



Parish Discernment Session #6 **Transformation in Christ**

Focusing Question: What can we do to help our children be transformed by their preparation for and reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation so that they want to continue to grow in their Faith?

I. Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

Lectio divina with Matthew 19:13-15

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them

Was there a word or phrase or image that stood out to you?

What insights did you have during your meditation?

What graces did you receive during your meditation (for example: joy, hope, longing, contrition, etc.)?

II. Introductory Comments (10 minutes)

A Message from Bishop Berg

“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” From the first moment of our existence our loving Father holds us in His hands, loving us and desiring to be close to us. Such tender love He has for us!

He longs for this so much that He sent His own Son to free us from the snares of this world, to suffer, die, and rise again so that we can find in Him our true happiness and fulfillment. We encounter this loving Father in the grace of the sacraments, entrusted by Jesus to His bride, the Church. In this grace, we live in the Kingdom of Heaven even now, caught up in the divine life and transformed by the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit so that we, with Christ, call “Abba, Father!”

We long for this fullness of life in Christ for our children, destined for greatness in Him. We have such hopes and dreams for them, and we know that through their Baptism they can be transformed by their encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist and can transform the world and bring others to the Kingdom and the King. At the same time, we recognize that this is not always happening as it should. Many of our children, to our sorrow, are leaving our Church and turning to the world, trying to find hope and peace in passing things that cannot satisfy. Life in Christ, strengthened by the sacraments, lived in discipleship and mission is the only way to that greatness in littleness to which each of our children are called. We want them to be transformed by the grace of the sacraments, living a life of deep prayer, growing in humility and virtue, constantly moving deeper into conversion, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and works of love. Our struggle and our task is to form our children for this transformed life in Christ, particularly by accompanying them to a reception of the sacraments that bears life-long fruit.

As a Diocese, we have taken steps to aid this accompaniment. The Sacramental Preparation Guidelines promulgated in 2019 refocused us on walking with our children into discipleship as they prepare for the sacraments. As I see in the letters from our Confirmation candidates and in stories from the parishes, more of our children are encountering the living Christ, entering into prayer, and receiving the sacraments disposed to bear fruit. Each year, more of our parishes understand and implement more fully these guidelines, but I call you to be intentional about moving deeper into the process of discernment and formation that they outline.

As you continue this Parish Discernment Session, I ask you to prayerfully consider the questions, “How can we more fully help our children to have this life in Christ? How can we help them to encounter the Living God in the sacraments? How can we help them to live as disciples and take their place in the mission of Christ?” Come Holy Spirit!

Points to Remember

- No one of us has all the answers.
- God has the answers.
- God speaks through His people.
- Discussion based in prayer is a means of hearing God’s will.
- Do not be attached to your own opinion.
- Look with charity on the thoughts and opinions of others and assume that we are all

wanting something good.

Prayer for Openness to the Lord's Will

Lord Jesus, we come together as Your Body to submit to You as the Head of the Body. Send Your Holy Spirit to soften our hearts, to detach us from our own opinions, to help us to encounter You in prayer, to inspire our conversations, to help us to hear Your will for Your Body, and to guide us into deeper communion in You through our time together. Remove any obstacles or barriers that stand in the way of these things, and send Your holy angels to protect us during our time together.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for us!

St. Thérèse, pray for us!

(patron of our parish), pray for us! (or "have mercy on us!" if it is Sacred Heart)

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

Come, Holy Spirit!

III. Ask the Lord (30 minutes)

A. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and silent prayer (5 minutes)

B. Guided Meditation (10 minutes)

- Jesus made me for communion with Himself, with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus draws me to Himself in the sacraments and pours His life into me.
- The grace from the Eucharist and the other sacraments is intended to keep me close to Jesus in every aspect of my life. If that does not happen, it is because I have not opened myself to that grace.
- **Pray in these or your own words:** "Jesus, help me to encounter you in the Eucharist and to live my life in You."

C. Ask the Lord these questions: (15 minutes)

1. How do You want to act in the lives of the children of our parish?

2. What words do You have for us to guide the preparation of our children for the sacraments?

3. In keeping with the Little Way (doing little things with great love), what one action are You prompting *me* to do that will help our children be transformed by their preparation for and reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation so that they want to continue to grow in their Faith?

D. Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

IV. Discussion and Conclusions (60 minutes)

A. Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

1. How does God want to act in the lives of the children of our parish?

2. What words does God have for us to guide the preparation of our children for the sacraments?

3. In keeping with the Little Way (doing little things with great love), what one action is God prompting us to do that will help our children be transformed by their preparation for and reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation so that they want to continue to grow in their Faith?

B. Large Group Synthesis (40 minutes)

1. What holy desires can we see in these responses?

- 2.. What one step will we take to support our children in their relationship with Jesus in the sacraments and to live a life in Christ?

V. Follow-up plan (20 minutes)

- A. This is how we will be sorting through this information:

- B. This is how and when you can expect to hear more from us in response to what is in your input:

- C. Who is in charge of inviting others into this discussion?

- D. How will others be invited into this discussion?

VI. Praise and Thanksgiving

A. Divine Mercy Chaplet

Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet as normal but with the following prayers preceding the appropriate decade.

1. First Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon our clergy, *(name your pastor, other priests, and deacons)*.

For each decade:

V. Eternal Father, we offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ

R. in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

(x10) V. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion

R. have mercy on us and on the whole world.

2. Second Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon all the parishioners of our parish, *(name your parish)*.

3. Third Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon those in our parish who have fallen away from the practice of their Faith.

4. Fourth Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon all who live within our parish boundaries.

5. Fifth Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for the mercy of the children of our parish having deep relationships with You throughout their lives.

B. “Conversational” style prayer of thanksgiving for one another

Those who are prompted may offer aloud a prayer of thanksgiving for others.

C. A Prayer for Eucharistic Revival

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to stay with us always, until the end of the age. Reawaken our wonder at His presence in the Most Holy Eucharist. May our hearts burn within us as He opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread. Give us the eyes of faith to recognize His presence in our brothers and sisters, especially in the face of the poor and the suffering. Nourished by the Eucharist, send us forth to walk faithfully as missionary disciples, proclaiming the Gospel to every heart and extending Your kingdom to every land. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eucharistic Revival Parish Discernment Sessions Overview

Session #1

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Communion
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we enhance communion between pastor and parishioners in our parish?
- This session to be facilitated by representatives from the diocesan team. Subsequent sessions to be facilitated at the local level.

Session #2

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Thanksgiving
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we thankfully move forward as a parish in the gifts we have instead of focusing most of our attention on what we lack?

Session #3

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** The Real Presence of Christ
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we create a culture of encounter with Jesus in our parish?

Session #4

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Food for the Journey
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we help the young adults in our community find the food they need for their journey in Christ and the Church?

Session #5

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** The Sacrifice of Christ
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we more fruitfully help our elderly, sick, and homebound be supported and contribute to the mission of the parish?

Session #6

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Transformation in Christ
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** What can we do to help our children be transformed by their preparation for and reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation so that they want to continue to grow in their Faith?

Session #7

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Conversion
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we support each other in growing in holiness through authentic spiritual friendships?

Session #8

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Sent Forth
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we help those we love come back to the Church, and how can we reach out in love to the marginalized?

The session handouts for these sessions will be made available approximately every two months, beginning in January, 2023.