there are statistics demonstrating that many people baptized as infants do not practice their faith later in life. For example, one somewhat dire retention trend analysis suggests that by the time a child born in 2011 reaches the age of eighteen in 2029, then, if the current retention rate decline continues, the native born cohort may only be about eleven percent Catholic.¹² While such a future reality would depend upon many factors, this project is aimed at improving retention rates by positively affecting the long term faith development of baptized infants. It is not so much whether the parents, for example, can answer “Baptism” when asked what they want for their child, but rather the quality of their response and its depth of commitment.¹³

This project seeks to unify the two goals of preparing parents for full, active and conscious participation in the rite, and providing them with the necessary resources to live an active, ecclesial faith at home as mature adults, a foundational element of the ongoing faith formation and catechesis of their children. Baptism preparation seeks to help ensure that a child

¹¹ RBC, 5,5 (*Rites*, 1:367).

¹² Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), *The Growing Mystery of the “Missing” Catholic Infants*. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, CARA 2007), 3. Accessed from http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2013_02_01_archive.html June 9, 2013, 6:24 a.m. Hereafter CARA and *Growing Mystery*. This statistic is based upon a projection of the change in retention rates from 1973 to 2011.

¹³ During a few classes the present author compared this response during the Rite of Baptism to the profession of vows made during the Rite of Marriage. Participants in the class were able to identify with this analogy.

who is given faith at baptism is formed in that same faith by the parish community, parents and godparents, both in the parish and at home.

Parents and the Faith Formation of Their Children

How is it that children, from the time of their baptism up until the age of eighteen, learn and grow in Catholic faith? More specifically, what are the best ways parents can practically implement the commitments they make during the Rite of Baptism? One way to answer this question is to distinguish through geography: children are formed in the faith of the Church both at the local parish and in the family home.

The parish is the place where sacraments are celebrated. Parish events and programs help parents raise their children in the faith - Mass, reconciliation, confirmation, religious education programs, Catholic schools, activities for families, service projects, family catechesis, and even the parish picnic. All of these elements of parish life listed in parish bulletins help parents better raise their children in the faith through basic participation in the life of the parish. The elements listed are, of course, of differing priority. The weekly Eucharist is the primary and essential element of faith life for parents and children and should not be compared in importance to the annual parish picnic.

In the family home, parents have the opportunity to teach their children the basic prayers of the faith and how to pray them – in the morning, before meals, and before bed. They also teach the basic truths of the faith through reading religious books, children's bibles, and talking

about what they see, hear and do in the parish.¹⁴ The commitment that parents make during the Rite of Baptism is, however, not just to teach their children knowledge of the faith, but to help them practice the Catholic faith and raise them to “keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor.”¹⁵ Parents need to help their children develop a conscience that leads to good decision making by teaching and witnessing to basic concepts of right and wrong.

The physical environment of the home should also be formative through the presence of crucifixes, a family bible, and a statue or picture of Mary. Raising a child to love God requires the parents to witness to their own love of God through a mature adult faith lived in the Christian community. This mature adult faith will naturally find expression in the parents’ taking their children with them to Mass, registering them for religious education or Catholic school or homeschooling them, and actively participating in the life of the Church. This is different from a simple obligation model where the parental motivation comes from external sources such as an undue focus on rules and requirements. It is one in which parental initiative flows from a relationship with Jesus Christ lived within the Christian community.¹⁶

The 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis* states that mature adult faith is “a living, explicit, and fruitful confession of faith.”¹⁷ In the next year, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops published *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for*

¹⁴ Marthaler, *Nature, Tasks and Scope*, 179.

¹⁵ RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 1:377).

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 3, 7. Hereafter CCC. “Those who with God’s help have welcomed Christ’s call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world.”

¹⁷ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), 72. Hereafter Congregation for the Clergy, *GDC*.

Adult Faith Formation in the United States.¹⁸ This document describes three characteristics of adult faith that inform the design of baptism preparation programs. Adult faith is required of parents during the baptism of their child, and adult faith is also the ultimate goal of their formation of that same child. A living faith, according to the Bishops, is maintained by frequent reading of scripture and Church documents, involvement in the community life of the Church, personal prayer, service to the poor and love of God and neighbor; a living adult faith is always searching, always growing, aware of sin, and longing for eternal life.¹⁹

Adult faith is “clearly and explicitly rooted in a *personal relationship with Jesus lived in the Christian community*.”²⁰ It is connected to the life, teaching and mission of the Church, and is “radically Trinitarian.”²¹ “Out of this conviction comes the willingness and ability to witness to the Christian faith whenever possible, to explain it whenever necessary, and to be confidently guided by it always.”²² An explicit and personal relationship with Jesus that leads to witness will help parents fulfill the promise made at baptism to raise their child in the faith. At the same time, data suggests that for many adult Catholics today, a sense of personal relationship with Jesus is not normative. In 2008, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a large national survey of religion affiliation and belief. In response to the following question, “Which comes closest to your view of God? God is a person with whom people can have a relationship or God

¹⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1999). Hereafter USCCB, *Our Hearts*.

¹⁹ USCCB, *Our Hearts*, 17.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *GDC*, 99.

²² USCCB, *Our Hearts*, 19.

is an impersonal force?” twenty-nine percent of Catholics answered that God is an “impersonal force.”²³

Finally, adult faith bears both the fruits of the Spirit²⁴ and the fruit of justice, compassion and evangelization.²⁵ Again, when each of these elements is seen by children in their parents, at home, on vacation, at the mall and at the parish, then it is a fair assumption that the children, who learn from witness, will be more likely to grow into mature adult faith. Specifically, if the children grow up seeing their parents serve the poor and needy and are encouraged to do so themselves, they will understand that adult mature faith must bear fruit in practical service to those in need.

At the baptism of their children, parents commit to “make it your constant care to bring them up in the practice of the faith.”²⁶ They probably have every intention of doing so, but this does not mean that they possess and live a mature adult faith that supports the faith growth of the child. Parish leaders of baptism preparation programs, therefore, need to ask two questions: Do the parents have access to good, practical resources to help them grow in their own faith so they can live a mature adult faith as defined above? What is the commitment level of the parents preparing for the baptism of their child?

With regard to practical resources, parish bulletins list parish catechetical programs, regular sacramental offerings, sacramental preparation programs, and community events, but this

²³ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (Pew), *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic* (Washington, DC: Pew Forum, 2008), 164. Hereafter Pew, *Landscape Survey*.

²⁴ See Galatians 5:22-23.

²⁵ USCCB, *Our Hearts*, 20.

²⁶ RBC, 56 (*Rites*, 1:385).

in no way means that parents participate in such programs. Looking at the question of commitment, the very fact that the parents are in the baptism preparation program displays some level of commitment to the faith development of their child – they have, after all, come to the Church to ask for baptism. But these parents, who were probably baptized as infants, are not necessarily living the fullness of mature adult Catholic faith. This reality was demonstrated by the results of the initial project survey described in Chapter Four. While the faith development and practice of each parent coming to the parish for the baptism of their child was unique, it was important to view parental faith and practices within the context of national data and trends. The data are reviewed below.

Catholics in the United States

In the 1973 General Social Survey of the United States population,²⁷ it was estimated that eighty-eight percent of those who said they were raised as Catholics said they still considered themselves to be Catholics as adults. In 2008, the Pew *Landscape Survey* interviewed more than thirty-five thousand people in the United States and determined that this retention rate number had decreased to sixty-eight percent.²⁸ This means that in 2008 a full thirty-two percent of those surveyed who said they were raised as Catholic did not consider themselves Catholics as adults. Mark Grey, a sociologist with CARA, projects that, using this historical trend and continuing it beyond 2011, “retention could fall to 55% when those born in 2011 come of age in 2029. This

²⁷ CARA, *Growing Mystery*, 3.

²⁸ Pew, *Landscape Survey*, 30. It is important to note that retention rate data are based upon participants self-identification as Catholic, or stating that they were raised as a Catholic; the data does not prove that those who say they are (or were) Catholic were actually baptized or practicing the Catholic faith.

would result in a native-born cohort being about 11% Catholic by the time they reach adulthood at age 18.”²⁹ In 1972, only twelve percent of people raised as Catholics left the practice of the Catholic faith by adulthood, but this percentage had grown to thirty-two percent by 2008.

Retention rates for Catholics are relatively good when compared to other denominations and faiths.³⁰ Still, the increase in the percentage of Catholics who leave the Catholic faith is very significant and should be addressed. Indeed, as CARA points out, “Retention rates are the most valid measurements of the magnitude of religious change.”³¹

While many of those who stop considering themselves Catholic do so later in life, CARA states, “38 percent of those who said they were raised Catholic and later left the faith said they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic *before* reaching the age of 18.”³² This statistic, however, does not provide any information on why these people left the faith. In some cases it could have been because of the choice of the individual youth or child, and in other cases it could have been because his or her parents stopped practicing the Catholic faith. The significant loss of Catholics during the first eighteen years of life, whether through individual choice or the choice of parents, suggests significant reason to work with parents of infants before, during, and after the baptism of their child so as to help them raise their child to maturity of faith and practice. Not only is the time period between birth and eighteen significant from the perspective of retention,

²⁹ CARA, *Growing Mystery*, 3.

³⁰ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), *The Impact of Religious Switching and Secularization on the Estimated Size of the U.S. Adult Catholic Population* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, CARA 2008), 2. Accessed from <http://cara.georgetown.edu/re1022808.pdf> at 8:55 p.m. on December 27, 2013. Hereafter CARA, *Impact of Religious Switching*. Among the larger religions, only Mormons and Jews having higher retention rates.

³¹ CARA *Impact of Religious Switching*, 10.

³² Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA), *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, CARA, 2008), 171. Hereafter CARA, *Sacraments Today*.

but it is also the time during which parents have the responsibility to fulfill the commitment they make at their child's baptism. These realities are important for the purposes of assessing and planning baptism preparation programs. Improving the retention rate of Catholics over time is a long term goal of this project.

On a more positive note, since World War II Catholicism has accounted for roughly a quarter of the United States population and this proportion has remained fairly stable.³³ Since 1965 the overall Catholic population in the United States has been steadily increasing and it is estimated that in 2013 there are between sixty-eight and seventy-eight million Catholics.³⁴ This growth is accounted for by a number of factors such as a general growth in the population, conversions, migration, and immigration.³⁵ Though the overall Catholic population has been increasing, the number of Catholic baptisms has not.

Figure 1 below shows the number of baptisms by year since 1950. These data come from the Official Catholic Directory as provided to the present author by CARA.³⁶ They reflect the total number of baptisms of infants and young children up to the age of seven as reported by dioceses in the United States. It should be noted that more than nine in ten children are baptized

³³ Pew, *Landscape Survey*, 19.

³⁴ CARA *Frequently Requested Church Statistics* accessed from <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html> on February 4, 2014 at 9:15 a.m. CARA provides statistics for the total Catholic population from two sources; the Official Catholic Directory and an analysis of surveys in which participants self-report their religious affiliation. The latter number is higher than the former, but the growth trends using each methodology are consistent over the period from 1965 to 2013.

³⁵ Pew, *Landscape Survey*, 6. Forty-six percent of immigrants self-identify as Catholic which is higher than the overall proportion of Catholics in the general population, meaning that as immigration increases the number of Catholics in the general population increases at a greater rate. Additionally, 2.6% of the adult population has changed their affiliation to Catholicism.

³⁶ Mark M. Gray, Director, CARA Catholic Polls, e-mailed the present author a spreadsheet containing data for total Catholic baptisms of infants and children up to the age of seven, as taken from the Official Catholic Directory, on December 27, 2013.

before they reach the age of one.³⁷ As can be seen, the number of these baptisms has been declining since 1995.

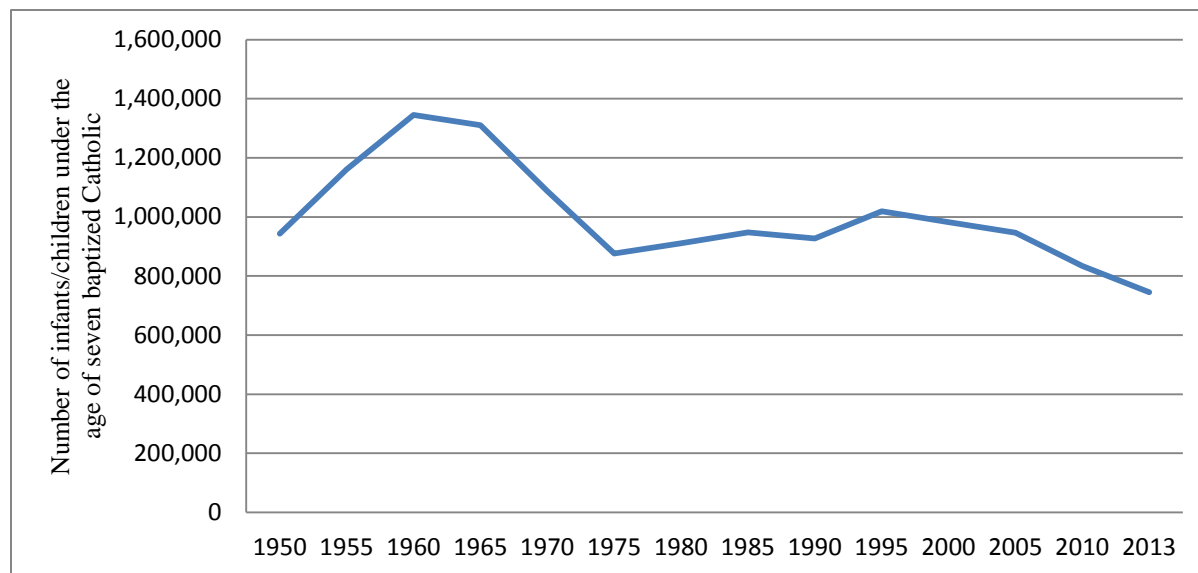


Figure 1. Number of Infants/Children Under the Age of Seven Baptized Catholic in the United States, 1950-2013.

While figure 1 represents the actual number of Catholic baptisms of infants and young children, the percentage of Catholic parents who bring their children forward for baptism is unknown. There are no data to determine definitively if Catholic parents are baptizing their children at a different rate today than in the past. But analysis of other trends allows for the formation of an informed opinion. For example Mark Gray, in the CARA research blog “1964,” shows U.S. Catholic infant baptisms as a percentage of all live births and how this percentage has been decreasing steadily since 1995.³⁸ He comments on the trend by saying,

This leads to two possibilities – one being more likely than the other:

³⁷ CARA, *Growing Mystery*, 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

1. Catholics are just as likely to baptize their children now as in the past but they are having significantly fewer children than non-Catholics. Possible, but unlikely.
2. Catholics are just as likely as non-Catholics to have children but are less likely to baptize them than in the past. More probable.³⁹

In light of this probability, each time a parent brings an infant or child to a parish for baptism it is a special and important opportunity to welcome the family to the parish and the Catholic community. Also, if parents are well prepared to raise their children into a mature adult Catholic faith, then, as CARA hypothesizes,⁴⁰ those well-formed adults will themselves choose to have their own children baptized when the time comes. Given the reality that parents choose to bring their infant to the Church for baptism, it is reasonable to suggest that today's baptism preparation program has an important role to play in increasing baptism rates in the next generation, as well as improving retention rates.

Participation in the Sacraments

In 2008, CARA conducted a survey on the sacramental practice of Catholics. One thousand and seven self-identified Catholics were asked an extensive series of questions. Specific questions were asked about Mass attendance rates which are important because, as CARA says, the "Frequency of Mass attendance is a strong indicator of the general importance of Catholicism in a person's life and of his or her level of commitment to living out the faith."⁴¹ Overall, twenty-three percent of adult Catholics said they attended Mass every week, but only

³⁹ CARA, *Growing Mystery*, 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴¹ CARA, *Sacraments Today*, 2. It should be noted that statistical studies ask about *attendance* at Mass, not *participation* in Mass which is the theologically preferred term as discussed in Chapter Two.

fifteen percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation⁴² and eighteen percent of the Millennial Generation attended every week (though thirty-nine percent and thirty-six percent attended at least once a month respectively).⁴³ It should also be noted that sixty-eight percent of Catholics either somewhat or strongly agree with the statement “I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.”⁴⁴

Those parents in the baptism preparation program at the time of this project include members of the Millennial Generation, but one cannot extrapolate and make direct correlations about the Mass attendance rates of specific parents based on national statistics; firstly, the statistical sample of those in the program is too small, and secondly, those in the program are distinct from the general Catholic population in that they have specifically taken initiative and chosen to come to the parish for the baptism of their child.

However, the present author asked parents about Mass attendance in the initial survey and, based upon self-reported statistics, sixty-six percent of parents said they attended Mass weekly, and thirty-three percent said monthly. Parish baptism preparation programs should not assume that parents regularly attend Mass. If the habit of attending Mass is present in a couple, it should be praised; if it is not, it should be developed.⁴⁵

The commitment parents make at the baptism of their child includes a commitment to complete the initiation of their child through preparation for and reception of the sacraments of

⁴² CARA, *Sacraments Today*, 16. CARA defines the Post-Vatican II Generation as those aged twenty-seven to forty-seven in 2008 (those born between 1961 and 1981), and the Millennial Generation as those aged eighteen to twenty-six in 2008 (those born in 1982 or later).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99. Additionally, about half of Millennial Generation Catholics in 2008 said that they were “proud to be Catholic,” but only twenty-five to thirty percent considered themselves to be practicing.

confirmation and Eucharist.⁴⁶ Data from CARA shows that while ninety-two percent of all those baptized as infants in the past have been confirmed, the number is sixty-nine percent for those in the Millennial Generation – significantly lower than for older generations.⁴⁷ Similarly, ninety-one percent of all Catholics say they have received first communion, yet the percentage is eighty-five for the Millennial Generation.⁴⁸ This suggests that parental commitment to completing initiation has decreased and, therefore, is something to be nurtured and highlighted in baptism preparation programs.

Additional Data on How Faith Is Expressed

In addition to active participation in the sacramental and pastoral life of the local parish, a lived and visible faith life in the home environment is central to the faith development of children and their maturation into adult Catholics. What, then, is the average Catholic home like with respect to some indicators pertinent to the faith development of children? These items include prayer in the home, the presence of religious art/statues, regular discussion of faith matters or the sharing of faith, support of basic truths of the Catholic faith, etc. Some of these questions were part of the pre-assessment survey⁴⁹ used for the project, but CARA and the Pew Forum also provide other useful national statistics.

Prayer is a central part of faith life for both adults and children. Sixty-three percent of Catholics with a child under the age of eighteen in the home say that they “pray or read scripture

⁴⁶ RBC, 5,5 (*Rites*, 1:367).

⁴⁷ CARA, *Sacraments Today*, 27, 29.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See Chapter Four.

with” their children.⁵⁰ This is a positive statistic, suggesting that the majority of families in a baptism preparation program would indeed include prayer in the life of their home. However, this statistic provides no information on the regularity or type of prayer.

Fifty-one percent of Catholics with children under the age of eighteen in the home send their children to Sunday school or another religious education program, and another twenty percent either homeschool or send their children to a religious school.⁵¹ These figures are relatively high and significantly higher than the weekly Mass attendance statistics.

Images, statues, and wearing a cross or crucifix have long been part of Catholic tradition and have been important elements in passing on the faith among Catholics. Fifty-nine percent of Catholics have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.⁵² However, it should be noted that during the home visits conducted as part of the project the present author did not see any religious items – pictures, statues, crosses, etc. – in any of the homes visited, though these visits were limited to one or two rooms of the home.

In October 2012, Pope Benedict XVI convoked the Synod for the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. This synod arose out of the clearly identified need to repropose the basic gospel message of Catholicism to those for whom the message had grown cold. Cardinal Donald Wuerl, in his book *New Evangelization: Passing on the Catholic Faith Today* suggests that “Secularization has fashioned two generations of Catholics who do not know the Church’s foundational prayers. Many do not sense a value in Mass attendance. They fail to

⁵⁰ Pew, *Landscape Survey*, 194.

⁵¹ Pew, *Landscape Survey*, 195.

⁵² CARA, *Sacraments Today*, 90. It is interesting to note that significantly more Millennial Generation Catholics have a statue or picture of Mary in their home than members of the Post-Vatican II Generation.

receive the Sacrament of Penance, and have often lost a sense of mystery or the transcendent as having any real and verifiable meaning.”⁵³ He goes on to say that it is “as if a tsunami of secular influence has swept across the cultural landscape” thereby requiring a fresh proclamation of the Gospel. This anecdotal statement, combined with some of the above mentioned data, suggests a significant need and an opportunity to work with parents during baptism preparation.

Parish Baptism Preparation Programs Today

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II, when listing elements necessary for a new Rite of Baptism, states, “The roles of parents and godparents, and also their duties, should be brought out more clearly in the rite itself.”⁵⁴ As a result, the RBC says that parents,

should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding. They should be provided with suitable means such as books, letters addressed to them, and catechisms designed for families. The pastor should make it his duty to visit them or see that they are visited; he should try to gather a group of families together and prepare them for the coming celebration by pastoral counsel and common prayer.⁵⁵

Prior to Vatican II and the new rite, infants were brought to the parish at a set time and baptized with no formal preparation and no “class” requirement. But shortly after the promulgation of the RBC in 1969, most parishes began to implement some sort of preparation program for parents.

The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life in the mid-1980s reported that seventy-five percent of the thirty-six parishes in the sample had some sort of formal baptism preparation

⁵³ Cardinal Donald Wuerl, *New Evangelization: Passing on the Catholic Faith Today* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013), 22.

⁵⁴ SC, 67 (Flannery, 21).

⁵⁵ RBC, 5,1 (*Rites*, 1:367).

program. The majority of these programs were run by the pastor and half were for one hour or less.⁵⁶ A recent informal survey of baptism preparation programs in the Archdiocese of Washington⁵⁷ shows that the majority of parishes do have some form of baptism preparation. One hundred and thirteen parishes out of one hundred and thirty-nine responded to an archdiocesan request for information about baptism preparation and stated that they had some form of program that included a parent session - either with the pastor by appointment or during a set class time - of at least one hour in duration. Eight parishes required two or more sessions, usually a formal class following an interview with the pastor. Forty-two parishes required only an appointment with the pastor who conducted the catechesis. Fourteen parishes had programs that included two or more hours of instruction or face to face time, meaning that the remaining ninety eight parishes prepared parents for the baptism of their child in less than two hours. Of particular note is that no parishes indicated that they did any sort of postbaptismal follow-up or mystagogy with the family, and no parishes indicated that they visited the homes of the families either before or after the baptism.

Publishers/Resources

About half of the one hundred and thirteen parishes in the Archdiocese of Washington survey said they used printed or video materials from publishers for their baptism preparation.

⁵⁶ Susan R. Rafferty and David C. Leege, *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, Report 14: "Catechesis, Religious Education and the Parish."* Accessed from <http://icl.nd.edu/initiatives-projects/church-life-research/> on June 13, 2013 5:45 a.m.

⁵⁷ The Secretariat for Catholic Education contacted every parish during the summer of 2013 and asked for an overview of their parish baptism preparation program. Data are available upon request by calling the Office for Catechesis at 301-853-5368. It should be noted that these data were gathered through an informal telephone survey.

*Your Baby's Baptism*⁵⁸ was the most common resource, and *Your Child's Baptism*⁵⁹ was the second most common. Twenty parishes indicated that they showed parents a video as part of the preparation, with the overwhelming majority using the companion DVD to *Your Baby's Baptism*. While many more programs and resources are available for parents, a review by the present author identified that most follow the same basic format of catechizing on the sacrament, explaining the elements of the rite, and encouraging the parents to raise their child in the faith after the baptism.

The resource titled *Infant Baptism: A Sourcebook for Parishes*,⁶⁰ from Loyola Press, was written specifically for usage in parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago. This excellent manual, accompanied by a parent handbook, presents a comprehensive baptism preparation program to engage young parents in the life of the parish and well catechize them for the sacrament their child will soon receive. Of particular note is that this program provides specific and directed actions for a parish team to reach out to parents after the baptism of their child to engage them in the life of the parish as a new, young family. These ideas include gathering parents of newly baptized children together for events focused on Christian parenting and community building.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Rosemary Gallagher and John Trenchard, C.S.S.R., *Your Baby's Baptism* (Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Press, 2004).

⁵⁹ Paul Turner, *Your Child's Baptism* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publication, 1999).

⁶⁰ *Infant Baptism: A Sourcebook for Parishes* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

Conclusion

A parish baptism preparation program has among its goals preparation of parents for the celebration of the baptism of their child and the ongoing task of raising their children in the faith. In light of particular data on Mass attendance, retention rates and general Catholic practice, along with current baptism preparation program practice, there is the opportunity and need to develop an enhanced baptismal preparation program that builds on parental initiative and the importance of mature adult Catholic faith as integral elements to raising children in the faith after baptism.

Chapter Two

Theology and Principles

Chapter Two investigates the nature and history of infant baptism within the context of Christian initiation and the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Study of these reforms, as manifest in both the Rite of Baptism for Children (RBC)¹ and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA),² proved useful for the development of a new infant baptism preparation program. Specific theological principles include the presence of faith during the RBC, the need for a postbaptismal catechumenate, and the roles of parents and godparents. Other foundational elements studied for the design of the program include usage of liturgical catechesis, mystagogy, principles of adult learning and the essential tasks of catechesis as described in the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC).³

Christian Initiation

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, called for the reform of the rites of baptism for adults and infants.⁴ This resulted in the 1969 Rite of Baptism for Children and the 1972 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The

¹ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990). Hereafter RBC and *Rites*.

² *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990). Hereafter RCIA and *Rites*.

³ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997). Hereafter *GDC*.

⁴ *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 66 and 67 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1987), 21. Hereafter SC and Flannery.

RCIA includes a formal period of catechesis prior to initiation, the catechumenate, and reflects the restoration of the order of the sacraments of initiation and their unity in one process of initiation. After the initial proclamation of the gospel, conversion and catechesis, adults are baptized, confirmed and then receive the Eucharist to complete their initiation. The sacrament of baptism necessarily requires a conscious and mature commitment to Christ. Adult baptism is the theological norm since the conversion comes before the sacrament. But in the case of infant baptism, as defined in the RBC,⁵ the conversion and commitment must be provided by means of the teaching and witness of the parents, godparents and Christian community, who together guide the baptized infant to mature adult Catholic faith. Additional reforms from Vatican II include a shift to a more personalist view of the sacraments and a focus on active participation by the laity in sacraments, which are now seen as encounters with Christ.⁶ A review of the history and theology of these reforms provides important principles for the design of a new baptism preparation program that is the focus of this project.

In the earliest days of the Church, people became Christians by means of the following process: first, they heard the good news of Jesus; second, they responded by a conversion of life and expression of initial faith; third, they were baptized; and fourth, they entered into the life of the community, including celebrating the breaking of bread.⁷ As Maxwell Johnson points out in

⁵ *The Roman Ritual: Christian Initiation, General Introduction*, 3 and 4 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 4. Hereafter GICI and *Rites*. It is also important to note that the General Introduction to Christian Initiation refers to both adults and infants.

⁶ Mark Searle, "Infant Baptism Reconsidered," in *Alternative Futures for Worship, Volume 2: Baptism and Confirmation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 15.

⁷ "Preceded by authentic proclamation of the risen and exalted Christos-Messiah and by conversion, Spirit baptism by water at apostolic hands initiates one into the full life of the community into which the gospel has begun

his book *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, initiation took place at the Easter vigil (following a long period of preparation in a formal catechumenate) and included baptism, a sealing with the Holy Spirit, and reception of the Eucharist. From the beginning, children and infants were baptized along with their parents, but St. Augustine's teaching on original sin (along with the Christianization of the West) led to infant baptism becoming the pastoral norm.

In the fourth and fifth centuries in Rome, a subtle but important shift in initiatory practice took place. As Johnson says, "Only Rome had both an episcopal handlaying rite and a (second) postbaptismal anointing. And in the following centuries, these uniquely Roman postbaptismal episcopal rites will become the postbaptismal rites of Western Christianity in general."⁸ More children were being baptized and, additionally, they were being baptized right after birth for fear of early death, not at the Easter Vigil as before. Also, at the same time, it became harder for every infant to be confirmed by the bishop soon after baptism due to the increase in baptisms and geographical spread of the Church beyond cities. Since on occasion confirmation did not take place until adolescence, the bishops insisted that parents bring their children for this hand-laying before the age of seven, but this rule over time led to the formal separation of confirmation from baptism by a number of years. Eventually, the celebration of confirmation became affiliated with a child's developmental growth and was prohibited for those who had not reached the age of

to become praxis." Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1991), 22.

⁸ Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 200.

seven.⁹ Given the large size of dioceses in the Middle Ages, confirmation could often not be administered before adolescence, thereby leading to a further separation from baptism and the formal identification of confirmation as a separate sacrament with its own theology.

Additionally, in the Middle Ages, as J.D.C. Fisher points out in *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West*, the development of the doctrine of transubstantiation made “the Church unwilling to tolerate any longer those accidents which were bound to occur sometimes in the communicating of infants.”¹⁰ Since infants could not consume bread, they received only the consecrated wine. When, in the thirteenth century, the cup was forbidden for lay people, first communion was delayed until children were old enough to eat the host.¹¹

What had once been a unified process of initiation administered at one time became three separate sacraments celebrated over many years and in a different order. Kavanagh, while reflecting on liturgical developments in the early 1900’s, summarizes the history of Christian initiation as follows:

Thus only slightly more than a generation prior to the Second Vatican Council the Roman Rite had come to a polity of sacramental initiation which no longer recognized the *baptism-seal-eucharist* sequence of Hippolytus, nor the *baptism-consignation/confirmation-eucharist* pattern of the medieval and Counter-Reformation Church, but a wholly new procedure: *baptism-penance-communion-confirmation*. The catechumenate in preparation for baptism had ceased to exist; catechesis had been separated from the liturgy and deritualized; and what had once been a single initiatory process consummated in two paschal phases (baptism/consignation and Eucharist) had now become four sacraments loosely based on personality development in preadolescent individuals and knit together by religious education and therapy programs to serve them.¹²

⁹ Dominic E. Serra, “Baptism and Confirmation: Distinct Sacraments, One Liturgy,” *Liturgical Ministry* 9 (2000), 64. Hereafter Serra and “Baptism and Confirmation.”

¹⁰ J.D.C. Fisher, *Baptism in the Medieval West* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), 152.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹² Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 70.

Returning to the reforms of Vatican II, The General Introduction to Christian Initiation

begins by first stating the effects of Christian initiation as a whole:

In the sacraments of Christian initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire people of God in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.¹³

It is in the second paragraph that each of the three sacraments of initiation is described (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist), thereby reflecting the central unity of initiation along with the specific order of sacraments within initiation.¹⁴ Kavanagh describes the process as “one single initiatory event done in three stages.”¹⁵ It is also important to note that initiation is completed in the Eucharist, which is the paschal mystery actually being lived out by the Christian community.¹⁶ Eucharist is not just a reward for those who have been baptized, but has an essential initiatory effect.¹⁷ This unity and process, as reflected in the RCIA, provides an essential model and context for the formation process of parents seeking baptism for their infant children.

¹³ GICI, 3 (*Rites*, 1:4).

¹⁴ GICI, 2 (*Rites*, 1:3-4). It is interesting to note that within paragraph two there are no numerical divisions among sections for each sacrament; this formatting (or lack thereof), differs from the rest of the document and appears to reflect the ecclesial understanding of the unity of initiation and the relationship of the three sacraments.

¹⁵ Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 174.

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1322, 334. Hereafter CCC. See also SC, 10 (Flannery, 6), and GICI, 1 (*Rites*, 1:3).

¹⁷ Serra, “Baptism and Confirmation,” 68.

Infant Baptism

Sacrosanctum Concilium states that people “are made sons of God by faith and baptism,”¹⁸ not just by baptism. Adult baptism, in light of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, is viewed as the theological norm since the baptism of an adult follows the proclamation of the Gospel and his or her conversion and expression of faith,¹⁹ as was the case in the early Church. Yet in the United States today, more infants are baptized than adults²⁰ and, while adults bring faith to baptism, infants cannot do so, at least at a conscious level.²¹ But this in no way means that faith is not present at infant baptism. The RBC states that infants are “baptized in the faith of the Church, a faith proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers.”²²

Faith is essential for baptism. In infant baptism, that faith is expressed in the rite by parents and godparents during the renunciation of sin and profession of faith: “If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, renew now the vows of your own baptism. Reject sin, profess your faith in Christ Jesus. This is the faith of the Church. This is the faith in which these children are about to be baptized.”²³ At the end of the profession of faith the celebrant says, “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our

¹⁸ SC, 10 (Flannery, 6).

¹⁹ See SC, 9 (Flannery, 6).

²⁰ For example, in the Archdiocese of Washington in 2012 there were six thousand infant/child baptisms and five hundred adult baptisms. Source: Secretariat for Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Washington.

²¹ Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1999), 71. Kathleen Hughes points out that for some young children, and even infants, the love expressed at baptism may “awaken for the first time in the pre-conscious child an experience of being loved by God.”

²² RBC, 2 (*Rites*, 1:366).

²³ RBC, 56 (*Rites*, 1:385).

Lord.” Then the community gathered responds by saying, “Amen.”²⁴ This one faith of the Church is expressed publicly by the parents and godparents and affirmed by the celebrant and entire community – that community by which the Church is made present.²⁵ Then, and only then, can the baptism proceed.²⁶

Adults in the RCIA process are formed in the faith during the catechumenate, prior to baptism. While some elements of the historical catechumenate are present at the beginning of the RBC in a compressed form - for example, the signing of the cross on the forehead, exorcisms, renunciation of Satan, and the profession of faith²⁷ - infants and children do not experience conversion and faith prior to their baptism.²⁸ Therefore, the RBC states, “To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptized.”²⁹ While this formation is the responsibility of the entire Church,³⁰ the rite specifically tasks parents to raise their children in the faith after baptism.

Celebrant: “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to

²⁴ RBC, 59 (*Rites*, 1:387).

²⁵ RBC, 4 (*Rites*, 1: 367). It is interesting to note that in the section of the Introduction to the RBC on the “Ministries and Roles in the Celebration of Baptism,” the important role of the people of God is mentioned first, even before that of the parents. Indeed, “the community exercises its duty when it expresses its assent together with the celebrant after the profession of faith by the parents and godparents. In this way it is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family, but the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ.”

²⁶ Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 38-44. Mark Searle provides an interesting discussion of possible ways that infants actually do bring faith to their baptism by analyzing the ways in which life as an infant is aligned to the paschal mystery.

²⁷ See Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 260.

²⁸ Searle “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 30, and Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 175. This reality is used by some theologians as an argument for replacing infant baptism with some rite of enrollment into the catechumenate adapted for infants, and then baptizing children at a later age as part of a complete sacramental initiatory process.

²⁹ RBC, 3 (*Rites*, 1:366). See CCC, 1231, 316.

³⁰ RBC, 4 (*Rites*, 1:366), and GICI, 7 (*Rites*, 1:5).

bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?
Parents: "We do."³¹

This commitment is restated at the "final interrogation,"³² highlighting the importance of the parental duty to be the "first teachers of their children in the ways of faith."³³

The RCIA, the RBC, and the Rite of Confirmation,³⁴ and indeed all the liturgical documents, maintain the original order of the sacraments of initiation as baptism, confirmation and Eucharist.³⁵ While the RCIA brings the three sacraments together at one time, the reforms of Vatican II did not change the temporal separation of the sacraments for those baptized as infants or young children. The current RBC, however, maintains the unity of initiation by requiring that the baptism of an infant lead to the completion of initiation through confirmation and Eucharist, despite the fact that, in practice, confirmation is often delayed even beyond the reception of communion. After the baptism of the child and before the Lord's Prayer, reference is made to confirmation and holy communion,³⁶ and in the RBC parents are directed to "prepare the child to receive confirmation and participate in the holy eucharist."³⁷ It is also recommended that infant

³¹ RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 1:377).

³² RBC, 18 (*Rites*, 1:371).

³³ RBC, 70 (*Rites*, 1:391).

³⁴ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Confirmation*, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990). Hereafter RC and *Rites*.

³⁵ RC, 11 (*Rites*, 1:482). It should be noted, however, that the Rite of Confirmation acknowledges that confirmation is often celebrated in the Latin Church after Eucharist, but refers to this as a delay and not a theological norm. "With regard to children, in the Latin Church the administration of confirmation is generally delayed until about the seventh year. For pastoral reasons, however, especially to implant deeply in the lives of the faithful complete obedience to Christ the Lord and a firm witnessing to him, the conferences of bishops may set an age that seems more suitable. This means that the sacrament is given, after the formation proper to it, when the recipients are more mature."

³⁶ RBC, 68 (*Rites*, 1:390).

³⁷ RBC, 5 (*Rites*, 1:367).

baptism be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday “to bring out the paschal character of baptism,”³⁸ referring to its fulfillment in the Eucharist.

The need for the postbaptismal catechumenate and completion of initiation is so great that, as the RBC states, “In the complete absence of any well-founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion, the baptism is to be delayed.”³⁹ The preparation of parents prior to the baptism of their child is therefore, “of vital concern to God’s people,”⁴⁰ as stated in the General Introduction to Christian Initiation. This is not only so they can participate in the rite with faith, but also so they understand and are able to fulfill the critical follow-up to the sacrament – namely, teaching and forming the child in the faith and leading them to full initiation. How the local parish assists parents in their role as primary educators is essential. The postbaptismal parent sessions in this project were included specifically to help parents raise their children in the first few years after birth, years when there is a notable absence of specific parish programming, especially when compared to programs for school-aged children.⁴¹

Mark Searle highlights the integral relationship between infant baptism and the family when he states, “the family is part of the sacramental sign of baptism and will be confirmed as such by taking its part in the enactment of the rites themselves.”⁴² From the perspective of the infant, the faith of the Church into which he or she is baptized is only made present to them

³⁸ RBC, 8.9 (*Rites*, 1:369).

³⁹ RBC, 8.3 (*Rites*, 1:369).

⁴⁰ GICI, 7 (*Rites*, 1: 5).

⁴¹ “The Church apparently has nothing to say to or about young children from the time they are baptized shortly after birth until the time when they are old enough to be enrolled in preschool religious education programs.” Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 35.

⁴² Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 37.

through the faith of the parents in the domestic Church. Therefore, the role of the parents is all the more important.

The General Introduction to Christian Initiation states that the sacraments of initiation combine so as to “enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and the World.”⁴³ Baptism and initiation come with a mission that is further defined by the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity as the baptized person’s work “when they endeavor to have the Gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order, going about it in a way that bears clear witness to Christ and helps forward the salvation of men.”⁴⁴ The importance and nature of this apostolate, originating in initiation,⁴⁵ should be an essential element of catechesis for parents since one way that they can live out their apostolate is by the evangelization and sanctification of their children. Specifically, with the ecclesial community, parents catechize and form their children in the home after baptism and lead them to confirmation and Eucharist, so that, fully initiated, their children can live a mature adult Catholic faith.

⁴³ GICI, 2 (*Rites*, 1:4).

⁴⁴ *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1987), 768. Hereafter AA and Flannery.

⁴⁵ “Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate.” AA, 3 (Flannery, 768). See also GICI, 2 (*Rites*, 1:4).

Liturgical Catechesis and Mystagogy

In the article “To Be What We Celebrate,” Catherine Dooley states, “The task of liturgical catechesis is to attend to the images found within the liturgy.”⁴⁶ Chapter Three describes how the principles of liturgical catechesis were applied to the design of the baptism preparation program, not only before the actual baptism but also afterwards through a home visit that utilized some elements of mystagogy.

It is important to note that liturgical catechesis does not focus on teaching the parents the doctrine of baptism from a catechism and should not follow a traditional speaker-student classroom model with presentation and note taking. It also does not mean focusing on the details of where participants should stand during the rite and what they should say and do.⁴⁷ Liturgical catechesis uses the words and actions of the rite to prepare parents to fully celebrate that same rite. Kathleen Hughes says in her book *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament*, “Perhaps the most effective of all forms of immediate preparation for infant baptism is to take the rite that will be used and, possibly in the company of other couples also preparing themselves for this sacrament, reflect on the numerous instances when their involvement will be required and their own beliefs will be celebrated.”⁴⁸

Mark Searle, in his article “Images and Worship,” highlights how modern education systems form people to give priority to literalism over imagination, and yet, “worship is, above

⁴⁶ Catherine Dooley, “To Be What We Celebrate: Engaging the practice of Liturgical Catechesis,” *New Theology Review* (November 2004): 10.

⁴⁷ In fact, focusing on the details (as opposed to the words, images, symbols, and what they mean) will detract from full participation.

⁴⁸ Hughes, *Saying Amen*, 69.

all, an act of imagination.”⁴⁹ The images present in the RBC include water, fire, prayers, oil, and clothing, and the actions are many, all of which have meaning and provide an opportunity for those present to participate fully though imagining what is happening at a deeper level than what is seen or heard. In the early Church, formal catechesis was not separated from liturgy; for example, in the fourth century mystagogical catechesis was often the first time that neophytes heard the full teaching of the Church as taught from the images and actions of the initiatory rites.

The images, words and actions of the rite speak for themselves. They do not need to be technically explained in advance. In the RBC when, after the baptism, the parents or someone from the family lights and holds a candle, the presider states that the candle is “entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.”⁵⁰ It is quite possible that the parent holding the candle at this particular time may not fully hear the words of the presider simply because his or her focus will be on holding a lit candle; but by holding it during the rite and taking it home afterwards, the parent will definitely realize that that they are holding something on behalf of their child - a light that represents the light of Christ. The rite itself, through its very actions, catechizes the parents on their responsibility for the child after baptism. What, therefore, is essential is that the parents be prepared to participate fully in the rite by paying attention to the signs and symbols used, by listening to the words proclaimed, and in a particular way, by reflecting in advance on the faith they bring to the commitments they themselves will make. After such preparation, as Mark Searle so clearly states, “All that is required is that one strive to relax and center oneself before the liturgy begins, and to maintain the attitude of attentive receptivity to everything that happens

⁴⁹ Mark Searle, “Images and Worship,” *The Way* 24:2 (1984): 103.

⁵⁰ RBC, 64 (*Rites*, 1:389).

as the rite unfolds.”⁵¹ Another example of liturgical catechesis is not to explain to parents before the baptism that the rite will begin at the door of the Church. In this way, the parents are left to walk into the Church carrying their child,⁵² walking towards the altar, and being open to saying, “What does this mean?”

Romans 6:3-5: An Example for Liturgical Catechesis

Romans 6:3-5 is a key scripture in the theology of baptism and is useful for liturgical catechesis before and after the celebration of the rite.⁵³

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.
(Romans 6:5-3)⁵⁴

The word baptism, taken directly from the Greek βαπτίζειν, means to “plunge” or “immerse” into water; the very word implies action, an action of moving something down into water and then up. The sacramental immersion of the catechumen (infant or adult) in water brings the one baptized into communion with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the central event of salvation history. The General Introduction to Christian Initiation (GICI) reiterates this central definition of baptism: “For baptism recalls and makes present the paschal

⁵¹ Searle, “Images and Worship,” 114. See also *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11 (*Vatican II*, 7).

⁵² As will be seen in Chapter Three, many actions of the rite were explained to parents during mystagogy after their experience of the sacrament, following the model of the early Church.

⁵³ Using Romans 6 in baptism preparation should be done in light of a healthy theological balance between theological and liturgical traditions of the East and the West, and between a Johanine and Pauline understanding of baptism.

⁵⁴ *New American Bible*. (Washington, DC: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., 1991).

mystery itself, because in baptism we pass from the death of sin to life.”⁵⁵ But in the rite there are many additional images of the paschal mystery beyond the water bath⁵⁶ that can be used in liturgical catechesis. Some are as follows:

- The GICI recommends that baptism take place during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday specifically “to bring out the paschal character of baptism.”⁵⁷
- When the parents respond to the question, “What do you ask of God’s Church for N.?” they respond by saying “Baptism.”⁵⁸ Using the word “Baptism” refers to immersion into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as explained in Romans 6.
- The child is signed with the sign of the cross,⁵⁹ a sign of victory over death⁶⁰ and of the resurrection.
- The first general intercession is a direct reference to the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection: “By the mystery of your death and resurrection, bathe these children in light, give them the new life of baptism and welcome them into your holy Church.”⁶¹
- The second option for the prayer of exorcism states, “Your Son died and rose again to save us.”⁶²
- As the celebrant touches the water at the end of its blessing, he says, “We ask you, Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life.”⁶³

⁵⁵ GICI, 6 (*Rites*, 1:5).

⁵⁶ RBC, 60 (*Rites*, 1:387).

⁵⁷ RBC, 9 (*Rites*, 1:369).

⁵⁸ RBC, 37 (*Rites*, 1:377).

⁵⁹ RBC, 41 (*Rites*, 1:378).

⁶⁰ See RCIA, 55 (*Rites*, 1:58).

⁶¹ RBC, 47 (*Rites*, 1:379).

⁶² RBC, 49 (*Rites*, 1:381).

⁶³ RBC, 54 (*Rites*, 1:384). See also alternative blessings in RBC, 223 (*Rites*, 1:450-451).

St. Ambrose, quoted by Edward Yarnold in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, summarizes the centrality of the paschal mystery to baptism clearly: “See where you are baptized, see the source of your baptism. It is none other than the cross of Christ, the death of Christ. Here is the whole mystery: he suffered for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.”⁶⁴ At the very heart of baptism is the act of immersion in water, of plunging someone down under water and raising him or her up again. While in most parishes today this is accomplished by affusion,⁶⁵ the imagery of submersion or immersion can help parents understand the deeper meaning behind the ritual action. Parents, the primary protectors of their loved infant child, intentionally ask for their child to be “plunged” under water, an act that is inherently dangerous. The theological reality that life comes only through death, through the paschal mystery, can powerfully be communicated to parents through the almost absurd symbolism and action of baptism in water. The destructive and saving power of water is also conveyed through the words of the blessing of the water in the rite that make reference to the great flood and the crossing of the Red Sea, both of which destroyed life, and also the water that flowed from the side of the crucified Jesus.⁶⁶

Mystagogy, as a form of liturgical catechesis after the celebration of a sacrament, provides an opportunity to help parents more fully understand the work of God in their child

⁶⁴ St. Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, II, 6 (Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2006), 112).

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 33. See also Kavanagh’s comment on current infant baptism practice, “The dignity of one’s baptism needs more than drops of water, dabs of oil, taps on the cheek, and plasticized bread dipped in a modicum of wine. Baptism into Christ demands enough water to die in, oil so fragrant and in such quantity that it becomes the Easter aroma, kisses and *abrazos*, bread and wine enough to feed and rejoice hearts.” Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 179.

⁶⁶ RBC, 54 (*Rites*, 1:383).

through baptism and indeed, in their family and the entire community. In the early Church, sacramental initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) was referred to as the mysteries. While both catechesis before the sacraments and the experience of the sacraments help the catechumen understand God's work, there is an element in which, as Michael Driscoll says, "First, the mystery must be experienced if it is to be known."⁶⁷ Possibly the earliest example of mystagogy is Romans 6:3-5 itself, in which St. Paul explains to the ecclesial community in Rome what they have experienced in baptism after they have experienced it. As Dooley says of mystagogy in general, "The purpose of mystagogical instruction is not so much to understand the rites of baptism but to understand the action of God in the lives of the believing community."⁶⁸

Through the reforms of Vatican II, mystagogy is included as an integral element of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The period of mystagogy during Easter is defined by the RCIA as a "time for the community and neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery."⁶⁹ Since mystagogy in the RCIA process seeks to deepen the neophytes' understanding of the sacraments they have received, it could be argued that a mystagogical approach to infant baptism might not be appropriate since the parents have not themselves just experienced a sacrament. However, the rite is clear that during the Easter season "the entire community and the newly baptized with their godparents should be encouraged to participate"⁷⁰ in the Masses for neophytes, Masses that have a mystagogical character. The RCIA goes on to

⁶⁷ Michael S. Driscoll, "Symbol, Mystery and Catechesis: Toward a Mystagogical Approach," *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring 1998): 67-75.

⁶⁸ Catherine Dooley, "From the Visible to the Invisible: Mystagogy in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*," *The Living Light* 31, (1995): 32.

⁶⁹ RCIA, 244 (*Rites*, 1:168). See also *GDC*, 238.

⁷⁰ RCIA, 25 (*Rites*, 1:43).

say, “This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity.”⁷¹ As the community grows in their understanding of the paschal mystery through mystagogy with neophytes, so parents can grow through mystagogical reflection on the baptism of their child as demonstrated in this project.

A brief study of St. Ambrose of Milan, a fourth century mystagogue, provides useful context for the application of mystagogy to baptism preparation today. Craig Alan Satterlee lists five key methods of mystagogy used by St. Ambrose:

The methods that Ambrose employs to assist the newly baptized in experiencing the rites on the level of faith include: (1) calling upon the neophytes to remember what they experienced, (2) emphasizing the neophytes’ active involvement in the mysteries, (3) appealing to the neophytes’ senses and emotions, as well as to their minds, (4) telling the newly baptized how to respond, and (5) spelling out the implications of initiation for life in the world.⁷²

Additionally, it is useful to review some specific phrases taken from St. Ambrose’s sermons given in Milan during Easter Week, probably in the year 391. The quotes are taken from Ambrose’s “Sermons on the Sacraments” as translated by Edward Yarnold in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*.⁷³

- “What was it we did on Saturday?”
- “Think of the place where you made your promise”

⁷¹ RCIA, 244 (*Rites*, 1:168).

⁷² Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan’s Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 137.

⁷³ St. Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, I, 2-14 (Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 100-105).

- “The Bishop touched your ears and nostrils”
- “Think whom you saw, think what you said. Recall it carefully.”
- “After this you drew nearer, you saw the font itself, and you saw the bishop presiding over it.”
- “You saw what is seen, but not what is done.”

The above methodology and these phrases and questions were used in the design of the postbaptism home visit that is part of the project so as to help parents reflect back on their experience of the baptism of their child.⁷⁴

Dooley goes on to provide another purpose for mystagogical catechesis, namely that of “adopting a sacramental vision of life by which one is able to look at one’s own life through the eyes of faith and discover an inner and deeper meaning in the ordinary.”⁷⁵ This aligns closely with the need to help parents, as the first teachers of their children, to accomplish the second task of catechesis from the National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), namely to promote “a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments.”⁷⁶ To take this one step further, if parents are able to develop or refine the ability to look at life through the eyes of faith and in light of the regular liturgical experience, then they will in some sense be doing, in the words of Enrico Mazza, “mystagogical theology.”⁷⁷ Such a habit and sacramental world view manifest in

⁷⁴ Similar questions are reflected in the directions given to catechists for mystagogy by Dooley. See Catherine Dooley, OP, “Mystagogy: A Model for Sacramental Catechesis” in *The Candles Are Burning: Directions for Sacrament and Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 66.

⁷⁵ Dooley, “Mystagogy,” 59.

⁷⁶ *The National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 60. Hereafter *NDC*.

⁷⁷ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 6.

the home, the domestic Church, would provide an excellent environment for the raising of children in the Catholic faith.

In *The Adult Learner*, Knowles, Holton and Swanson propose some essential principles of adult learning.⁷⁸ Effective adult learning should take into consideration the following six factors: [1] the learner's need to know, [2] the self-concept of the learner, [3] the learner's experience, [4] the learner's readiness to learn, [5] the learner's orientation to learning and [6] the learner's motivation to learn. While these principles are more fully applied in Chapter Three, some initial reflections on possible application to baptism preparation are below.

When parents approach the parish requesting baptism for their child, it is important to understand why they have come forward and the parents' own understanding of the need for baptism preparation. Do the parents consider the preparation and postbaptismal follow up merely as requirements to have one's child baptized, or do they see the program as necessary formation for them so that they, as parents, can be prepared to profess faith during the baptism and raise their child in that faith afterwards?

By means of the initial survey completed by parents when they began the program, the present author was able to differentiate the levels of knowledge and faith practice among parents, and thereby respect their prior experience and level of desire to learn. Analysis of the survey responses allowed for some individualization of the program content to better build upon the faith level and experience of each participant.

⁷⁸ Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 2005), 4.

Of particular note is the reality that the question asked of parents at the beginning of the RBC - “What do you ask of God’s Church for N.?”⁷⁹ - reflects the parents’ need to know and learn because it is their decision to bring their child forward and consequently to raise their child in the faith. The parental initiative built into the rite provides an excellent foundation for ongoing learning on the part of the parents and shifts the whole process from ecclesial command to request and response. As the parents discuss the signs of baptism and their commitments to raise the child in the faith, the seriousness of their responsibility becomes clearer, leading to greater engagement in the process on their part. Parental initiative was highlighted and discussed in the pre-baptism catechesis. Also discussed was the right relationship between parents, as the primary educators of their children, and the ecclesial community. If done well, liturgical catechesis can deepen the faith and commitment of parents who, in the words of Thomas Groome, may initially see baptism as “a cultural expectation rather than a call to transformation of life and participation in the Church’s mission of God’s reign in the world.”⁸⁰

In the first few years of a child’s life after baptism, the family home, or domestic Church, is their primary experience of faith and God. But the role of the ecclesial community, into whose faith the infant was baptized, remains essential. Therefore, developing a relationship between the parents and the parish community was a priority in the program design, especially in the cases in which parents had minimal involvement in the life of the local parish. Though time consuming, the present author ensured that there were as many personal contacts with the parents as possible, and that the parents had opportunities to meet other couples and parishioners. The purpose of this

⁷⁹ RBC, 37 (*Rites*, 1:377).

⁸⁰ Thomas Groome, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent* (Allen, TX: RCL Publishing, 1998), 343.

relationship building was specifically to ensure that, after the program ended, the parents had an increased sense of belonging and membership in the parish community so that the formation of the child would more likely be a partnership between the parents and the parish and, therefore, the work of the entire ecclesial community.

Principles for the Ongoing Formation of the Child

Chapter One described the importance of parents living a mature adult Catholic faith in the ecclesial community as integral to the ongoing formation of their children. While the witness of parents is important, additional and more specific activity on their part, within the context of the faith community, is also required to fulfill the goal of Christian initiation – that the baptized child grow in faith.

Following the RBC's identification of parents as the “first teachers of their children,”⁸¹ the NDC states, “Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children”⁸² and “nothing replaces family catechesis, especially for its positive and receptive environment, for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith.”⁸³ This catechesis on the part of the parents, while intermittent and informal,⁸⁴ should be informed by the six tasks of catechesis as outlined in both the GDC and the NDC:

1. Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.
2. Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments.

⁸¹ RBC, 70 (*Rites*, 1:391).

⁸² NDC, 234.

⁸³ GDC, 171.

⁸⁴ See NDC, 101.

3. Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.
4. Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.
5. Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
6. Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.⁸⁵

How can parents, in their home and through active participation in the life of the parish, assist in the implementation of the six tasks of catechesis? In order for parents to promote knowledge of the faith in the family, they themselves need to know the basic tenets of the Catholic faith. If this is lacking, then they need to avail themselves of the catechetical ministry of the parish to grow in that understanding. Such a parish ministry would include not only formal catechesis for adults, but also provision of materials for parents to learn at home.

Thomas Kleissler, Margo LeBert and Mary McGuinness, in their book *Small Christian Communities*, state, “Sharing means talking freely about God and about life experiences and reflecting on these in the light of scripture and tradition.”⁸⁶ They go on to define sharing as the most important core element of a small Christian community. Encouraging parents to share faith with each other provides an opportunity for their faith to deepen as well as a visible witness to their children that faith is important in their lives.

Catechesis on the sacraments is clearly a central part of baptism preparation, but parents must accept and live the responsibility to engage their children in the Eucharistic community by

⁸⁵ *NDC*, 60-62.

⁸⁶ Thomas A. Kleissler, Margo A. LeBert, and Mary C. McGuinness, *Small Christian Communities* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 116.

regular participation in Mass. This could include talking with their children after Mass about what they noticed, felt and remembered, following a mystagogical model. Parishes who partner with parents in this catechesis have a responsibility to ensure that liturgies are celebrated in a way that engages the entire community of believers, that is, adults, youth and children. Additionally, parents of recently baptized children should be invited to participate in the Masses for neophytes celebrated in the Easter season as a way to continue their own mystagogical reflection on the baptism of their children.⁸⁷

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that moral formation occurs by parents “giving a good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them.”⁸⁸ The witness of the parent’s marriage is also a key element for moral formation.⁸⁹

Prayer must necessarily be part of the Christian household, before meals, at bedtime, and as a normal part of family life. The parish should provide recommended resources to parents, and homes should have prayer books for children. More importantly, the parish should promote prayer by means of the Liturgy of the Hours since this ancient form of prayer was designed to reflect the unity of the Church at prayer together, even if prayed individually. The importance of the Divine Office is reflected in the call for its reform in Chapter Four of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ RCIA, 248 (*Rites*, 1:169).

⁸⁸ CCC, 2223.

⁸⁹ See *NDC*, 234.

⁹⁰ SC, 83 (Flannery, 24).

Parents have a responsibility to witness to the faith actively in their workplace and society at large, including service to those in need. Such actions as speaking to others with love, feeding the hungry, and standing up for justice, help form children in the ways of faith. Whether through service at the parish food pantry, giving to the poor, or talking about matters of faith to non-believers, children will quickly see how parental faith is practically lived out, and they will learn from them.

Conclusion

The design of a new program for baptism preparation described in Chapter Three depends upon an understanding of the history and theology of Christian initiation, of which baptism is an essential element. While the Vatican II reforms resulted in significant changes to adult initiation, the baptism of infants still faces theological and historical challenges such as its separation from the other sacraments of initiation. As Mark Searle opines, “The newly restored practice of adult initiation serves to highlight precisely those aspects of baptismal theology which the new rite of infant baptism continues to obscure.”⁹¹ However, designing a new baptism preparation program for parents provides two opportunities: first, to fully implement the rite within the context of liturgical catechesis and second, to inculcate in infant baptism some of the elements reflected in the RCIA, such as adding a component of mystagogy done in the context of liturgical catechesis.

⁹¹ Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 27.

Chapter Three

Project Design - A New Model for Baptism Preparation

A new baptism preparation program was designed in light of the theological, liturgical, and catechetical principles described in Chapter Two. The primary objectives of the program were to prepare young Catholic couples for the baptism of their infant children and to help them raise their children in the Catholic faith after the baptism. Chapter Three focuses on the design of the program; Chapter Four describes its implementation; and Chapter Five presents an evaluation. The main elements of the program were as follows:

1. Introduction and at-home preparation. After a welcome and introduction by the pastor and the present author, parents were sent a link to an online pre-assessment survey to determine the initial level of faith knowledge and faith activity in the home. They also received a link to an online catechetical video about baptism.
2. Group catechesis on the Rite of Baptism. The parents participated in a catechetical session on the Rite of Baptism.
3. The baptism of the child was celebrated in the weeks following the class.
4. Postbaptismal home visit. After the baptism of the child, the present author visited the parents' home for a sixty-minute meeting that included structured reflection on their experience of their child's baptism and mystagogical catechesis on the words and actions of the rite.
5. Meeting others at the parish. Parents attended a parish event that included prayer, faith sharing, and a simple presentation on a practical parenting topic useful to young parents. Social time and a meal allowed for building relationships.
6. Program evaluation. After completing the program, parents were sent a link to an online survey that provided assessment data useful for an evaluation of the program.

During the program, couples met in a group and individually with the present author for catechesis and formation both before and after the baptism. In addition, they experienced self-

directed times of prayer, learning and faith sharing in their home using specially designed resources.

Initial Preparation and Assessment

Participants in the program included parents who called Church of the Resurrection and requested preparation for the baptism for their infant or child. During the first call, the parish staff scheduled a meeting for the couple with the pastor, usually directly following a Mass, and recorded their contact information. At this short meeting, the pastor acquainted himself with the couple and encouraged them to participate in Mass regularly. If they were not married in the Church, the pastor explained the process for having their marriage validated. The pastor then sent an e-mail welcoming the parents to the program and advising them that the present author would be in touch with them in a few days to explain the steps in the process of baptismal preparation and how to register for the monthly baptism preparation class. The pastor's initial e-mail included two documents – a baptism registration form (Appendix A) for the parents to complete and a summary outline of the program (Appendix B).

After receiving a copy of the e-mail from the pastor, the present author called the parents, congratulated them on the birth (or upcoming birth) of their child, and explained how the program would prepare them to express faith during the baptism and fulfill the commitments they would make during the Rite of Baptism for Children (RBC).¹ The present author mentioned the six elements of the program, including the initial survey and the postbaptismal home visit,

¹ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, 39 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 377. Hereafter RBC and *Rites*.

and that the program was part of his doctoral studies. He assured them that all information would be kept confidential.

During this call, the present author was attentive to the details of the family such as the state of the pregnancy, due date, and names and ages of other children. These details were recorded on a secure spreadsheet and used as reference for future conversations to further develop a relationship with each couple. This database also stored contact information and data on each couples' completion of various elements of the program. Since Church of the Resurrection is a large suburban parish, many young couples did not know any other parishioners or parish representatives prior to their entrance into the baptism preparation program. The program design specifically included multiple opportunities for relationship building to better ensure that the parents were fully integrated into the life of the parish community.² Immediately after the phone call, the present author sent an e-mail (Appendix C) to the couple with links to the online pre-assessment survey and online baptism video.

The online parent pre-assessment survey contained twenty-six questions (Appendix D). It had three objectives within the program. First, the survey enabled the present author to determine the faith knowledge and activity level of each couple prior to the class. As evidenced by the data in Chapter One, adult Catholics today have varying degrees of faith knowledge and practice. Data from the pre-assessment was used to adapt each class, as well as individual catechetical interactions, to the needs and faith life of each couple. Second, the survey was designed to engage the parents in reflection on key questions pertaining to the baptism of their child,

² See Chapter Two on the importance of the ecclesial community in baptism preparation and the faith formation that follows.

questions that they may not have previously considered such as “Why do you want your child to be baptized?”³ Other questions on faith activity encouraged parents to think about their religious practice. A question such as “How often do you read from the Bible or a religious book?” reminded a couple that such activity is worthy of consideration. The intent of these questions was specifically communicated to parents in the survey’s introduction to Question 6.⁴ Third, the present author intended to utilize the survey instrument as a means to evaluate the program’s effectiveness.⁵

The survey began with an overview of the elements of the program, the present author’s contact information, a program timeline, and words of encouragement to the parents.⁶ The first four questions gathered the names of the child, parents and person completing the form. This information was cross-checked against the parish baptism registration form to ensure names were correctly spelled and complete. The survey included eight right/wrong faith knowledge questions to establish a baseline of parental faith knowledge. It also included six questions about the parents’ faith activity and participation in the liturgical life of the Church and seven opinion questions that led the parents to think about their faith and commitment level to the baptism of their child. Questions were chosen specifically to determine if the parents had knowledge or practiced faith in areas pertinent to baptism and raising children in the faith, so that the program

³ Knowles, Malcolm S., Elwood F. Holton and Richard A. Swanson. *The Adult Learning* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 2005), 99. Hereafter Knowles and *The Adult Learner*. Questions can be used as “instruments to open engaged minds to unsuspected possibilities.”

⁴ This engaged the parents as adult learners by showing that their time spent in completing the survey was for their own benefit.

⁵ As described in Chapter Five, the final evaluation tool had to be amended to include questions beyond those in the initial survey.

⁶ While this information was also covered in the phone conversation with the present author, it was intentionally repeated to ensure that parents had a good understanding of the program as a whole.

interventions could focus on what that couple needed to learn and practice in order to fulfill the commitments of baptism. The survey was created using a backward design process,⁷ keeping at the forefront the desired outcomes from the program with regard to parental faith. The final question provided parents the opportunity to register for an upcoming baptism preparation class. The questions and analysis of the data from the survey are presented in Chapter Four.

In addition to completing the pre-assessment survey, parents were asked to watch a twenty-two minute video titled “Preparing for Baptism” by Archbishop Donald Wuerl.⁸ Using an online video that parents could watch at their convenience helped meet the program objective of respecting the busyness of new parents. In the video, Donald Wuerl, then Bishop of Pittsburgh, provides catechesis for parents preparing for the sacrament of baptism for their infants. The presentation includes video images from the celebration of an actual infant baptism and uses the words and actions of the RBC to catechize. Content is divided into two parts.

Part One: The Theology of Baptism. Bishop Wuerl defines a sacrament as a visible reality becoming a means of grace and, in easy to understand language, he describes the importance of signs in everyday life and how, in baptism, the sign of water being poured actually accomplishes what it symbolizes. He identifies three basic outcomes of baptism and initiation: first, the washing away of original sin to restore us to relationship with God; second, the infusion of God’s spirit into the child; and third, how the child is incorporated into the body of Christ and

⁷ Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005), 14-15.

⁸ Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, *Preparing for Baptism* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1992). The video can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/TBxINH87Uu8>. Because this video is no longer published, it was placed on a secure YouTube channel by the present author such that the number of views could be tracked and recorded in the master program spreadsheet, allowing for determination if parents did actually watch the video.

becomes a member of the Church.⁹ Parents and godparents take on the responsibility to nurture the spiritual life of the child so he or she lives out and is formed in the gift received at baptism.

Part Two: A Walk Through the Ritual. Bishop Wuerl describes each element of the RBC beginning with the welcoming and ending with the final blessing. This liturgical catechesis is interspersed with video images of the actions being described, such as the signing of the infant.¹⁰ He aligns the actual actions of the baptism with their theological meaning and import, identifying what happens both visibly and invisibly.

At this point in the program, prior to the formal baptism preparation class, the parents have met with the pastor, had two discussions about their roles and responsibilities in baptism, completed an online pre-assessment survey, watched a video at home, and read materials. All of these activities intentionally highlighted the importance of the parents in the baptism of their child and how they, as parents, need to take responsibility for the process. The parental role and need for their initiative is clearly identified as essential in the liturgical documents.¹¹ Additionally, as discussed by Malcolm Knowles in *The Adult Learner*, adults need to have a clear understanding of why they need to know the information if they are to actively engage in a learning process.¹²

⁹ *The Roman Ritual: Christian Initiation, General Introduction*, 2 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 3. Hereafter GICI and *Rites*.

¹⁰ RBC, 41 (*Rites*, 1:378).

¹¹ RBC, 5.3.5 (*Rites*, 1:367).

¹² Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 3.

Baptism Preparation Class

Baptism preparation classes were held on the third Sunday of each month at 10:30 a.m.. A week before the class, the present author called those who had signed up for the class to review details and encourage them to complete the survey or watch the video if they had not already done so. The sessions were held in the parish Youth Center. Couples sat on one of four long couches around a large, low coffee table that held a candle, flowers, and a bible on a stand. A box of toys suitable for infants and toddlers was placed in a bay window area of the room, and coffee and donuts were provided. Signs were placed in the building to ensure parents could find the room easily. The present author welcomed the parents as they arrived and gave them a packet and nametag. The internal agenda and talking points for the class are in Appendix E.

The classes began with introductions and an opening prayer that included a reading of Romans 6:3-5 from the bible on the table and spontaneous prayer by the present author for the families present. An overview of the program and objectives were briefly shared using a handout (Appendix F), along with presentation of the class objectives. The elements of the class included discussion of baptism, the role of parents before, at, and after the baptism, a reflection on the blessing of the water from the RBC, and the next steps. The present author presented the importance of parental initiative and responsibility in this program and beyond. There was then brief time for questions and answers.¹³

In the first catechetical component of the class, the present author presented a definition of the Greek word βαπτίζειν, to “dip” or “plunge” in water, and explained the down and up

¹³ Good adult learning methodology suggests asking group participants to ask any specific questions to which they want answers at the beginning of a class or lesson, so as to prevent the participant from being distracted by a particular burning question during the catechesis.

motion of immersion, while quoting the words of baptism from the essential rite.¹⁴ The parents then heard the three effects of baptism presented in language similar to that used in the online video.¹⁵ The first discussion included parents listing, from their knowledge or experience of baptism, any examples of specific actions before or during an infant baptism. The objective of this listing process was to help the parents see how active their roles are in the RBC, so as to prepare them to be fully engaged in the liturgy. As necessary, the present author suggested actions of parents such as approaching the parish to ask for baptism and stating that baptism is what they want at the reception.¹⁶ After this, the present author presented a brief teaching on adult baptism as the theological norm for baptism, and, therefore, infant baptism requires the parents to teach and witness to their child after the baptism by means of a postbaptismal catechumenate.¹⁷ From the RBC, parents then learned about the commitments they would make during the rite¹⁸ and the importance of the profession of faith.¹⁹

In the second discussion, parents were asked, “What do you remember from your childhood that had an effect on your faith? What faith activity happened in your family when you were a child?” Examples from the parents were used to highlight the importance of family rituals and traditions, so the parents could practice them in their own homes with their own children. This led to further discussion, based on the six tasks of catechesis found in the National

¹⁴ RBC, 60 (*Rites*, 387).

¹⁵ Donald W. Wuerl, *The Gift of Faith* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001), 229. See GICI 2, (*Rites*, 1:3).

¹⁶ RBC, 37 (*Rites*, 377).

¹⁷ RBC, 3 (*Rites*, 366).

¹⁸ See RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 377) and RBC, 60 (*Rites*, 387).

¹⁹ RBC, 57 (*Rites*, 385).

Directory for Catechesis,²⁰ of specific actions on the part of parents to raise their children in the faith, such as bringing them to Mass, completing their initiation, praying regularly at home, being involved with the parish, and teaching them to make good moral decisions. This section ended with the present author reading Matthew 28:16-20 and presenting a teaching on the baptismal apostolate of the laity from *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.²¹

Forty minutes into the session each parent was asked to share with his or her spouse reflections on the following questions: “What does it mean to you that you are baptized as a Catholic? What difference does it make on your life?” Couples took five to ten minutes to share their thoughts. At the end, the present author encouraged them to continue talking together about matters of faith and to use the take home materials as a catalyst for such conversations, with the hope that repetition of such conversations would become a habit, supporting the family’s essential role in the catechesis of children.²²

The next section of the class began with a slow reading of the blessing of the water by the pastor using the first option in the RBC.²³ The parents followed along with the class handout of quotes (Appendix G). Parents then discussed common experiences of water today: what it does, how it is encountered, and why it is important. The pastor explained the references to the great

²⁰ *The National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 60-62. Hereafter *NDC*.

²¹ *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1987), 768. Hereafter *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Vatican II*.

²² Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), 171. Hereafter *GDC*.

²³ RBC, 54 (*Rites*, 383).

flood and the crossing of the Red Sea,²⁴ referring back to the reality that baptism, as a plunging into water, symbolizes death and resurrection with Christ as in the opening reading from Romans 6. Parents were encouraged to imagine full immersion for their child and to express any concerns. This led to a discussion of the incongruity of actually placing a newborn infant under water. Parents were encouraged, in Dooley's words, "to attend to the images found within the liturgy"²⁵ by pondering and thinking about why such an apparently dangerous act would be part of the Church's ritual. This liturgical catechesis, referring back to Romans 6 in the opening prayer, led the parents into an understanding of the paschal nature of baptism.²⁶ This exercise also gave the couples an experience of using their imagination actively to reflect on one element of the rite.

The class continued with discussion of the next steps to prepare for the baptism - details such as the need to arrive early, the parish photography policy, and the role of godparents. A time for questions followed, and the take-home materials were explained. Parents were encouraged not to worry about where to stand or when to move during the rite. Such details were the responsibility of the priest or deacon. As a final exhortation, the present author mentioned some of the questions and comments used by St. Ambrose of Milan in the Fourth Century when catechizing neophytes.²⁷ The parents were encouraged to remember to be attentive during the baptism of their child because, afterwards, the present author would visit them to discuss

²⁴ "The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of baptism that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness. Through the waters of the Red Sea you led Israel out of slavery to be an image of God's holy people, set free from sin by baptism." RBC, 54 (Rites, 383).

²⁵ Catherine Dooley, "To Be What We Celebrate: Engaging the practice of Liturgical Catechesis," *New Theology Review* (November 2004): 10.

²⁶ GICI, 6 (*Rites*, 1:5).

²⁷ See Chapter Two, 40-41.

specifically what they saw, heard, felt and experienced during the baptism of their child, in the model of mystagogy. The session closed with prayer that included a reading of Matthew 28:16-20.

The packet distributed at the class included four one-page handouts that were take-home activities for couples to use prior to the baptism of their child (Appendix H-K). Each handout included brief instructions, a text for prayer or reflection, and some discussion activity. They provided the couple with resources for practical experiences of prayer, learning, and faith sharing in their own home. These materials, along with the post baptism reflection exercise and elements of the class and mystagogy sessions, were aimed at building specific faith habits in the lives of the parents through simple repetition. These habits included prayer, reflection on the sacrament of baptism, learning, and sharing of faith.

The first activity (Appendix H) focused on the Apostles' Creed to help the parents understand the importance of the profession of faith during the rite and to discuss their own levels of belief prior to the rite. The second activity (Appendix I) was based upon the Prayer of St. Francis and allowed the parents to reflect on gratitude to God for present blessings and to spend time together in thanksgiving and intercessory prayer. The third activity (Appendix J) quoted the commitment parents make at the baptism to train their child in the practice of the faith²⁸ and asked the parents to reflect on their commitment level to this responsibility and how they practically intend to live it out. The final activity (Appendix K) was based upon a quote from St. Ambrose of Milan's second sermon on the sacraments, on the effects of baptism and the

²⁸ RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 1:377).

basic kerygmatic message of the Gospel.²⁹ Reflection on this passage helped the parents understand baptism in the context of salvation history, and also helped them discuss with each other their own experience of salvation in their lives. Given the theological norm of proclamation and conversion preceding baptism,³⁰ it was important that parents understood and experienced, to the greatest extent possible, their own conversion in light of the kerygma, so as to be better prepared to raise their child in the faith.

Celebration of Baptism

After completion of the class and submission of any needed letters for godparents, the parents contacted the parish office to schedule the baptism of their child on a first Saturday of the month at 11:30 a.m., a second Sunday of the month at 1:30 p.m. or during a weekend Mass. The present author called the parents a day or two before the baptism to answer any last minute questions and to remind them of the importance of being attentive and prayerful during the rite.

The baptisms of infants in the program were celebrated using the RBC. The present author arrived early to welcome the family with the priest or deacon, and participated in the rite. Most parents chose to celebrate the baptism outside of a Eucharistic liturgy, but as the project progressed and the benefits of baptisms during parish Masses became evident, the pastor, in conjunction with the present author, provided increasing encouragement to parents to choose to

²⁹ Edward Yarnold, S.J. *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2006), 116.

³⁰ “Preceded by authentic proclamation of the risen and exalted Christos-Messiah and by conversion, Spirit baptism by water at apostolic hands initiates one into the full life of the community into which the gospel has begun to become praxis.” Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1991), 22.

celebrate the baptism at a parish Mass. At the end of the program, this was the only option presented to parents in the preparation program. A few days after the baptism, the present author called the parents to arrange a time for the home visit.

Postbaptism Home Visit for Mystagogy

The present author visited the family home within a few weeks of the baptism and discussed with the parents their experience during the rite. While the introduction to the RBC³¹ and Canon 851³² recommend that a family be visited as part of the preparation for the baptism of their child, conducting the home visit after the baptism and in the context of mystagogy provided the opportunity for deeper catechesis with the parents based upon what they had experienced during the rite.³³ The visit was designed specifically to reflect the methodological elements of St. Ambrose's mystagogical practice as described by Craig Alan Satterlee.³⁴ This included "spelling out the implications of initiation for life in the world"³⁵ by helping parents to understand the importance of fulfilling the baptism by completing the child's initiation and raising him or her to

³¹ RBC, 5.1 (*Rites*, 1:367).

³² "The celebration of baptism must be prepared properly; consequently: 1/ an adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and is to be led insofar as possible through the various stages to sacramental initiation, according to the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms issued by it; 2/ the parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be instructed properly on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The pastor personally or through others is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer, bringing several families together and, where possible, visiting them." Can. 851, *Code of Canon Law* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1984), 323.

³³ See Michael S. Driscoll, "Symbol, Mystery and Catechesis: Toward a Mystagogical Approach," *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring 1998): 67-75.

³⁴ Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 137. See Chapter Two, 40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

have a mature adult Catholic faith. The celebration of their child's baptism is not the end of a process, but, in some sense, a beginning. The outline for the home visit is found in Appendix L.

Upon arrival at the family home, the present author greeted the family, asked about the child or children, and gave the parents the original baptism certificate. He opened with spontaneous prayer, including thanksgiving for the baptism of the child and the graces received, and offered a time for the parents to add their own prayers of thanksgiving or intercession. Then the present author introduced the primary discussion question by referring back to St. Ambrose of Milan and how, in the fourth century, he would use phrases with those just baptized such as, "What was it we did on Saturday?", "Think of the place where you made your promise," and "Think whom you saw, think what you said. Recall it carefully."³⁶ The present author explained that, by reflecting back on their experience, the parents could better understand the work of God during the baptism and also form stronger memories to share with their children when they grow older. He quoted St. Ambrose who said, "You saw what is seen, but not what is done,"³⁷ and then asked the parents, "What do you remember from the Baptism? Can you tell me about anything in particular that was especially meaningful for you?" Parents shared memories of the baptism, many of which turned out to be very significant and are described in Chapter Four.

After initial sharing, the present author used the RBC to point out some of the specific actions in the RBC by which the parents "exercise a genuine ministry."³⁸ Actions included asking for baptism, signing the child, professing faith, carrying the child to the font, clothing the

³⁶ Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2006), 100-109.

³⁷ Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 100-109.

³⁸ RBC, 5.3 (*Rites*, 1:367).

child, and holding the lit candle. After each description, he asked the parents for their recollections - what they felt, thought, remembered, and heard. He then explained the theological meaning of each ritual action using words from the RBC. Where appropriate, the present author linked a parental recollection to future action. For example, if a parent had a specific memory regarding holding the lit candle, he or she was invited to consider using the candle at specific significant events during the child's life so as to recall the baptism at which the light of Christ entered the child.

The next element of the visit was a discussion of next steps to help parents in their commitment to raise their child in the faith. The present author presented the importance of regular prayer, participation in Mass and the sacramental life of the parish, reading scripture, and the ongoing catechesis of their child.³⁹ Additionally, he shared practices such as signing the child with the cross every night, participating in parish family events, and continuing the practice of mystagogy.⁴⁰ At the end, the parents received a packet with four items:

- A simple family book of prayers, “Catholic Prayer and Practices.”⁴¹
- A final prayer and learning activity sheet based upon the ritual of the lighted candle from the RBC that led parents in prayer for their child (Appendix M).
- A coupon code for online access to the Archdiocese of Washington's “Living Catholic” adult catechetical course.⁴²

³⁹ The present author also briefly explained the parish process for religious education beginning in Kindergarten, the Children's Liturgy of the Word schedule, and an overview of archdiocesan Catholic schools.

⁴⁰ Parents were encouraged to incorporate mystagogy into their sacramental lives by talking about the homily on the way home from Mass and also placing a “What I experienced at Mass” sheet on the refrigerator door on which each family member writes a phrase or concept that they found significant from that Sunday's Eucharistic celebration. This was particularly encouraged for families with older children.

⁴¹ Peter M. Esposito, *Catholic Prayers and Practices* (Cincinnati, OH: RCL Benzinger, 2012).

- A brochure created by the Secretariat for Education of the Archdiocese of Washington, titled “Living Your Catholic Faith in the Home.” This trifold resource provides tips for practice of the Catholic faith in the family home (Appendix N).

Prior to closing with prayer, the present author encouraged the parents to reflect on the gifts their child had received from God through baptism and how this sacrament was a sign of God’s gracious love.⁴³ The session ended with prayer for the family and mention of the next large group meeting for all parents with young children in the parish.

Postbaptism Large Group Session

After the child’s baptism and the home visit, parents were invited to a parish event that included a blessing at the Sunday 12:15 p.m. Mass, prayer, lunch, fellowship, and a presentation by an outside specialist on some practical topic pertinent to raising children. Letters of invitation to these events were sent to all families with children baptized in the past three years in the parish (a sample is found in Appendix O) and also promoted to the entire parish community through bulletin flyers. The afternoon event gave parents in the program the opportunity to develop relationships with other families with infants and young children in a relaxing, informal atmosphere. A simple meal and child care were provided. This community building and engaging parents in a parish event helped strengthen the ecclesial foundation for catechesis and give the parents a broader experience of faith and Church. In a practical sense, it helped families

⁴² This six to ten hour course, all online and with an asynchronous individual format, presents a simple overview of the Catholic faith from the Catechism of the Catholic Church with prayer activities and an introduction to practical evangelization. See www.mycatholicfaithdelivered.com/home.aspx?pagename=YearOfFaithDC

⁴³ Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1999), 65.

feel less “alone” in raising small children and gave them some practical tools for use as parents at home.

After welcome, introduction and opening prayer by the present author, the outside specialist led the group in that session’s specific child raising skill - such as helping children develop basic reading skills or math skills. After a break, the present author delivered a brief presentation titled “How to raise your children in the faith.” Starting with the promises made at baptism, he helped parents reflect on practical ways to develop faith life in the home through prayer before meals and participation in the life of the parish, especially the sacramental life, and the importance of parental witness. This section invited parents to share with others the ways they already incorporated faith into the life of the family home. At the end of the session, representatives from the parish pre-school gave an overview of their program to parents, and the pastor closed with prayer and a blessing. A detailed agenda used by the present author for the event, including a timeline, is found in Appendix P.

The final step for parents in the program was to complete a post-intervention assessment survey. The questions in the survey were designed to determine the effectiveness of the program and its specific elements. The data from the survey were used in the final project evaluation and a full analysis, including design criteria for the questions, is found in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Implementation

Chapter Three described the design of the project. Chapter Four reports how this design was implemented and the results of this implementation. Included are data from the initial survey, accounts of what happened during each stage of the program, and specific responses of parents that demonstrate learning or needs for program adaptation.

In August 2012, three months prior to the first baptism preparation class of the project, the present author met with the pastor of the parish to discuss implementation of the new model for baptism preparation in the parish. It was agreed the new program would begin in October with the present author acting as the parish Baptism Preparation Coordinator.¹ Between November 2012 and October 2013, the project intervention timeframe, thirty-five families contacted Church of the Resurrection parish requesting baptism for their children. Fifteen families completed the essential elements of the project, including the pre-survey, class, baptism of the child, home visit and evaluation. These families were the subjects for the project. Five families did not continue with the program and dropped out or moved away. Seven families did not complete the program within the intervention timeframe, so they were not considered in the analysis.² Eight families were members of another parish and only attended the class as part of their home parish's requirement. The project intervention description, analysis and evaluation

¹ The prior coordinator agreed to assist by attending the formal baptism preparation classes; however, she was only able to attend four of the ten classes.

² These families continued with the baptism of their children after the project ended.

were restricted to the fifteen families who completed the essential elements. Each of these families was given a randomly assigned number to ensure confidentiality.

Analysis of the Survey Results

After each of the fifteen couples in the program had an introductory meeting with the pastor and e-mail and phone communication with the present author, they completed the initial online assessment survey. The present author checked the online survey system weekly to determine when a family had filled out the survey. He then sent a simple e-mail thanking them and reminding them about the next baptism preparation class. Appendix D presents the survey questions and response data.

As stated in Chapter Three, the pre-survey was designed initially with three specific objectives: first, to assess what parents knew so as to inform instruction during the class; second, to motivate and teach the parents through the questions themselves; and third, to form the basis of a program assessment. The survey had twenty-six questions. Questions 1-4 gathered names of child, parents, and the person completing the survey.³ Question 26 listed the dates for the monthly baptism preparation classes, so the parents could register for one of them. The remaining questions were divided into three categories: knowledge of the faith, practice of the faith, and opinion questions focused on the desire and commitment of the parents. An analysis of the data in each question area is below.

Questions 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, and 16 were faith knowledge questions with right/wrong answers.

³ The contact information gathered in Questions 1-4 was compared to the family baptism registration form to ensure that the names of parents and child were spelled correctly.

- While thirteen of fourteen respondents knew that there are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church, only four of thirteen were able to accurately identify the three sacraments necessary for initiation. This led the present author to strengthen catechesis on the unity of initiation through the three sacraments and the importance of lifelong learning.
- With regard to knowledge of baptism, eleven of fifteen were able to correctly identify the key elements of water, oil and a candle as used in a baptism, though all respondents selected at least water. No one correctly answered Question 15, which listed six possible results of baptism. This was probably because sixty percent of respondents to this questions said that baptism, “Fully initiates them into the Church,” which further reflected the lack of knowledge regarding initiation.⁴
- Other knowledge questions received good responses. All respondents correctly identified the Trinity as comprising of three persons, and eighty percent correctly answered question fourteen on identification of books of the bible. Additionally, in Questions 12, thirteen respondents referred to at least one bible story that included water. All but one parent said it was true that they were “responsible for bringing my child up in the Catholic faith.”⁵

Questions 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, and 24 provided information on the participants’ actual practice of the faith.

- In Question 17, ten respondents of fifteen said they went to Mass once a week and five said they went once a month. The rate for weekly attendance in this sample is three to four times greater than the national averages as reported by CARA,⁶ whereas the number responding “once a month” was similar to the national averages.
- All fifteen respondents to Question 19 indicated that their friends knew they were Catholic. This response suggests, but does not prove, that parents lived their faith in a way that demonstrated they were Catholic. This could be considered a positive sign in light of the current focus on the New Evangelization in the Catholic Church today.⁷

⁴ Given that the restoration of the order of the sacraments of initiation in the RCIA is somewhat recent, it is understandable that these Catholic families did not have a good understanding of initiation.

⁵ The present author worked specifically with the one family who incorrectly answered this question, and their final evaluation survey responses indicated that their commitment to raising their child in the faith had grown as a result of the program.

⁶ Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA), *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, CARA, 2008), 16. See also Chapter One.

⁷ See Cardinal Donald Wuerl, *New Evangelization: Passing on the Catholic Faith Today* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013).

- Twelve of fourteen respondents indicated that they prayed daily; two indicated they prayed at least every week. Data for Question 22 in Appendix Q lists the significant variety of responses regarding how the couples prayed. This having been said, two respondents indicated that they “never” talk to their spouse about God and the impact of faith on their life, and only six of eleven said they did so weekly or more.

Questions 5, 7, 11, 12, 20, 23 and 25 were opinion questions. Responses indicated that parents in the program were both desirous and committed to the task of living the faith and raising their children as Catholics.

- Of the thirteen respondents who answered Question 5, twelve either strongly agreed or agreed that they wanted to grow in their own faith through the program. This is slightly higher than the thirteen of fifteen respondents who indicated on Question 25 that raising their child in the faith was very important to them.
- All thirteen respondents to Question 11 indicated that, “As parents we will teach our children about Jesus” and “We will bring them to religion classes at the parish.”

The responses to the open-ended Question 20, “Why do you want your child to be baptized?” are worth listing in full and as entered in the survey, since they clearly reflect the desire and initiative of the parents in the program. This desire and initiative, as discussed in Chapter Three, is an essential element of baptism.⁸

- To be cleansed of the original sin and to grow up spiritually.
- We want N. to be baptized in order to remove original sin, make her a new creature, and belonging to Christ.
- To start her life as a Catholic.
- Catholic practice, ability to see God in after life.
- I want to raise my children in the Catholic Church.
- Bring them up in the Catholic faith, the faith I grew up in and believe in.
- Giving back to Christ.
- To follow in the faith that we were raised with, and have a relationship with God.

⁸ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, 2, 3 and 5 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 366-367. Hereafter RBC and *Rites*.

- Cleanse his original sin and make him a Christian.
- To initiate him into the church.
- Wash away original sin and welcome them to the Catholic family.
- Because we are Christians and we want our child to share the same faith we have.
- A first step to growing to know God in her life.
- I want her to become and stay a good Catholic.
- To initiate our child into the Catholic faith and home.

Baptism Preparation Classes

Ten baptism preparation classes were conducted during the project period. In addition to the fifteen families in the sample, seventeen other families attended one of the classes and are identified in this chapter by a letter. These families are those who did not complete the essential steps within the intervention timeframe, dropped out, or were from another parish. They are mentioned only for the purposes of comparison to the project sample or when their comments or actions had a specific effect on the project sample. Fifty-seven adults and thirty-one infants/children (all under the age of four) attended the classes in total.

Class Number	Parents in program, by couple code	Additional couples present (not in program sample)	Adults present	Children/infants present	Team members present
1	3	None	2	1	1
2	7	G, I, K	7	4	3
3	15	None	2	0	2
4	5, 12	F	3	1	2
5	1, 2	Q	5	5	3
6	14	None	1	1	2
7	6, 9	B, V	10	6	3
8	8	D, M, N	8	3	2
9	10, 11, 13	E	8	4	2
10	4	C, L, P, R, S, T	11	6	3
Total:	15	17	57	31	

Table 1. Attendance Data for Baptism Preparation Classes.

Prior to each class, the present author reviewed each registered couple's survey results to establish a baseline understanding of their knowledge, practice and passion for the faith. In

addition, the present author reviewed pertinent information about the couple, such as the number of children or details from earlier conversations. The objectives of the classes, as described in Chapter Three and reflected in the class design, were to prepare parents for the celebration of the baptism of their child and to fulfill the commitments made during the rite. The classes were administered according to the design, and their effectiveness was assessed in the evaluation process detailed in Chapter Five. Below is a brief overview of specific interactions with parents during each class.

Class One: Couple 3. All knowledge questions on the survey were answered correctly, though the couple indicated on the same survey that they attended Mass only “once a month” and that “neither of us is really active.” In an e-mail prior to the class, the father stated, “With the birth of N., I hope and plan to get to church more and to bring her up Catholic. I always feel great when I attend Church.” During the class, the present author asked the father to describe in more detail what he felt during Mass, but he was unable to do so; however, he reiterated feeling good at Mass and wanting to go more, which was significant for him to say in front of his wife who was, to use his words, “not an overly religious person.”

Class Two: Couples 7, G, I and K. Couple 7’s survey reflected good passion for, and knowledge of, the faith. However, the couple indicated that they only attended Mass monthly, and so the importance of regular participation in Mass was highlighted during the class. Couple 7 was more engaged in the class than other couples, two of whom were from another parish.

Class Three: Couple 15. In their pre-meeting with the pastor, the couple agreed to work with him to have their marriage blessed in the Church. In Question 18, the mother indicated that she was active but her husband was “not so much” and this became apparent when the mother said during the class that she had been to confession the week before and reported that her

husband had said, somewhat abruptly, “I don’t have to go; I’ve done nothing wrong!” This opened the door for a conversation about sin, reconciliation and forgiveness, and the present author catechized using some examples from his own experience. During this discussion, the father’s body language relaxed significantly and, from that point on, he was much more involved in the conversation. At the end of the session, the father expressed commitment to the baptism preparation process and agreed to use the take-home materials. He said, “Yes, I want to do this.”

Class Four: Couples 5, 12, and F. Couple 12’s survey expressed excellent knowledge, faith activity, and desire. Couple 5’s survey did not. When asked about their own recollections or understanding of baptism, the father of Couple 5 stated, “I chose to be Catholic when I was twelve so it was a powerful moment for me, deciding to be Catholic.” At the request of the present author, this parent described his baptism in detail, and since it took place in Africa and was culturally different, the account engaged the group. It provided an opportunity for discussion about parental initiative in the RBC given that infants do not make choices. In this way, a key catechetical objective of the class was introduced and discussed in the context of a life experience of one of the learners, thereby making the catechesis more effective.

Class Five: Couples 1, 2, and Q. During this class, Couple 1 and 2 demonstrated deep faith and good knowledge which reflected their survey responses. The father in Couple 2 who was baptized when twenty-five years old said, “My mother always made sure that we were baptized at Easter.” This provided an excellent opportunity for catechesis on the link between Romans 6 and baptism, highlighting the paschal nature of baptism and initiation. Again, because he was sharing his experience, all present were more engaged. This led to an extensive time of general faith questions and answers, allowing members of the group to get to know one another better and to deepen their understanding of baptism.

Class Six: Couple 14. The mother attended with her infant. She was active in faith, and her Muslim husband supported her desire to have their second child baptized. She knew the basics of the faith and was committed to bringing her children to Mass. She had the support of other Catholic family members. She expressed feeling bad about missing Mass at Easter since she was in the intensive care unit at hospital just after the birth of her child. This provided an opportunity for pastoral compassion and development of the relationship between the present author, the assistant coordinator, and the mother. When the present author shared a sense of seeing God present in a child at a baptism two weeks before, the mother said she got teary-eyed and stated “My faith is very important to me, and I want my children to be raised Catholic.”

Class Seven: Couples 6, 9, B, and V. The surveys showed that Couples 6 and 9 had good knowledge of the faith and actively practiced their faith. Couple 6 was involved in the parish African community. Couple 9 had participated in baptism preparation in the past for their elder children. The father of Couple V became upset during the class about the pastor’s encouragement to use parish envelopes, saying that this was only so the pastor could “check up on me going to Mass.” The present author spoke to the father after the class and clarified the purpose of envelope usage; however, the family did not continue in the program.

Class Eight: Couples 8, N, M, and D. The pastor asked couples to think about one element of their own childhood experience that had built faith in them. The answers included prayers before bed, attending Catholic schools, grace before meals, and Couple 8 said, “my parents took me to Mass every Sunday.” This question provided an introduction to the class section in which couples reflected on what was significant in their own experience as a child.

Class Nine: Couples 10, 11, 13, and E. Surveys reflected good faith knowledge and practice for all couples present. During discussion, the mother of Couple 11 said, “My mother

showed us that God is everywhere in life; she is why we are Catholic.” This statement reflected a deep commitment to raising their child in the faith on the part of this couple. Another statement that reflected mature faith was made in this class: “I want God in my life to help me with challenges and I want my children to know God can help them too.”

Class Ten: Couples 4, C, L, P, R, S, and T. Most of the couples in this large class contacted the parish at the end of the project timeframe, and, therefore, did not complete enough steps to be included in the program sample. The mother of Couple 4, when asked about memories from her childhood, stated, “I didn’t have to have my father tell me to pray, because I saw him pray.” This compelling line provided an opportunity to discuss the important role of parents in witnessing a living, explicit and fruitful faith to their children.⁹ This mother, in the survey and class, demonstrated deep commitment to the Catholic faith.

Baptisms

The present author attended the baptisms of Couples 2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, and 14. All couples were called during the week before to encourage them to be prayerful and to fully participate in the rite. They were also asked if they had any questions. It was clear to the present author that the couples were pleased to see him at the baptisms. Five baptisms took place during Masses, and the experience of these prompted the pastor, with the encouragement of the present author, to make infant baptism at a parish Eucharistic liturgy normative. This was, in part, as a result of the baptism of the child of Couple 8, which was attended by at least forty family

⁹ See Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), 72.

members and friends who were well dressed, reverential, and participative in the liturgy. The joy of this family and their presence and participation in the Eucharist had a positive impact on the worshipping community.¹⁰

At the baptism of the child of Couple 2, the present author served as proxy for the godfather since the father's brother was in Africa and could not be present. The mother closed her eyes a number of times during prayers in the rite. As was the case in many of the baptisms, the father was constantly smiling and communicated a sense of joy.

Home Visits for Mystagogy

An important element of this new baptism preparation program was the home visit for mystagogy after the baptism of the child. The present author completed fifteen mystagogy sessions with parents, thirteen of which took place in the family home and two at the parish. The visits followed the agenda and outline in Appendix L, which is aligned with the design elements described in Chapter Three. The depth and quantity of discussion during these visits was greater than during the pre-baptism classes for three reasons. First, the conversation was between the present author and the parents only. Second, the parents felt more relaxed in their own home. And third, after the baptism, the parents could talk about their actual experience.

After beginning with small talk and an opening prayer, the couples shared what they remembered from the baptism, prompted by the questions and statements used by St. Ambrose of

¹⁰ An additional factor in encouraging baptisms during Masses was a comment made by a mother in the program (Couple 11) during a mystagogy visit, after the baptism of her child during a Sunday Mass. "People come up to me at the 9 a.m. Mass and ask me how the baby is doing; I like that, and it is nice to start to get to know people." Couple 13 also indicated an instance in which a young parishioner came up to them at a parish festival weeks after the baptism to congratulate them in person and ask after the baby.

Milan. As the present author directed the conversation to specific actions of the rite, actions on the part of parents as well as the essential rite, additional and often more significant comments were made about the parents' experience and faith. Some of the comments from the parents are below. For example, during a visit to the home of Couple 4, the father said, "I remember carrying my baby to the altar and thinking, 'I'm bringing her to God as a gift.'" The present author responded by reiterating that baptism is fulfilled in the Eucharist,¹¹ and that it is the parents' responsibility, in collaboration with the parish, to complete their child's sacramental initiation. Below are some other verbatim comments:¹²

- I haven't been to a Catholic baptism before and didn't know we had to do all that stuff like walking down the aisle, where to stand and so on. This comment reflected, in part, the intention of the program design to not tell the parents too much about the actions of the rite before its celebration, so that they could see some elements of the rite as new or surprising.
- I felt a real joy – I was so happy to have N. baptized. I just felt joyful.
- I noticed the cloth, the white strip of cloth that you put over N. after the baptism – I thought about that because we don't do that in my country. It reminded me of my own baptism, that I made a choice when I was twelve years old to become a Catholic.
- I asked my wife not to wash N.'s hair so I could smell the oil on her for days and I smelled it a lot!
- I remember Father talking about sins being washed away during baptism and I looked over at N. and said, 'She hasn't sinned – she is just a baby!' but then I remembered the original sin and realized that she was being cleansed of my sin, of her mother's sin and all sin. This was good.

¹¹ See RBC, 68 (*Rites*, 1:390).

¹² These quotations reflect, to the greatest extent possible, the exact words of the parents as transcribed from the memory of the present author right after the visits. Where a child's name was used, it has been replaced with N.

- When we went over to the baptism I felt the power of God – a real power there and God was present as we did the baptism. I was very happy. I know God was there with power. I could feel it.
- They put oil on her head and chest.” While not a significant comment in itself, it should be noted that this couple failed to identify oil as a symbol used in baptism in the opening survey. Their faith knowledge grew through the process.
- I felt God rushing through me every time the priest said N.’s name – it was a powerful feeling!
- Since class we started going to Mass every week, 7:30 a.m., and I’m praying every day. Every night I pray with N. (husband), but I’m praying the rosary when I feed N.
- I got goosebumps when he put the white cloth on; there was something happening then.
- I remember making the oath to raise N. Catholic – the promise we made before the baptism, and I was like, ‘Oh my God, I don’t know if I can do this! God please help me to do this, I’m going to need your help!’
- Just before the priest put oil on N.’s head I noticed that he stopped and breathed out slowly, and I felt a huge sense of peace come down on N., and I felt the presence of God. I’ve never experienced that before.
- I haven’t seen my father since 1995 and my godfather since 1993, and they came to the baptism – it was amazing; my Mom couldn’t be there but my Dad and I mended fences and he has been calling a lot from (foreign location).
- He (the infant being baptized) was ready; he was engaged and looking around and I know he was saying to us, ‘I’m ready! Let’s do this!’
- I was surprised how emotional I was – I was crying through the whole thing.
- From the godfather, brother of the mother of the child: I felt like N. was coming into the Church with the whole community there (this baptism was during Mass) and I was happy that she wasn’t going to be alone in her life; she was becoming part of the Catholic family all across the world, with the same sacraments.
- That’s my job – to get my children baptized and be Christian and raise them well. It’s not easy, but in the home I try to be a good example; I’ve learned that kids learn by example.

These comments, reflecting various elements of faith growth in the lives of the parents as a result of the celebration of the rite, were followed by specific mystagogical catechesis by the

present author. While some comments are simple and not particularly theological, they all reflect a significant memory of an important event in the life of their child. Sharing this memory with the present author and their spouse helped solidify such memories and place them in context. Parents were encouraged to remember what they experienced and to share it with their children later in life.

At one visit to the home of a four-year old child who had been baptized, the present author helped the child to make the sign of the cross during the closing prayer. This modeled for the parents their responsibility to teach and raise the child in the faith, which was important given that the father was not Catholic and the mother had little knowledge of and practice of the faith as indicated in her survey and during the visit.

The second part of the mystagogical visits included conversations regarding how the Church can help families in their task of raising their children to mature adulthood. The list found in the agenda, in Appendix L, provided ideas for this conversation. A significant number of families asked about Catholic or church run childcare options.¹³ Many wanted information on Catholic schools. In one conversation, a father was clearly interested in the present author's standard comment that the parish, and especially the pastor, had resources to help couples struggling in their marriage. The conversation, while not direct, indicated that the father appreciated this and that he may be thinking of speaking to the pastor about challenges in the marriage. The present author spent significant time talking with him about family life and balancing the responsibilities of marriage and family. During side conversations at other visits,

¹³ During one visit, a mother asked, "Can the Church do something in an evening, with childcare, so that I can get out with my husband, just for a few hours?" This was discussed with the pastor later.

challenges such as unemployment, difficult pregnancies, and finances were discussed. The context of a home visit provided opportunities for the present author to minister to families.

In two discussions in separate homes, parents said that they felt alone in the work of raising small children. The present author used this as an opportunity to encourage the families to engage in parish activities for families, particularly the upcoming parenting sessions at the parish which included time for fellowship with other couples with young children. Parents also mentioned the difficulty of participating in Mass with little children.¹⁴

Parish Parenting Workshops

The last element of the program, the large group session, was first held in the summer of 2013 from 1:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. in the parish Youth Center. Eighty letters of invitation were sent to the parishioners who had had a child baptized in the parish within the past three years. In addition, the present author sent a copy of the letter via e-mail to all couples in the program and called each of them personally. The event was staffed by the pastor, the present author, two office staff who prepared and served the lunch, two parish teenagers who oversaw the childcare room, and a representative of the parish pre-school. In addition, a professional child-reading specialist, with prior work experience as a teacher in a Catholic school, delivered a presentation on developing basic reading skills for infants and toddlers. Seven parish families attended, five of whom were participants in the project – Couples 2, 7, 12, 14, and 15. There were nine young

¹⁴ One program participant, commenting on her Mass participation, said, “I go sometimes, but I can’t take the kids – I just can’t. I’ve been in that room at the back before and the kids just go wild and I don’t get anything out of it. I go with my Mom sometimes. My husband doesn’t go.”

children present. The event followed the outline in Appendix P which reflected the design described in Chapter Three.

After welcome, introductions and grace, couples ate lunch together and the present author ensured that no couple ate alone. Children were seated at a special table monitored by the teens. Lunch went longer than expected due to vibrant conversations among couples who clearly enjoyed having a chance to speak with other young families in a safe and secure environment. After lunch, couples moved to the couches at the end of the room for the main presentation. The present author introduced the reading and language skills workshop by explaining how Jesus is the Word of God, with references to John 1:1 and Genesis 1. Children need to learn words, language and reading to be able to, in part, encounter God through the word, both written and proclaimed. The outside presenter engaged families with simple children's books and included elements of song, dance, and dramatic reading along with data on the importance of reading and how parents can develop good habits in their children. Parents were engaged and enjoyed the activities and interaction. The presenter gave each couple a children's book and had a drawing for them to win some extra books. The representative of the parish pre-school gave a brief presentation and encouraged parents to consider enrolling their children when they were three-years old.

At the end of the session the present author presented some basic tips to live the faith at home and how the parish can help. Each couple received a book of prayers, a small crucifix, and a bible from the parish. The pastor closed the afternoon with prayer and a blessing. It was interesting to note that most couples stayed after the close, simply talking with each other and staff.

While the number of attendees was low, those who attended gave positive informal feedback and asked if there would be further sessions. The present author, working with the pastor, arranged for a four-session follow up series in the fall with the same external presenter returning and leading interactive workshops on developing math, music, and reading skills. The letter of invitation to these workshops is found in Appendix O. Each followed the above format and was well received by participants. Couples 6 and 4 attended one or more of the workshops in this series and were joined by a number of the couples from the first session and other parishioners. On average, each session had about ten attendees. Of the seven couples in the project sample who attended at least one session, four attended more than one. While this sample size was small, these learning and fellowship building events were well received by the parents. One couple who attended multiple workshops said, “It was good to meet other couples with young children. The protestants say that Catholics don’t have fellowship, but we do and that event was great to meet other parents.”

Near the end of the project intervention period, the present author sent the fifteen couples a link to the final program evaluation survey. The survey and response data are found in Appendix Q and its design and results are detailed in Chapter Five. Six couples completed the survey within a week of receiving the link. The remaining couples completed the survey after a reminder phone call from the present author. It should be noted that the program design continued to form the basis for the baptism preparation program at Church of the Resurrection after the conclusion of the project.

Chapter Five

Evaluation

An essential element of any pastoral project is evaluation, the process of determining the value of the project and its contribution to ministry. Evaluation aims at determining the extent to which the initial objectives were met through implementation. It also provides suggestions for how the project design and implementation can be improved in the future. The National Academy for Academic Leadership states that, “Evaluation uses information based on the credible evidence generated through assessment to make judgments of relative value.”¹ Assessment is the process of determining the current state of affairs before and after the program, so that an evaluation can be made based upon data or evidence. To fully evaluate the project, it was necessary to assess its three major components: the inputs, which were the state of participants entering the program, the available resources, and the program design; the processes used, which include the implementation of the program and fidelity to the design; and the outcome, which was the final state of the participants as compared to their beginning state.

In this evaluation, the present author sought to assess how the parents were different at the end of the program as compared to the beginning and to what extent any change was caused by the intervention. Evidence regarding the inputs, processes, and outcomes was gathered by means of the initial parent assessment survey, verbatim comments from parents during the program, and a final assessment survey completed by parents at the end of the program.

¹ “Assessment and evaluation in higher education: Some concepts and principals.” Taken from the National Academy for Academic Leadership. Accessed from <http://www.thenationalacademy.org/readings/assessandeval.html> September 3, 2013

Without goals, there can be no assessment. The goal of this project was to design, implement, and assess a home-based baptism preparation program that sought to accomplish the six objectives listed in the Introduction.² The evaluation was done within the context of these specific program objectives. Some of the objectives assessed were process objectives and some were outcome objectives.

The initial survey, described in Chapter Three, provided data for the analysis of the primary program input, the initial state of the parents coming into the program with regard to their knowledge of the faith, their commitment to it, and their practice.³ Originally, the final survey was intended to repeat all the questions of the initial survey. While the initial survey did provide data on the state of participants entering the program, the sample size of fifteen was too small for a statistically valid response analysis.⁴ Additionally, the unit of analysis was a couple and not an individual.⁵ As a result, a complete analysis using only the original set of questions both before and after the program was not possible.

It was therefore determined that the best approach to comparing the inputs and outcomes of the program was to use a second survey with new questions aligned to the project objectives,

² Introduction, 1-2.

³ This survey also gave the present author information about each couple, so that the class could be tailored to them, and some of the survey questions themselves intentionally provided the participant with ideas and encouragement regarding knowledge and good faith practice.

⁴ Fifteen completed surveys does not meet the common standards for the central limit theorem that suggests a sample of thirty to thirty-five as the minimum for statistical research. Therefore, the results of one survey offered both before and after the intervention would not statistically prove change in the group as a result of the program. The likelihood of individual anomalies in such a small sample would preclude the possibility of accurately assessing change program wide. Comparing some elements, however, did identify areas in which an individual participant was changed by the program.

⁵ It should also be noted that that couples were also asked to complete the survey “as a couple” meaning that the unit of analysis was not one individual but a couple either working together or one partner speaking for the couple. This precluded an analysis of data from the survey, such as Mass attendance data, with other national surveys in which the unit of analysis is one individual.

yet including some questions from the opening survey to provide a discursive comparison of individual participants before and after the program. Therefore, the final assessment survey included three elements. The questions and data are in Appendix Q.

- Select questions from the pre-survey used to determine if the intervention accomplished change in the participant's faith life and knowledge. Questions 5, 8, 12, 16, and 20 (Questions 25, 24, 21, 22, and 17 respectively from the initial assessment survey). These questions included topics such as the importance to the parents of raising their children in the faith, how often they talked as a couple about God, and habits regarding reading the Bible, prayer and attending Mass.⁶
- Questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 19, and 23 were designed to assess specific program objectives, including process and outcome objectives. These questions asked the parents for their own assessment of how their faith understanding, commitment and activity had changed as a result of participation in the program. A number of these questions included an open ended element that asked parents to explain their response in their own words.
- Questions 4, 14, 17, 18, 21 and 22 were designed to gather suggestions for improvement of the program and parents' overall impressions. Some questions were adapted from the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire 8 of Larsen, Attkinson, Hargreaves and Nguyen⁷ to determine the parents' overall satisfaction with the program.

Questions were asked in random order in the final survey. The online survey system SurveyMonkey was used to implement the assessment. All data were password protected and only accessible to the present author. Analysis of the assessment data is ordered below by program objective. Other program data which proved useful for assessment are included along with the analysis of the final survey questions.

The first program objective was to effectively prepare parents for the baptism of their child. Two questions in the evaluation survey assessed this first objective. Question 2 asked if

⁶ Analysis of these questions did not include the two situations where the initial and final surveys were filled out by a different spouse.

⁷ D.L. Larsen, C.C. Attkisson, W.A. Hargreaves, T.D. Nguyen, "Assessment of Client/Patient Satisfaction: Development of a General Scale." *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 2 (1979). 197-207.

the parents felt “that the program adequately prepared you for the baptism of your child” and all fifteen respondents answered, “Yes, definitely” to the question. This demonstrated clearly that the parents felt that the program prepared them for the baptism of their child. In addition, all fifteen stated in Question 6 that their knowledge about baptism and its meaning had increased as a result of the program.⁸ The father of Couple 6 indicated in Question 2 that “This program helped me to really understand what I was asking the Church for my daughter.” This parent’s response reflected an understanding of the importance of parental initiative in infant baptism.

The second objective was to deepen parental understanding of the commitments made at baptism to raise their child in the faith after the baptism and to deepen their commitment to this essential task. Since the baptism of an infant requires a postbaptismal catechumenate in which the parents play an essential role, the program sought to help parents understand and then commit to raising their children in the faith as called for in the Rite of Baptism for Children (RBC).⁹ This program objective was assessed by means of Questions 5, 9, 15, and 18.

In Question 18, fifteen respondents stated that the program “prepared you to more effectively raise your child in the Catholic Church” with ten saying “Yes, it helped a great deal” and five saying, “Yes, it helped somewhat.” Couple 8 was the only respondent who indicated in Question 9 that her commitment to raise their child as an active Catholic did not grow as a result of this program. All others responded in the positive, with ten saying, “Yes, definitely” and four, “Yes, generally.”

⁸ Ten respondents indicated “Yes, definitely” and five indicated, “Yes, generally.”

⁹ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990).

The survey item “Raising my child in the faith is very important to me” was asked both in the initial survey (Question 25) and the evaluation survey (Question 5). Of the fourteen individuals who responded to this question in both surveys, four said that raising their child in the faith was more important to them after the program than before, with one couple changing their response two gradations, from “Neutral” in the initial survey to “Strongly agree” in the final survey.¹⁰ Two respondents to Question 15 indicated that their understanding of “what it means to raise your child in the Catholic Church” didn’t really grow as a result of the program. However, nine respondents said, “Yes, definitely,” and four said, “Yes, generally.”

One significant comment made by the mother of Couple 5 after Question 9 was, “I obviously planned to raise my child as a Catholic but going through the process of the baptism and preparation I MADE the commitment to raise them as active Catholics.” In response to Question 4, an open-ended question on what parents liked about the program, the father of Couple 1 said, “I liked the follow up by Tom. This constantly reminds us of our duties and responsibilities.” It can be concluded, therefore, that the program intervention definitely helped prepare the majority of parents to raise their children in the faith and deepened their commitment to do so.

Objective 3 was to give parents multiple concrete experiences of prayer, learning, and faith sharing in their own home. Such experiences provided a foundation for the development of long term habits so that these specific expressions of faith would become normative in the family home and assist in the ongoing formation of the newly baptized child, as required by the RBC.

¹⁰ Eight of the remaining respondents indicated both at the beginning and the end of the program that they strongly agreed with this statement.

Measuring the long term faith practice of the parents beyond the program timeframe was not possible. This constraint also applied to assessing their long term Mass participation (see Objective 5 below). However, building understanding and commitment to raising the child in the faith (Objective 2) and giving parents experiences to help them do so was assessed. The data suggest that the program intervention brought value to the participants in these areas.

Assessment of Objective 3, which is a process objective, sought to determine if the program design was effectively implemented as planned and actually provided parents with the aforementioned experiences. Parents in the program were given a total of five handouts to use at home for prayer, learning and faith sharing. Twelve of fifteen individuals noted in Question 7 that they used all or some of the handouts, yet thirteen noted in Question 11 that they found them useful. At the beginning of the program, the present author was unsure whether or not the parents would actually use the take home materials. These two questions show that the materials were used by at least eighty percent of the couples and that they benefited from them.¹¹ This element of the program, therefore, proved valuable and could be replicated in further program designs. It is important to note that the use of take-home handouts is a relatively efficient way to enhance the catechesis and formation of the parents in a program since it does not require ongoing work on the part of the coordinator and is convenient for the parents. Since these resources were well received by the parents their usage could be included in other pastoral programs or expanded in this program.

¹¹ Both Question 7 and 11 intentionally sought data on usage of the take home materials, though in different ways, so as to enhance the validity of the results. Given that both questions provided data showing that at least eighty percent of the respondents used the take-home materials, the data are valid.

In Question 12, which was identical to Question 21 in the initial survey, the mothers of Couples 10 and 13 indicated that they changed from reading a religious book from “Once a month” to “Every day,” yet the mother of Couple 14 changed from “Once a week” to “Once a month.” Other respondents stayed the same. Question 23 in the evaluation survey asked a similar question in which seven of fifteen respondents indicated that they read more from the Bible or a religious book as a result of the program. The increase in spiritual reading grew in almost half the participants, which was a modest, yet significant effect. The father of Couple 9 stated, “I read a lot more as I now carry a pocket bible which makes me read short verses and meditate on them from time to time as I go on with my daily schedule.”

Question 8 in the final survey, which was identical to Question 24 in the initial survey, asked parents, “How often do you talk to your spouse about God and the impact of faith on your life?” When comparing the responses before and after the intervention, five parents indicated they talked more after the program than before. Couple 10 changed from “Never” to “Every day,” but one parent indicated talking slightly less. Question 13 in the final survey asked in a similar manner, “Has the frequency of your conversations about God and the impact of faith in your life as a couple changed as a result of this program?” Ten of fifteen couples indicated in the affirmative, with eight answering, “Yes, definitely.” From the responses to these two questions, it is clear that the program intervention did increase the frequency of conversation about faith in the majority of couples. As the father of Couple 12 said, “We talk about God more often than we use to.” The father of Couple 9 indicated, in answer to open-ended Question 4 regarding what participants liked about the program, that “I really liked the nature of the questions because they gave us the opportunity to share our spiritual life with our partners and by so doing identified those areas we need to improve to become better Christians and good parents.” This analysis

demonstrates that through the program the majority of parents did have specific experiences of prayer, learning and faith sharing in the home.

Objective 4 was to deepen the faith life of the parents through an at-home session of mystagogy to reflect on their experience of the baptism of their child. At the beginning of the program intervention, it was unknown whether or not parents would be willing to participate in the home visit after the baptism of their child. All fifteen couples in the program did participate, and while two of the visits took place at the parish for reasons of convenience, thirteen visits took place in the home as intended in the program design. Four of fifteen respondents to Question 4 specifically indicated that they liked the home visit.

A number of elements of the baptism preparation program sought to help parents grow in their faith. In Question 19, eight respondents answered “Strongly agree” to the statement “My Faith has grown as a result of participation in this program.” Three others answered “Agree,” meaning that a full eighty percent of those surveyed said that they grew in faith. The final survey did not provide qualitative data on parental faith growth specifically as a result of the home visit.¹² The home visits, however, were well received by the parents and provided significant time for conversation regarding faith and their experience of God during the baptism of their child. Chapter Four lists some of the comments made by parents during the mystagogical catechesis element of the visit.¹³ These reflections helped the parents more accurately remember

¹² Though the father of Couple 12 stated in answer to Question 4 that what he liked in the program, “Is that it let us go over our baptism commitment and also gave us the chance to integrate more into the parish community. One very important thing that touched us was the home follow up after the baptism.”

¹³ Chapter Four, 75-76.

what happened during the rite, and the dedicated time for catechesis during the visit provided an opportunity for additional and more in-depth discussion of faith.

Objective 5 was to build commitment to daily prayer and participation in weekly Mass. The initial program survey asked participants about the frequency of their prayer and Mass participation. These same questions were asked in the final evaluation survey to allow for a direct comparison between program inputs and outcomes. Additional questions were asked to see if the parents themselves felt that their practice had changed as a result of the program intervention, so as to enhance the validity of the assessment.

Question 16 asked about frequency of prayer. When responses were compared to the same question from the initial survey (Question 22), only one person indicated a change in prayer frequency. This is not very significant given that in the initial survey twelve of fourteen respondents indicated that they prayed daily. But in Question 10, six respondents said they prayed “A lot more than before,” and an additional three answered, “Somewhat more than before.” This indicates that sixty percent of respondents said they prayed more after the program intervention than before.¹⁴ The father of Couple 9 stated, “Because of the program, I am more conscious of the fact that I have to not only pray for myself but also for my wife and kids and as a dad lead my family to salvation in word and deed.”

In Question 20, a repeat of Question 17 from the initial survey, thirteen respondents indicated their regularity of Mass attendance stayed the same. Ten of these respondents attended weekly both before and after the intervention. The only change was the mother of Couple 7 who changed from “once a month” to “every day,” a change of two gradations. In Question 3,

¹⁴ The remaining six respondents indicated that they prayed the same amount as before.

however, four individuals (including the mother of Couple 7) indicated that they attended Mass more frequently after the program intervention. The father of Couple 9 said, “After the program we are more aware of the responsibility we have as it relates to our child's Christianity thus making it urgent for us to attend Mass more often to pray for ourselves and our child.” Also, the father of Couple 6 stated, “We felt differently after baptism. We felt the church has welcomed us and our daughter in a very special way and we think by going to church more often with our child she will grow stronger in the faith we introduced her to.” The father of Couple 1 said, “At the doctrine, we were made to understand that kids copy from parents. So whatever parents do should be morally oriented so that kids will copy the right thing. Going to church more often will instill in them that same spirit.”

The effect of the program in parental prayer and Mass participation practice was more modest than changes in other areas, partly because those in the program already had significant prayer and attendance practice. Indeed, only four of fifteen respondents started the program attending Mass less than weekly, and at the end of the program it was only three. It is interesting to note that in both these areas the direct questions about habits (Questions 16 and 20) demonstrated minimal change, but when parents were asked if they thought that they had changed behavior as a result of the program, more change was identified (Questions 10 and 3).

Objective 6, a process objective, was to authentically respect the busyness of new parents by utilizing take-home resources that could be completed at the parents' convenience, along with a pastoral visit to the home. The design of the program sought to take into consideration the reality that parents with newborn children tend to be very busy and may have difficulty attending parish events. Take home materials were developed and distributed after the class and the

mystagogy session. Twelve of fifteen individuals noted in Question 7 that they used all or some of the five handouts, and thirteen of fifteen noted in Question 11 that they found them useful.

Question 21 stated the following: “The program included class at the parish, take-home materials, online resources, a home visit, and a parenting workshop. ‘The balance of these elements, some at home and some at the parish, respected the busyness of my life as a new parent.’” Twelve respondents indicated “Strongly agree” and three, “Agree.” This demonstrated that the efforts to design the program in light of the busyness of parents were indeed appreciated. More specifically, the mother of Couple 8 wrote, in answer to the open ended Question 4, “I appreciated being able to prepare at home by complet(ing) the survey online and watching the video. Having the flexibility to be able to do it on our own time was really appreciated with having a new baby.”

The evaluation survey also included questions to assess the parents’ satisfaction with the program, what they liked, and what they think could be improved. With regard to improvements, two comments were provided in response to Question 17. One suggested that there be more class time before the baptism, and another was to include Mass and reconciliation in the program. These are valid considerations. Extending the class time from sixty to seventy five minutes to allow additional time for discussion could be considered for future implementation. While offering the sacrament of reconciliation either before or after the baptism class appears to be a good idea, it could be difficult for the parish priest because the class took place at the same time as a Sunday morning Mass.

When asked in Question 22 how satisfied they were with the program, all fifteen respondents indicated they were “Very satisfied.” All fifteen respondents, one from each of the families in the program, identified at least one element they liked about the program in Question

4.¹⁵ These comments addressed a number of the objectives in the program and are included below.

- I really liked the nature of the questions because they gave us the opportunity to share our spiritual life with our partners and by so doing identified those areas we need to improve to become better Christians and good parents.
- I liked the follow up by Tom. This constantly reminds us of our duties and responsibilities.
- The preparation and follow up.
- The class.
- I appreciated being able to prepare at home by complet(ing) the survey online and watching the video. Having the flexibility to be able to do it on our own time was really appreciated with having a new baby.
- It really felt like we were connected to the church community.
- It was a positive, encouraging experience.
- I felt the preparation class was very good. It provided me with a great sense of what was going to happen the day of and also a good education (reminder) behind the action of baptism.
- The spirituality discussion.
- Is that it let us go over our baptism commitment and also gave us the chance to integrate more into the parish community. One very important thing that touched us was the home follow up after the baptism.
- The program brings the family together because we were prepared for the baptism.
- The program gave me opportunity to meet with other mum and now after Mass, I can stop to say hello to other mothers.
- The follow up from the church.

¹⁵ This was the greatest response rate for all open-ended questions, the next highest being eleven comments for Question 2.

- Genuine interest by the church to have children brought up in the faith, the fact that they took the time to design a short class for this effort, speaks volumes.
- The personal one-on-one attention. Tom was very accommodating.

While the home visits were not specifically focused on program assessment, during the course of the visits the following positive statements were made by participants about the program as a whole.

- Couple 8 said, “I wasn’t expecting this to be so hands on, but this is really great. It is clear that you and Fr. N. have lots of experience. It was more than I expected but I like the personal care and making us feel like our family was important.”
- Couple 1 stated, "It was great; so much better than the other one when N. (an older child) was baptized, because you didn't just talk to us about the baptism itself but taught us what Baptism really is and also how we are supposed to raise our children, what our responsibilities are after the baptism. It wasn't just about the ceremony. You taught us about baptism - what is it and does."
- Couple 14 said, “N. was baptized at Resurrection two years ago and we never did any of this follow up stuff, or the survey or video. It was just a class. I like this – it makes me feel like the Church is more engaged, more alive.”

The essential elements of the program were implemented in accord with the original program design. However, despite significant efforts in marketing and personal invitation, only seven project couples attended one of the events at the parish that focused on parenting skills. While attendance was not a formal requirement of the program, it was hoped that more couples would participate, though it should be noted that four out of the seven couples attended more than one of these events, suggesting that if a parent does attend one session there is a likelihood that they will return.

Analysis of the above assessment data shows that the program did meet the objectives established at the outset. Parents grew in their commitment to and practice of the Catholic faith and in their understanding that their faith life is an important element in raising their children in

the faith. Given the above assessment data, the program intervention has value with regard to the goal of helping parents prepare for the baptism of their child and then living out the promises they make at baptism through good faith practice both at home and in the parish.

Conclusion

The introduction to the *Rite of Baptism for Children* (RBC) states that “After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents...to assist the child to know God,”¹ and during the baptism celebration parents commit to “training him/her in the practice of the faith.”² While the Church assists parents in this task, what happens in the home – the lived faith life of the parents themselves – has lasting and significant impact on the child’s faith development. Regular participation in Mass, engagement in the life of the parish, reflection on liturgical experience, family prayer, adult faith learning in the home, and sharing the impact of faith on daily life provide an environment conducive to the faith growth of a child. These faith practices on the part of parents, along with integration into the parish community, help fulfill their child’s baptism by bringing that child to conversion and mature adult faith as called for by the RBC. This project prepared parents for the baptism of their child and helped them develop good faith practices beneficial to raising their newly baptized child in the Catholic faith.

Ongoing research in the area of infant baptism preparation is important in light of declining infant baptism rates, Mass attendance, and retention rates. For example, thirty-eight percent of Catholics who leave the Church do so before the age of eighteen.³ This is the period during which parents are called by the RBC to live out their faith in such a way that their children themselves grow to mature adult faith.

¹ *The Roman Ritual: Rite of Baptism for Children*, 5,5 in *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1990), 367. Hereafter RBC and *Rites*.

² RBC, 39 (*Rites*, 1:377).

³ Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA), *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, CARA, 2008), 171.

The project included the design, implementation and evaluation of a baptism preparation program with fifteen couples at Church of the Resurrection in Burtonsville, Maryland. The program included six distinct elements centered on the celebration of the baptism of the child. Parents participated in baptismal catechesis using the RBC both before and after the baptism. Mystagogy, as an element of liturgical catechesis, was included in the home visit following the celebration of the sacrament.

In the program final assessment, parents identified an increase in their understanding of and commitment to living out the promises they made at the baptism of their child to raise their child in the Catholic faith after baptism. The program implementation also brought about an increase in the parents' faith practice, with modest positive change in the areas of prayer and Mass participation, and more significant growth in spiritual reading and the frequency of discussions about faith in the home. Eighty percent of participants indicated they grew in their faith as a result of the program. All fifteen respondents to the closing survey said they were "Very satisfied" with the program.

Three elements of the program in particular could contribute to the ongoing development of baptism preparation ministry. In response to the call of the RBC for the visitation of parents seeking baptism for their children,⁴ this program included a home visit which occurred not before but after the celebration of the baptism. This provided parents an opportunity for deeper catechesis on baptism in light of their own experience of the rite. A process of mystagogy, following the model provided by St. Ambrose of Milan, was used during the home visit with a specific focus on elements of the RBC and the commitments made by the parents.

⁴ RBC, 5.1 (*Rites*, 1:367).

Both before and after the baptism, parents were given and used take-home handouts that included elements of prayer and learning. These handouts, along with the usage of an online catechetical video, respected the parents' busyness and helped them develop or deepen habits of prayer and learning in the home.

A final focus of the program was increasing the parents' engagement with the parish community through regular contact with the program coordinator and a closing event on parenting that included meeting other parishioners. On average, each couple had at least four face to face contacts with a representative of the parish as well as a significant number of telephone and e-mail conversations. During the program, relationships were established that continued after the program concluded. Looking ahead, these elements, along with a focus on developing good faith practices, could be included in future baptism preparation programs so as to help parents more effectively celebrate and live out the commitments they made during the baptism for their child.

Baptism requires conversion and is fulfilled in the Eucharist. Infant baptism, therefore, necessarily requires a postbaptismal catechumenate for the child so that he or she grow up to live a mature adult Catholic faith rooted in the sacramental life of the ecclesial community. Parents play an essential role in this formation and, with the godparents and parish, witness faith and make commitments during the rite of baptism. Effective baptism preparation is, therefore, essential to help parents celebrate the rite and, through good faith practice, raise their child to be Catholic adults.

Appendix A
Parish Baptism Registration Form

Child's Name:

Letters Needed

Received

☐ Parish

☐ Godfather

☐ Godmother

Place of Birth:

Date of Birth:

Baptism Date: _____

Date of Baptism:

TBD after letters received

Father's Name:

Celebrant of Baptism:

Mother's Maiden Name:

Godfather:

- ☐ Catholic Sponsor
- ☐ Christian Witness

Godmother:

- ☐ Catholic Sponsor
- ☐ Christian Witness

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Parish:

☐ Class Completed / Date: _____

Appendix B
Program Outline Sent to Parents

“You have asked to have your children baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

From the Rite of Baptism for Children

In the Rite of Baptism, parents make a number of significant promises. The first promise is to raise the child in the Catholic faith, teaching the child to keep God’s commandments to love God and our neighbor. Parents also make a profession of faith in which they reject sin and profess belief in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Before you schedule the baptism of your child, it is important to examine your life. It is necessary to reflect on how you are practicing the Catholic faith and living God’s commandments. One question to start with is: Do I attend Mass faithfully every weekend? Why or why not?

Sacraments are celebrated in the parish that you are currently attending. You should be a registered parishioner with a demonstrated history of sharing your time, talents, and treasure with the parish.

Sometimes circumstances make celebrating a sacrament in your home parish very difficult. Your family may be in the Burtonsville area, but you live in West Virginia. The Church of the Resurrection is willing to work with you to schedule a baptism at our parish in order to meet the needs of your family. We will need a letter from your parish stating that you are an active, registered parishioner. It will also be necessary to take a baptismal preparation class at your parish before scheduling a date at the Church of the Resurrection.

- Baptism Preparation Class is usually the 3rd Sunday of the Month at 10:30 in the Parish Life Center. It is necessary to register in advance of the class. Please be on time or you may need to reschedule.
- To register, please contact Fr. Scott Hahn at shahn@resurrectionadw.org, or 301-236-5200 x11. Fr. Hahn will schedule an appointment to meet with you (usually after one of the Sunday Masses). The meeting will take 15 to 30 minutes.

Appendix C
Template of Initial E-Mail to Parents

Dear N.,

I work with Fr. Scott to assist parents in preparing to have their children baptized at Resurrection. I'm thrilled that you are seeking to have your child baptized and would like to work with you during the process.

Our next class is on **Sunday DATE at 10:30 a.m.** in the parish life center. The entrance is behind the Church around the Greencastle Road side. I'd love to see you then and I encourage you to bring (name of child). Please let me know.

Please find in this e-mail further information about the baptism preparation program at Resurrection. I myself have three young children (6,4,3) and we love Resurrection; all our children were baptized at the parish.

I have developed an online survey and registration form to gather some information and help you prepare for the baptism of your child. There are 25 short questions on the online survey. Please fill out the survey before you come to class if possible - it is really quick.

The registration survey is found at the link below. I encourage you to do it together since there are some good questions that can be useful for a couple to think about and discuss.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Baptism3>

Second, I ask that you watch a short 22 minute video on Baptism which can be found at <http://youtu.be/TBxINH87Uu8> (you may have to paste the link into a browser).

As you watch this, hopefully together, take a little time to think about and discuss with each other the reasons why you want to have your child baptized.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me at (phone number) or respond by e-mail. Thank you and I look forward to seeing you hopefully this Sunday.

Sincerely in Christ,
Tom.
Thomas W. Burnford
Baptism Preparation Coordinator
Church of the Resurrection
301-xxx-xxxx

Appendix D

Pre-Assessment Survey for Parents: Questions and Response Data

Resurrection Baptism Preparation: Initial Survey

1. Name of child to be baptized (if known yet!):	
Answer Options	Response Count
	15
<i>answered question</i>	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0

NOTE: Names were removed to protect confidentiality

2. Father's name:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	15
<i>answered question</i>	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0

NOTE: Names were removed to protect confidentiality

3. Mother's name:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	15
<i>answered question</i>	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0

NOTE: Names were removed to protect confidentiality

4. Name of person filling out this survey (Mom or Dad):	
Answer Options	Response Count
	14
<i>answered question</i>	14
<i>skipped question</i>	1

NOTE: The survey was filled out by 5 dads, 8 moms, one "parents."

NOTE: Names were removed to protect confidentiality

5. I would like to grow in my own faith through the preparation for the baptism of my child						
Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
	10	2	1	0	0	13
<i>answered question</i>						13
<i>skipped question</i>						2

6. How many Sacraments are there in the Catholic Church?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
3	0.0%	0
5	7.1%	1
7	92.8%	13
9	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		1

7. There are many ways to describe Jesus Christ; pick all the ones that mean the most to you			
Answer Options		Response Percent	Response Count
Jesus is the Son of God		100.0%	15
Jesus was a holy and good man who died		53.3%	8
Jesus was a prophet sent by God		33.3%	5
Jesus is God		60.0%	9
Jesus is my friend		80.0%	12
Jesus rose from the dead and is alive, and I know him from the Eucharist and Prayer		80.0%	12
<i>answered question</i>			15
<i>skipped question</i>			0

8. Which of the following is NOT a Sacrament?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Baptism	0.0%	0
Confirmation	0.0%	0
Eucharist	0.0%	0
Funeral	86.7%	13
Reconciliation	13.3%	2
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

9. Which of the following are used in a Baptism? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Water	100.0%	15
Bread	0.0%	0
Oil	73.3%	11
Wine	0.0%	0
Candle	93.3%	14
answered question		15
skipped question		0

NOTE: 11 of 15 respondents correctly identified water, oil and candle as symbols used in baptism.

10. To fully enter or be initiated into the Catholic Church you need which of the following sacraments?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Eucharist	46.1%	6
Holy Orders	0.0%	0
Reconciliation	23.1%	3
Marriage	0.0%	0
Confirmation	69.2%	9
Anointing of the Sick	0.0%	0
Baptism	92.3%	12
answered question		13
skipped question		2

NOTE: Only 4 of 13 respondents correctly identified Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation as necessary for initiation

11. As your child grows up, how will they get to know Jesus and how will they learn about him? Answer all that apply, or add others:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
As parents we will teach our child about Jesus	100.0%	13
They will learn from what they watch on TV	7.7%	1
Our child will learn from the way we live our lives as Catholics	84.6%	11
They will learn by going to Mass each week	92.3%	12
They will learn about Jesus in Public School	7.7%	1
We will bring them to religion classes at the parish	100.0%	13
Other (please specify)		1
answered question		13
skipped question		2

#	Other (please specify)
1	Possibility of Catholic schooling

12. List any Bible stories you can think of that use or talk about water; for example, Noah and the Flood.

Answer Options	Response Count
	13
<i>answered question</i>	13
<i>skipped question</i>	2

#	Response Text
1	Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus splitting a river into two to let people cross, Jesus said also, 'But whoever will drink of the water which I will give him will never be thirsty again.'
2	The baptism of Jesus, the woman at the well, Moses parting the red sea, Jesus calms the storm, the amazing catch of fish
3	Noah, Moses parting the red sea, Jonah and the whale, Jesus turning water into wine
4	Jesus and little children
5	Moses parting the Red Sea, Jesus walking on water
6	The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan
7	Water to wine, washing Jesus feet
8	When Jesus walked on water, Moses separating the sea, and creation of water and separation of the sky
9	Jesus turns water into wine Jesus baptism
10	Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God
11	Changing water into wine, the baptism of Jesus
12	The waters of Jordon that Jesus was baptize, the waters of the red sea
13	Story of the fishermen, Job and the whale story, Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus walking on water and the story of the Israelites crossing the sea on dry land.

13. How many persons are there in the Holy Trinity?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	0.0%	0
2	0.0%	0
3	100.0%	15
4	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>	15	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0	0

14. Which of the following is not the title of a book of the Bible?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Genesis	0.0%	0
Deuteronomy	20.0%	3
Matthew	0.0%	0
Andrew	80.0%	12
Romans	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>	15	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0	0

15. What does the Sacrament of Baptism do to the person being baptized? (answer all that are correct)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Washes away all sins and original sin	93.3%	14
Makes them a member of the Church	66.7%	10
Makes them a priest	0.0%	0
Fully initiates them into the Church	60.0%	9
Gives them the Holy Spirit	53.3%	8
Gives them new life with God	86.7%	13
<i>answered question</i>	15	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0	0

NOTE: No respondents correctly selected all except "Makes them a priest" and "Fully initiates them into the Church."

16. As a Catholic Parent I am responsible for bringing my child up in the Catholic faith		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
True	93.3%	14
False	6.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>	15	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0	0

17. How often do you go to Mass?						
Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Response Count
	0	10	5	0	0	15
<i>answered question</i>						15
<i>skipped question</i>						0

18. When it comes to practicing our faith individually...		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
We are both active	53.3%	8
Mom is active; Dad, not so much!	40.0%	6
Dad is active; Mom, not so much!	0.0%	0
Neither of us is really active.	6.7%	1
Other	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>	15	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0	0

19. Do most of your friends (not so much friends from church) know that you are Catholic?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	15
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

20. There can be many reasons why parents want their child to be baptized. Why do you want your child to be baptized?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	15
<i>answered question</i>	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0

#	Response Text
1	To be cleansed of original sin and to grow up spiritually
2	We want N. to be baptized in order to remove original sin, make her new creature, and belonging to Christ on the soul
3	To start her life as a Catholic
4	Catholic practice, ability to see God in after life
5	I want to raise my children in the Catholic Church
6	Bring them up in the Catholic faith, the faith I grew up in and believe in
7	Giving back to Christ
8	To follow in the faith that we were raised with, and to have a relationship with God
9	Cleanse his original sin and make him a Christian
10	To initiate him into the church
11	Wash away original sin and welcome to the Catholic family
12	Because we are Christians and we want our child to share the same faith that we have
13	A first step to growing to know God in her life
14	I want her to become and stay a good Catholic
15	To initiate our child into catholic faith and home

21. How often do you read from the Bible or a religious book?						
Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Response Count
	1	6	3	0	1	13
<i>answered question</i>						13
<i>skipped question</i>						2

22. How often do you pray?						
Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Response Count
	12	2	0	0	0	14
How do you pray?						12
<i>answered question</i>						14
<i>skipped question</i>						1

#	How do you pray?
1	We pray before going to bed and when we wake up in the morning. We begins with the holy trinity and conclude with our lord prayer
2	On our own, at Church
3	Sign of the cross, chapel and reading the bible
4	Speaking with God asking for strength, forgiveness or thanking him
5	At night before bed, before meals
6	The Lord's Prayer
7	Talk to God silently
8	Ask for forgiveness. Give thanks and praise to God and supplicate
9	Say the rosary daily
10	Say the rosary
11	The divine office which is the prayer of the church
12	Individually and together as a family

23. If someone asked you what you believed as a Catholic you would feel....		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Confident	92.9%	13
Anxious	7.1%	1
Embarrassed	0.0%	0
Scared	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		1

24. How often do you talk to your spouse about God and the impact of faith on your life?						
Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Response Count
	4	2	3	0	2	11
<i>answered question</i>						11
<i>skipped question</i>						4

25. Raising my child in the faith is very important to me.						
Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
	9	4	2	0	0	15
<i>answered question</i>						15
<i>skipped question</i>						0

Appendix E
Outline for Baptism Preparation Class

Monthly Baptism Preparation Class
Resurrection Parish Baptism Preparation Program
Outline and Talking Points for Leader (not for distribution)

Materials:

- Signage to room
- Bible for table, on stand
- Nametags/pens/paper
- Packet for each participant including
 - handout of quotes for class
 - overview of the program handout
 - four take-home prayer activity sheets
- Coffee and donuts
- Bag of toys for children

Objectives:

- To prepare parents to celebrate the Rite of Baptism for their children.
- To have them leave understanding their responsibility to raise their children in the faith after baptism.
- To fully engage them in the baptism preparation program.
- To answer any questions the parents might have.

OUTLINE:

Welcome and Introductions:

- Welcome by Presenter
- Presenter introduction
- Couple introductions (include names, children, parish)

Opening prayer: Read Romans 6:3-5 from Bible, with spontaneous prayer, including intercession for parents/children in the class.

Brief Overview of session:

- List objectives
 - To prepare you for your child's baptism.
 - To prepare you to raise your child in the faith.
- What we are going to cover?
 - What baptism is and what it does.
 - Your role as parents (before, at, and after the baptism), and the Church's expectations.
 - Reflection on water from the Rite.
 - Details of the program and next steps.
- *"Do you have any initial or burning questions or concerns?"*

Catechesis 1: What is baptism and what does it do?

- Basic definition of baptism:
 - Greek word means to plunge or dip, in water.
 - Read words from essential rite, RBC, 60.
 - "Through this sacrament we are born to a new life; we come to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, and so become children of God in Christ Jesus, heirs of heaven, and members of the Church. We are cleansed of original sin and all personal sins, endowed with faith, hope and love, and sealed as members of Christ's kingdom." (The Gift of Faith, Wuerl, p. 229).
- Effects of Baptism:
 - Washing away of original sin, and that which separates us from God.
 - Infusion of the Holy Spirit, adoption as Son/Daughter of God and giving of new life.
 - Incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ, and therefore be united with all Christians.

Discussion on Actions of Parents:

- Discussion question: *"From your own experience or knowledge, can you tell me about any actions that happen during the baptism process? Let's just list anything that happens, whether leading up to the baptism, at the baptism, or after."* List actions of parents before, during and after baptism, starting with those mentioned by parents; respond to each simply by identifying WHO does the action. Examples include:
 - Up to this point parents have: Called the parish, taken the survey, watched the video, met with pastor, showed up today, etc.
 - At the baptism: Bring the child, ask for baptism, name the child, sign the child, hold the child, make commitments during the rite (read from handout), profess faith, renounce Satan, and pray.
- Discussion question: *"What do you remember from your childhood that impacted your faith? What faith activity happened in your family when you were a child?"* Use as a lead in to actions parents can take to raise their children in the faith; examples include:

- Take them to Mass and encourage participation
- Teach them the basic truths about God and the Church
- Pray (morning, before meals, night)
- Be involved in the life of the parish
- Read scripture
- Witness to good decision making/morals

Catechesis 2: Conversion, Parent's Initiative, and Apostolate.

- Adult baptism is the theological norm because it starts with an encounter with Jesus, choice, and catechesis; briefly explain initiation in the early Church
- So for infants the conversion comes after – therefore parents ...
 - must commit to “training him/her in the practice of the faith”
 - are responsible for teaching and witnessing the faith to their children over the next 20 plus years
 - must own the initiative, the commitment, the witness (we are just here to help you in that role)
 - must practice regular faith habits (prayer, sacraments, sharing, learning, etc.)
 - must bring the child to the church to complete initiation through sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist.
- Baptismal apostolate of the laity: Read Matthew 28:16-20 and explain fundamental purpose and mission of all the baptized, including the parents:
 - Call to transform the world in which we live into the kingdom of God
 - Call to serve the poor and needy out of generosity
 - Call to evangelize others, pass on and witness to the faith
 - Think about how children learn: From witness, not so much commands; your mature adult faith (which is living, explicit and fruitful) is what will have the most impact on your children.

Question for Faith Sharing/Discussion (for each couple): *“What does it mean to you that you are baptized as a Catholic? What impact does it have on your life? Discuss this with your spouse for ten minutes.”*

Catechesis 3: Blessing of Water from the Rite.

- Ask parents to list uses of water in everyday life (clean, drink, grow, etc.).
- Why is water important? What happens if you have too little (die) or too much (drown)?
- Slow reading of Blessing of Water from Rite (handout)
- Walk through the bible references in the blessing
- This is an example of what we want you to do during the rite of baptism – pay attention to what is said, what happens, what you feel and be open to what God might be saying to you at that moment.
- Discussion question: *“How do you feel about your water being poured over your child?”*
“How would you feel if we did it by full immersion?”

Final details:

- Godparents: If not from parish, get letters sent
- Once letters have been sent, contact parish to schedule the baptism
- Take time before the baptism to...
 - use prayer / learning handouts as a couple
 - celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation
 - pray for and with your infant
- On the day of the baptism:
 - reverence – encourage your family
 - arrive on time – parents and child must be there 15 minutes before scheduled baptism time
 - photography/video: designate one person
 - reserved seating if baptism is at Mass
- Be prayerful and attentive during the rite; afterwards we will visit your home and ask....
 - What did you see?
 - What did you hear?
 - What did you feel?
 - What do you remember?

Questions?

Closing Prayer: Read Matthew 28:6-20, and blessing if pastor present.

Appendix F
Class Handout: Overview of Program

Church of the Resurrection:
Baptism Preparation Program

*“You have asked to have your children baptized. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking? **From the Rite of Baptism for Children***

Key Information About Having Your Child Baptized:

Welcome to Church of the Resurrection’s Baptism Preparation Program! We are thrilled that you want to bring your child, your precious baby, to the Sacrament of Baptism and look forward to working with you and your family as you prepare for this most special encounter with God. If you have any questions at any time along the way, please don’t hesitate to call or e-mail! Some key points are as follows:

1. The Baptism Preparation Program at Resurrection is designed to help you, as parents, to not only prepare for the baptism of your precious child, but also to help you be ready for the journey of raising your child in the faith. The program has a number of simple steps both before and after the baptism. These steps are listed in detail on the next page.
2. Are you a parishioner at Church of the Resurrection? If not, please know that Sacraments are usually celebrated in the parish that you are currently attending, but we know that sometimes circumstances make celebrating a sacrament in your home parish difficult. Your family may be in the Burtonsville area, but you may live in West Virginia. We are happy to work with you to schedule a baptism at our parish in order to meet the needs of your family but we will need a letter from your home parish, where you usually attend Mass, stating that you are an active, registered parishioner. It will also be necessary to take a baptismal preparation class at your parish before scheduling a date at the Church of the Resurrection.

Before you schedule the baptism of your child, it is important to examine your life. It is necessary to reflect on how you are practicing the Catholic faith and living God’s commandments. One question to start with is: Do I attend Mass faithfully every weekend? Why or why not?

In the Rite of Baptism, parents make a number of serious promises. The first promise is to raise the child in the Catholic Faith, teaching the child to keep God’s commandments to love God and our neighbor. Parents also make a profession of faith, in which, they reject sin and profess belief in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- Baptism Preparation Class is usually the 3rd Sunday of the Month at 10:30 in the Parish Life Center. It is necessary to register in advance of the class.
- To register, please contact Fr. Scott Hahn at shahn@resurrectionadw.org, or 301-236-5200 x11. Fr. Hahn will schedule an appointment to meet with you (usually after one of the Sunday Masses). The meeting will take 15 to 30 minutes.
- Baptisms are scheduled for the First Saturday of the Month at 11:30 a.m. and the Second Sunday of the Month at 1:30 p.m. If you would like to have your baptism take place during a Mass please contact Fr. Hahn directly.

Steps in the Process and Contact Information:

- Registration and Initial Survey www.surveymonkey.com/s/Baptism1
- Meet with Fr. Scott Hahn, Pastor (call below number to set up appointment)
- Regular attendance at Mass and at-home prayer, using resources provided
- If not registered at Church of the Resurrection, get a letter from your home parish granting permission to have baptism at Resurrection; contact your parish to get this letter
- Get sponsor letter for Godparents
- Watch short video on Baptism, available at <http://youtu.be/TBxINH87Uu8>
- Attend Baptism Preparation Class at the Parish, Third Sunday of the month in Room 113 of the Parish Center
- Schedule the baptism of your child by calling 301-326-5200
- Continue at-home preparation
- The Baptism of your child!
- Follow up visit at your home to talk about your experience at the Baptism
- Attend one of the quarterly welcome sessions at the parish for new families

Contact information:

- Fr. Scott Hahn, Pastor: 301-236-5200
- Tom Burnford, Coordinator: 301-xxx-xxx or tburnford@adw.org

Church of the Resurrection: **Baptism Preparation Program**

“Go and make disciples of all nations!”

Parents – know what you are committing to!

At the baptism, the presider will say:

“You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Parents will then respond: “We do.”

What is the Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an “Efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1131*

Seven Sacraments

- ❖ Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist
- ❖ Service: Marriage, Orders
- ❖ Healing: Reconciliation, Anointing of the sick

What is Baptism?

“The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1278.*

What Does Baptism Do?

“Through this sacrament we are born to a new life; we come to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, and so become children of God in Christ Jesus, heirs of heaven, and members of the Church. We are cleansed of original sin and all personal sins, endowed with faith, hope and love, and sealed as members of Christ’s kingdom.” *The Gift of Faith, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, p. 229*

Blessing of the Water

"Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs, which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

In baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness.

The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of baptism, that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.

Through the waters of the Red Sea you led Israel out of slavery, to be an image of God's holy people, set free from sin by baptism.

In the waters of the Jordan your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Spirit.

Your son willed that water and blood should flow from his side as he hung upon the cross.

After his resurrection he told his disciples: "Go out and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptism into Christ

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans:

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

Romans 6:3-5

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to you that you are baptized as a Catholic?
- What impact does your faith have on your life?
- Why do you want your child baptized?

The Great Commission

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28: 16-20

Church of the Resurrection: **Baptism Preparation Program**

The Apostles Creed

Read the Apostles Creed slowly and quietly to yourself.

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

Pay attention to any line or lines that strike you as you reflect on the creed. Share this with your spouse and talk about what the line or lines mean to you.

Church of the Resurrection: **Baptism Preparation Program**

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Prayer Activity: Set aside five minutes of quiet time, free from distractions, and say this ancient prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

Now do the following:

1. Thank God for one good thing in your life
2. Ask God to bless and help one person you know who is struggling
3. Ask God to help you with one specific challenge you face
4. Finish your prayer by saying the Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Church of the Resurrection: **Baptism Preparation Program**

A Prayer for Your Child/Children

As a couple take some time to pray together for your child or children, thanking God for them and asking God to bless them. Use the below prayer taken directly from the Baptism of your child – and said when the child's candle was lit from the Easter candle during the Rite of Baptism.

Read this passage from the Rite of Baptism to yourself quietly:

“Parents and Godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. These children of yours have been enlightened by Christ. They are to walk always as children of the light. May they keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts. When the Lord comes, may they go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.”

Together Pray this prayer for your child/children:

Lord God, we thank you so much for the gift of our child. Thank you for making (child) a new creation through Baptism and for coming to dwell in his/her heart.

May (child) walk always as a child of the light and keep the flame of faith alive in his/her heart. Help us to witness to your light in our lives every day.

When you come again O Lord, may (child) go out to meet you with all the saints in the heavenly Kingdom.

After this prayer, take a moment as a couple to list some of the qualities you see in your child, how they bring you joy and specific features, actions, or traits that you love. Do this in a spirit of thanksgiving to God who gave you your child.

Church of the Resurrection: Baptism Preparation Program

St. Ambrose of Milan: The Big Picture

The below passage is taken from a homily given in about the year 390 A.D. (that is, about 1600 years ago!) by St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, Italy. He was talking to a group of adults who had just come in to the Catholic Church – they had been baptized as adults only a few weeks earlier and here he explains to them clearly and precisely what God’s plan was and is.

In the beginning our Lord made man so that he would never die, so long as he never tasted sin. But he committed sin; he became subject to death; he was cast out of paradise. But the Lord, who wished his gifts to last forever and to destroy all the wiles of the serpent and to cancel out all harm it has done, first passed sentence on man: “You are dust and to dust you shall return,” and so he made man subject to death. The sentence was divine, and it could not be remitted by human kind. The remedy was found. It was that man should die and rise again. Why? So that what had formerly served as a sentence, should now serve as a gift. And what is this but death? “How can this be?” you ask. Because death, when it comes, puts an end to sin. When we die, we do indeed stop sinning. It seemed, then, that the sentence was being served; because man, who had been created to live forever as long as he did not sin, now became mortal. But in order that God’s gift might continue forever, man died but Christ invented the resurrection, in order to restore the heavenly gift which had been lost through the deceit of the serpent. Both death and resurrection, therefore, are to our advantage: for death is the end of sin and the resurrection is the reformation of our nature.

Edward Yarnold, S.J. *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*.
(Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 116.

Reflect on this passage together and ask yourselves, “Do I know this to be true in my life?” End your discussion by together saying the Our Father.

Appendix L
Agenda and Outline for Mystagogy Home Visit

Post-Baptism Mystagogy Session for Parents in Their Home

Resurrection Parish Baptism Preparation Program
Outline and Talking Points for Leader

Objectives:

- Practice postbaptismal catechesis for the parents so they can understand what happened to their child, remember it, and incorporate God's work into their lives.
- Provide parents with additional experiences of prayer, learning and discussion.
- Provide parents with resources, encouragement and specific next steps in raising their child in the faith, and help deepen their commitment to their role.
- Demonstrate, through the visit, that faith and the Church have a place in the home and that discussion of faith can be a regular part of life.

Arrival and Welcome:

- Thank parents for welcoming him into their home
- Opening Icebreaker question: "How are things going?" and "How is N. doing?"
- Lists objectives for the hour.

Begin with Prayer:

- Give thanks for the baptism of the child and the family – use their names.
- List graces received at baptism:
 - Washing away original sin.
 - Infusion of the Holy Spirit and adoption as child of God.
 - Incorporation into Body of Christ, the Church.
- Invite parents to add intercessions.

Catechesis: Preparation for Mystagogy:

- St. Ambrose said...
 - "What was it we did on Saturday?"
 - "Think of the place where you made your promise."
 - "Think whom you saw, think what you said. Recall it carefully."
- Explain: "You saw what is seen, but not what is done." Methodology from Satterlee:
 - What do you remember? What did you experience?
 - You were actively involved – remember what you actually did
 - What did you feel? What did you sense? – smell, hear, touch?
 - This is what really happened as you did this – the theological meaning
 - These are the implications for you and your child; this is what you can do to follow up...

Mystagogy: Discussion of Experience and Catechesis:

- Ask parents: *“What do you remember from the Baptism? Can you tell me about anything in particular that was especially meaningful for you?”*
 - Listen carefully to parents’ responses
 - Engage in active listening to lead them deeper into the experience
 - Using the RBC, catechize on the meaning of the specific experience
- Prompt parents, as needed, by going through the specific actions of the Rite, especially, actions on the part of parents, such as:
 - Publicly asked to have the child baptized
 - Signed the child with the sign of the cross
 - Renounced Satan and professed your faith
 - Carried the child to the font
 - Held the lighted candle
 - Received the blessing at the end as parents
- Include the Essential Rite: “See where you are baptized, see the source of your baptism. It is none other than the cross of Christ, the death of Christ. Here is the whole mystery: he suffered for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.” St. Ambrose of Milan, 390 AD.

Next Steps:

- Explain the resources in the packet: (book of prayers, take-home prayer sheet, “Living Catholic” coupon code, “Living Your Catholic Faith at Home” brochure, Catholic Schools brochure).
- List specific activities for the home:
 - Pray daily as family
 - Sign child with sign of cross
 - Read from bible or lives of saints
 - Participate in Mass
 - Weekly mystagogy sheet on fridge
 - Children’s Liturgy of the Word
 - Parish religious education or Catholic schools
 - Preparation for Eucharist begins in first grade
- Parent large group session at the parish – invitation and encouragement to attend.
- Final program evaluation online survey.
- Call if you have any questions. The pastor and I are there to help, with anything.

Close:

- Thank parents for visit
- Mention how God expresses his gracious love through Baptism
- Close with prayer of thanksgiving.

Church of the Resurrection: **Baptism Preparation Program**

Raising Your Child in the Faith

This activity is to help you as parents talk with each other about your expectations for how you plan to raise your child in the faith after their baptism. Set aside some time, free from distraction, to talk together as a couple using the following passage from the Rite of Baptism and questions:

At the baptism, the priest/deacon will say:

“You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Parents will then respond: “We do.”

Reflect quietly on the above passage and then take turns talking about **your** expectations and desires for your child:

- *What is our level of commitment to raise our child in the faith?*
- *Practically, what will this mean for us as a family?*
- *What are some of the things we can do to help our child grow as a Catholic?*
- *What role does going to Mass regularly play in this?*

End your discussion by together saying the Our Father.

Our world is crying out for “superheroes.” The great news is that our Catholic tradition is filled with stories of men and women who lived lives of heroic virtue in their love of God and neighbor. Share the stories of the saints with your children.

Do not underestimate the importance of eating dinner together on a regular basis. The family dinner table is a great setting for hearing the successes and challenges of the day. It provides an opportunity for parents to interject the values of our faith into the reality of our lives.

HOMEWORK

Finally, approach this great responsibility with the confidence that comes from a life of hope and joy in the Lord. The first Letter of Peter enjoins us to: **“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence”** (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

This is all the more true with our children, who know us well and call us to integrity in word and action. Do not approach faith as merely an obligation; rather reflect your faith as the reality that it is: a personal relationship with God who loves each one of us with a love beyond all telling.

RESOURCES

Prayer:

Teach Me About the Mass by Joan and Paul Plum

The Holy Mass Coloring and Activity Book
by Ancilla Christine Hirsch, F.S.P.

Learning:

The Catholic Children’s Bible
by Sister Mary Theola, S.S.N.D

Faith Sharing:

Loyola Kids Book of Saints by Amy Welborn

Can You Find Saints?: Introducing Your Child to

Holy Men and Women by Philip D. Gallery

Catholic Websites:

- usccb.org
- catholicparents.org
- foryourmarriage.org
- domestic-church.com

Catholic Home Essentials:

- Crucifix (preferably in every room)
- **Rosary (preferably used daily.)** For help on **praying the rosary visit usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/devotionals/rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary.cfm**
- Religious images (icons, statues)
- Holy water font



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LIVING your CATHOLIC FAITH at HOME

As Catholic parents you have a unique and God-given role in the Christian formation of your children.

The married man and the mother of a Christian family, if they are faithful to their obligations, will fulfill a mission that is as great as it is consoling: that of bringing into the world and forming young souls capable of happiness and love, souls capable of sanctification and transformation in Christ.

Thomas Merton

You began this journey when you had your child baptized. However, for the grace of baptism to unfold, the parent's help is essential. Faith formation in the family precedes, accompanies and enriches all forms of instruction in the faith.

TWO GRACE-FILLED MOMENTS

In the sacrament of marriage you received the grace to raise your children in faith. Your witness of Christian life is the first Christian experience your child will receive. Thus, parents should strive to be firm believers, able and ready to help your child on the road of Christian life.

In Baptism, the seed of faith is planted in the child and given its first drink of water. Parents and godparents promise to nourish

the child's faith, so that it grows and "bears much fruit." Parents in particular can provide a home environment wherein a young disciple of Christ can grow in faith and complete the process of Christian initiation. Living your faith at home should include the basics of prayer, learning and faith sharing.

PRAYER

The practice of prayer should include the elements that Jesus taught as he turned to the Father – adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition and contrition.

Make an effort to pray as a family – not just with your children at bedtime, which is important – but as a family before and after meals, as a couple, and spontaneously as situations present themselves. The car is a great place to pray as a family – start small, pointing out an accident and praying for God's intercession, begin a long journey with a prayer asking for safety, then work your way to longer prayers by praying the Rosary in the car.

The Sunday Eucharist is a privileged place of prayer and should be the center of every family's prayer life. "The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is also a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2236). Attend Mass every Sunday as a family!

LEARNING

You can't give what you don't have! Consider learning more about your Catholic faith by taking an online course at mycatholicfaithdelivered.com/adw.

Consider reading from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. An online version is available at usccb.org. The fourth pillar of the *Catechism*, focused on prayer, is an excellent place to begin.

Young children are inquisitive. Arrive early for Mass and spend some time pointing out the altar, holy water font, baptismal font, statues etc. This very basic catechesis on things found in the church will lay a strong foundation for future, more in depth conversations on faith.

FAITH SHARING

Parents are the primary teachers of their children. What you do (or don't do), and what you say (or don't say) inform your child's mind and heart.

Tell your children stories of faith – those found in the Bible, stories of saints and your own personal stories of faith. Remind your children that the Bible tells the greatest love story ever told and that you and your children are part of this love story.

Appendix O
Sample Letter of Invitation to Parish Event for Parents

Church of the Resurrection

July 2013

Dear Parents,

I am writing to invite you to a special event at the parish that you may find interesting. In an effort to provide useful resources to parents and also to bring families with babies and toddlers together for mutual support and community, we have planned a lunch and presentation on Sunday July 28th after the 12:15 p.m. Mass.

Child-care for young children will be provided, along with lunch (for both adults and children). We will begin with a special blessing for families during the 12:15 p.m. Mass, and then move to the Youth Center, downstairs in the Parish Life Center. Lunch will be served followed by a presentation. (Name), a renowned children's literature specialist and contributor to (website), will lead a training session for parents on how to develop strong reading skills in their children - even the youngest of children. Following the presentation we will talk together about best practices for raising children in the faith in the home. We will end with prayer at around 3:15 p.m.

If you can join us for this event, please RSVP to Tom Burnford, Coordinator of Baptism Preparation, at (*e-mail*) or by phone to (*phone number*). This will hopefully be the first in a series of events specifically for young families in the parish. I look forward to seeing you on the 28th.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Scott Hahn
And the Baptism Preparation Team

3315 Greencastle Road • Burtonsville, Maryland 20866 • 301-236-5200 • Fax 301-236-5204

Appendix P
Agenda for Parish Event for Parents

Parish Event: Parenting Skills

Resurrection Parish Baptism Preparation Program
Outline and Talking Points for Leader

Attendees:

- Young couples who have had a baby baptized within the last year at the parish
- Any other young couples from the parish with children under five

Objectives:

- To provide parents with infants or young children a relaxing afternoon out as a family amidst their busy schedules.
- To provide parents an opportunity to develop relationships with other parish families in a relaxed environment.
- To provide parents with practical training on some aspect of basic parenting (such as reading).
- To encourage parents to raise their children in the faith as they promised to do at baptism, and provide them practical ideas on how to do this in the home.

Atmosphere/Setup:

- Welcoming informal set-up in Youth Center.
- Lunch – tablecloths on round tables, with food buffet style on table along wall. Include lunch items suitable for kids and adults: simple, but nice.
- Child care in next door classroom, staffed by two teens from the youth program.
- Nametags and simple sign in sheet near entrance.
- Gift bags from the parish, including crucifix, book of prayers, Bible, and picture of Mary. Given out by pastor as people leave.

Timeline:

- 12:15 Mass: Fr. Scott blesses families during the Mass.
- 1:15 Attendees start to arrive.
- 1:20 Welcome by Tom Burnford, and overview of afternoon, and housekeeping.
- 1:25 Welcome by Fr. Scott and blessing of food.
- 1:30 Lunch: All together, but with table for non-infant children managed by two teen volunteers.
- 1:50 Tom introduces outside presenter and topic with reference to Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1, preparing for presentation on developing reading skills. .

- 1:55 Move to couch area as appropriate for: presentation on “Helping your child to become a reader” including questions, discussion, etc.
- 2:45 Presentation “How to Raise your Children in the Faith,” by Tom Burnford.
- 3:00 Quick overview of Resurrection Pre-school by director.
- 3:05 Closing prayer with children back in room, led by Pastor.
- 3:10 Close.

Catechesis: “How to raise your children in the faith - Practical Ideas”:

- Quote commitment made by parents at the baptism of their child: RBC 39.
- Discussion Question: “*How have you as parents already incorporated faith into the life of your family home?*” Parents share with other parents what they do in their homes; these are used as a basis for the below teaching on practical ideas.
- Additional presentation points:
 - Children do what they see their parents doing:
 - Let them see you pray
 - Let them see you talk about God
 - Let them see you participate actively in Mass
 - Let them see you be reverent
 - Let them see how you love each other
 - Let them see you forgive
 - Let them see you give thanks to God
 - Your Catholic Home:
 - Place of prayer
 - Signs and symbols: statues, pictures, etc.
 - Read the Bible in the home
 - Make Sunday a day of rest (not shopping or working).
 - Parish can help you educate and form your children in the faith:
 - Participate in the life of the parish: Read the bulletin for events and opportunities
 - Religious education program
 - Children’s Liturgy of the Word
 - Special liturgies for children
 - Family events, such as movie night, Breakfast with Santa, etc.
 - Adult formation, such as Bible study, book club, mothers group
 - Catholic schools
 - Pastor/staff – talk to them if you have particular needs

Brief Presentation on Parish Pre-School by Director.

Closing Thanks and Prayer by Pastor.

Appendix Q

Closing Evaluation Survey: Questions and Data

Evaluation Survey: Baptism
Preparation at Resurrection Parish

1. Name of person filling out this survey:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	15
<i>answered question</i>	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0

2. Do you feel that the program adequately prepared you for the baptism of your child?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No, definitely not	0.0%	0
No, not really	0.0%	0
Yes, generally	0.0%	0
Yes, definitely	100.0%	15
If so, how? If not, why not?		11
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

#	If so, how? If not, why not?
1	The program taught my wife and I the meaning and importance of baptism in our child's life as well as the role that parents must play in their child's Christian life. At the end of the program I realized the we as parents are called to a higher responsibility when dealing with the child's Christianity, a responsibility that is daily and not just on days of obligation.
2	We, both parents were presented with our responsibilities as parents in bringing up our kids in a spiritual manner
3	All the information we got from the class and doing the survey
4	It affirmed the reasons for which we wanted to have our son baptized
5	The class prepared me well for the baptism even though I still forgot certain parts of what I was supposed to say. But I warned that would happen.
6	The information and discussion section in the church was very nice and informative
7	It made us feel part of the Catholic community and also brought us closer to God.
8	The program helped renew our faith in baptism, and also helped prepare us how to teach our daughter and how to pray together as a family
9	This program helped me to really understand what I was asking the Church for my daughter, I had my baptism when I was 7 days old, so to actually go through this process gave me the opportunity to fully understand the real meaning of baptism.
10	We learned a lot during the class especially the reason why it is good to do it and early too
11	It gave me a great background of what baptism (Catholic) was about.

3. Has your Mass attendance changed as a result of this program?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, we go more frequently now	26.7%	4
Our Mass attendance has stayed the same	73.3%	11
No, we go less frequently now	0.0%	0
If yes, why? If no, why?		6
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

#	If yes, why? If no, why?
1	After the program we are more aware of the responsibility we have as it relates to our child's Christianity, thus making it urgent for us to attend mass more often to pray for ourselves and our child
2	At the doctrine, we were made to understand that kids copy from parents. So whatever parents do should be morally oriented so that kids will copy the right thing. Going to church more often will instill in them that same spirit.
3	I go to Sunday mass every Sunday that I am not working
4	We have been going frequently to mass even before the Baptism
5	My mass attendance has not changed because I work every other weekend or out of state to visit family, but when I am at work N. attends Mass with my sister.
6	We felt differently after baptism. We felt the church has welcomed us and our daughter in a very special way and we think by going to church more often with our child she will grow stronger in the faith we introduced her to.

4. One thing I really liked about the program was...

Answer Options	Response Count
	15
<i>answered question</i>	15
<i>skipped question</i>	0

#	Response Text
1	I really liked the nature of the questions because they gave us the opportunity to share our spiritual life with our partners and by so doing identified those areas we need to improve to become better Christians and good parents
2	I liked the follow up by Tom. This constantly reminds us of our duties and responsibilities.
3	The preparation and follow up
4	The class
5	I appreciated being able to prepare at home by completing the survey online and watching the video. Having the flexibility to be able to do it on our own time was really appreciated with having a new baby.
6	It really felt like we were connected to the church community
7	It was a positive, encouraging experience
8	I felt the preparation class was very good. It provided me with a great sense of what was going to happen the day of and also a good education (reminder) behind the action of baptism.

- 9 The spirituality discussion
- 10 Is that it let us go over our baptism commitment and also gave us the chance to integrate more into the parish community. One very important thing that touched us was the home follow up after the baptism.
- 11 The program brings the family together because we were prepared for the baptism
- 12 The program gave me opportunity to meet with other moms and now after Mass I can stop to say hello to other mothers.
- 13 The follow up from the church
- 14 Genuine interest by the church to have children brought up in the faith, the fact that they took the time to design a short class for this effort, speaks volumes
- 15 The personal one-on-one attention. Tom was very accommodating.

5. Raising my child in the faith is very important to me.							
Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
	12	3	0	0	0	1.20	15
<i>answered question</i>							15
<i>skipped question</i>							0

6. Has your knowledge about Baptism and its meaning increased as a result of this program?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, definitely	66.7%	10
Yes, generally	33.3%	5
No, not really	0.0%	0
No, definitely not	0.0%	0
If so, how? If not, why not?		8
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

- | # | If so, how? If not, why not? |
|---|--|
| 1 | The program highlighted fundamental scriptural passages that centered on baptism and its importance thus giving us material to meditate on for a better understanding and appreciation of what baptism is and does to our lives as Christians. |
| 2 | We were made to understand that baptism means rebirth. And when you are reborn in Jesus, you don't give any chance to sin. |
| 3 | It reminded me of what Catholic baptism is about |
| 4 | I am sure at some point in CCD classes I learned about all the meanings behind baptism but the prep class reeducated me on them |
| 5 | It made us become aware of our responsibilities as parents |
| 6 | Because being a member of Christ's family reminds you to always overcome temptation at all time |
| 7 | The feeling I had during the baptism made my belief stronger, and baptism is a spiritual process, which we need to feel, believe and act on it |
| 8 | I know why it is important to baptize a child early enough and how that translates into strengthening my own faith as well. |

7. Over the course of the program you were given five at-home prayer and learning activities on handouts to do at home. How many of these did you do?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
All of them	40.0%	6
Some of them	40.0%	6
Only one	0.0%	0
None	20.0%	3
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

8. How often do you talk to your spouse about God and the impact of faith on your life?

Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Rating Average	Response Count
	6	5	3	1	0	1.93	15
<i>answered question</i>							15
<i>skipped question</i>							0

9. Has your commitment to raise your child as an active Catholic grown as a result of this program?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, definitely	66.7%	10
Yes, generally	26.7%	4
No, not really	6.7%	1
No, definitely not	0.0%	0
If so, how? If not, why not?		9
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

If so, how? If not, why not?

- 1 This program made me to be proud as a catholic because it assured me of God's love for us and the fact that as a practicing catholic I have the fullness of the means of salvation
- 2 I always teach the difference between good and bad. What language is good and what language is bad. I advise my son and daughter to become mass servers
- 3 It's hard getting into the routine of going to Mass on a weekly basis with a new baby. I am hopeful that this will become easier now that N. is growing older
- 4 The reason I did not respond saying definitely is because a strong commitment was already in place
- 5 I obviously planned to raise my child as a Catholic but going through the process of the baptism and preparation I MADE the commitment to raise them as active Catholics
- 6 Yes because it brought us closer to each other and to God
- 7 By praying and reading the bible together
- 8 I was raised one and I see the benefits, so I would like my child to have the same benefits. The program made my desire to raise her as an active Catholic stronger
- 9 We go to Church every Sunday and pray every evening as a family

10. To what extent has your prayer life changed as a result of this program? Do you now pray...

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A lot more than before	40.0%	6
Somewhat more than before	20.0%	3
The same amount	40.0%	6
A little less than before	0.0%	0
A lot less than before	0.0%	0
If more, why? If less, why?		5
answered question		15
skipped question		0

If more, why? If less, why?

- 1 Because of the program, I am more conscious of the fact that I have to not only pray for myself but also for my wife and kids and as a dad lead my family to salvation in word and deed
- 2 We pray at bed time. I think this instills in our kids the spirit of Christian life.
- 3 We used to pray and we keep on praying
- 4 To keep the faith and the belief of how important prayer is to a family
- 5 After the baptism of my child I feel like a fulfilled Christian.

11. If you used some of the handouts, did you find them useful?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not applicable - sorry, didn't get a chance to use the handouts :-)	13.3%	2
No, definitely not	0.0%	0
No, not really	0.0%	0
Yes, generally	40.0%	6
Yes, definitely	46.7%	7
If useful, how? If not, why not?		6
answered question		15
skipped question		0

If useful, how? If not, why not?

- 1 They were helpful as they helped me learn more about baptism in a meditative fashion thus enriching me with spiritual gifts that can be shared with my wife, kids and others for the sanctification of souls and the glory of God
- 2 Honestly forgot all about them! This is a good reminder to pull them out :)
- 3 I found them to be convenient
- 4 The kept us focused
- 5 It refreshed our memory on the importance of baptism, and the power of praying together
- 6 How to pray.

12. How often do you read from the Bible or a religious book?							
Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Rating Average	Response Count
	4	7	2	1	1	2.20	15
<i>answered question</i>							15
<i>skipped question</i>							0

13. Has the frequency of your conversations about God and the impact of faith in your life as a couple changed as a result of this program?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, definitely	53.3%	8
Yes, somewhat	13.3%	2
No, not really	33.3%	5
No, definitely not	0.0%	0
If yes, why? If not, why not?		4
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

#	If yes, why? If not, why not?
1	As a result of the program, we are more aware of the fact that we have to pray not only for ourselves but also for our kids on a daily basis
2	We talk about God more often than we use to
3	Because we want to be an example to our daughter.
4	We used the handouts given to us in church. We also pray using the bible as advised during the baptism class as well as go to church every Sunday. All this thus had an influence on our faith and how I feel about God.

14. What recommendations do you have for the program coordinator to help him grow and improve?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	11
<i>answered question</i>	11
<i>skipped question</i>	4

#	Response Text
1	Give more opportunity for sharing among program participants as an area to focus on
2	Keep the program going and spread the news
3	It was a very pleasant experience and I can't think of anything to improve it
4	None come to mind

- 5 None, I think it was great
- 6 More class prep
- 7 For now I think the program is OK
- 8 To continue the good work he's doing
- 9 None
- 10 I think he is doing a fantastic job - keep it up
- 11 None

15. Has your understanding of what it means to raise your child in the Catholic Church grown as a result of this program?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No, definitely not	0.0%	0
No, not really	13.3%	2
Yes, generally	26.7%	4
Yes, definitely	60.0%	9
If so, how? If not, why not?		5
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

If so, how? If not, why not?

- 1 I now know that being a catholic Christian is a daily commitment and not just something to be done on Sundays
- 2 It was a good refresher on the meaning of Baptism
- 3 Yes but I think it will mean more for couples who are converts or still new in the catholic faith. I was brought up in this faith
- 4 By reading the bible and others catholic books to her daily
- 5 The program has made me a proud Catholic, and has made me know my faith better, thus making me understand what it means to bring up my child in the faith I proudly confess.

16. How often do you pray?

Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Rating Average	Response Count
	13	2	0	0	0	1.13	15
<i>answered question</i>							15
<i>skipped question</i>							0

17. One thing I wish were different about the program is...

Answer Options	Response Count
	7
<i>answered question</i>	7

#	Response Text
1	I wish mass and the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation were made part of the program
2	I wish it were offered more than once in preparation for the program
3	Nothing - great all the way through
4	Nothing
5	Arranging more class time with the family before baptism.
6	None
7	n/a

18. Has the preparation you received prepared you to more effectively raise your child in the Catholic Church?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, it helped a great deal	66.7%	10
Yes, it helped somewhat	33.3%	5
No, it really didn't help	0.0%	0
No, it seemed to make things worse	0.0%	0
If so, how? If not, why not?		5
answered question		15
skipped question		0

#	If so, how? If not, why not?
1	I now know as a result of the program that I have to talk about God to my kids when I find the least opportunity and not just in church as this makes them aware of God's presence and love
2	Having the Godparents attend increased their commitment and active participation
3	As I mentioned earlier, through the preparation class I became better aware of my commitment to my children to raise them in the Catholic Church.
4	Just gave me the tools I needed
5	Because we pray together daily more than before.

19. My faith has grown as a result of participation in this program.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
	8	3	4	0	0	1.73	15
If agree/strongly agree, how has your faith grown? If disagree/strongly disagree, please comment:							7
answered question							15
skipped question							0

#	If agree/strongly agree, how has your faith grown? If disagree/strongly disagree, please comment:
1	I pray often now especially in places you least expect
2	I pray with my kids every bed time

- 3 I pray more now and I understand a bit about my Catholic faith
- 4 I think the experience reminded me of how my mother was involved in my faith as a child and that is something that I aspire to as a parent.
- 5 Feeling of more moral religious responsibility to raise my son in the church
- 6 I know fully my responsibilities as a parent and my duties as a husband
- 7 We put God first in everything we do as a family

20. How often do you go to Mass?							
Answer Options	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Never	Rating Average	Response Count
	1	10	3	0	0	2.14	14
<i>answered question</i>							14
<i>skipped question</i>							1

21. The program included class at the parish, take-home materials, online resources, a home visit and a parenting workshop. "The balance of these elements, some at home and some at the parish, respected the busyness of my life as a new parent."							
Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
	12	3	0	0	0	1.20	15
<i>answered question</i>							15
<i>skipped question</i>							0

22. In an overall, general sense, how satisfied are you with this baptism preparation program?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very satisfied	100.0%	15
Mostly satisfied	0.0%	0
Indifferent	0.0%	0
Dissatisfied	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

23. As a result of this program, do you read more, the same, or less from the Bible of religious books?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A lot more	33.3%	5
Some more	13.3%	2
The same	53.3%	8
Less	0.0%	0
If more, why? If less, why?		3
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

#	If more, why? If less, why?
1	I read a lot more as I now carry a pocket bible which makes me read short verses and meditate on them from time to time as I go on with my daily schedule.
2	To refresh myself
3	To keep the family closer to God.

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