4 – sacraments and Baptism

Aim: To help your child understand what the sacraments are and why they were baptised

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| WELCOME & Opening prayer [5 minutes] 8.35 / 8.20 pm |
| * *Welcome the group with an affirming message.* * *Opening prayer.* * *Give an outline of today’s session.* |
| SMALL GROUP – ICE-BREAKER [10 minutes] 8.40 / 8.25 pm |
| Q: Why did you give your child their name?  Q: What did you or your child enjoy most when exploring the Family Handout?  Supplementary question:  Q: Did your child have any questions regarding the cross? Or regarding sin? |
| Introduction - Sacraments [5 minutes] 8.50 / 8.35 pm |
| Signs **and symbols help us convey a meaning that can be much deeper than words.** In the handout, we give your child an example of a ring. If you wear a ring, you could explain what it means to you. We ask you to think of another example of a symbol with a deeper meaning – like a flag.  Page 33a  God loves the world and all in it that he became a man. **Jesus became part of the material world that he had made.** He could see, hear, taste, feel and smell like us. Jesus wanted to show us the Father's love in a real way. He often used ordinary things to show his love.  Page 34a  We discovered in the second Family Handout that Jesus lived a miraculous life. He often used ordinary things to show his love. We give you two examples you can use in your conversation with your child at home: Jesus turned water into wine, which was his first sign. Through this sign, Jesus showed us God’s abundant love and generosity. Another thing that Jesus did was use dirt from the ground and his spit to create a paste that he spread on a blind man’s eyes to heal him. He didn’t need to create a paste, but it shows us the power of God. Also, it shows us that God uses the ordinary to make extraordinary things happen.  We ask you to remember some other examples where Jesus used ordinary things from the material world to do extraordinary things. For example, he took Bread and Wine and said this was his Body and Blood. He used five loaves and three fish and fed 5,000 people.  **The Church continues Jesus’ ministry. The Church, through the sacraments, also uses material things, words, and actions as physical symbols of God’s love for us**: words, water, oil, lit candles, white garments, bread, wine, the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross on your forehead, lips and heart, rings, joining of hands.  Page 2b  Look at the pictures and discuss when we use these symbols or actions in the Church.  A key line in this handout is: **These symbols are powerful and effective because the sacraments use things from God the Father’s created world; Christ is at work in them, and it is his Holy Spirit poured into our lives through them.**  **We ask you to look up Question 64 in the YouCat for Kids**, which can be found on page 108. It says, “The sacraments are seven meeting points, where God himself is present, waits for you, blesses you and leads you deeper into the community of the church.”  Page 35  **On page 35** of the handout, we introduce your children to the seven sacraments. Each sacrament has a description and a photo. The children need to match up the names of the sacraments with the right boxes. |
| A bit about Sacraments [8 minutes] |
| The Catholic Church teaches that the sacraments are:  "efficacious signs 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. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required DISPOSITIONS. - CCC 1131  "efficacious signs of grace” – signs that have an effect in giving us God’s grace  Grace is God’s free gift that we should receive with gratitude and share with others.  **Baptism** 🡪 We become cherished children of God.  **Confirmation** 🡪 The power of the Holy Spirit is given to become witnesses of Christ.  **Reconciliation** 🡪 We are reconciled to the Father and become Reconciliation for others.  **Eucharist** 🡪 The hungry become bread for others.  **Matrimony & Holy Orders** 🡪 Individualists become servants of love.  **Anointing of the Sick** 🡪 The despairing become people of confidence.  “instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church by which divine life is dispensed to us.”  We don’t have time today to go through every sacrament and explain how Jesus instituted them. So, we are just going to focus on Baptism.  **On page 38 of the handout**, we ask you to look at Matthew 3:13-17, the baptism of our Lord. John, the Baptist, had already been baptising people of their sins in the river Jordon. When John baptised Jesus, something new happened. He was not only baptised with water, but the Holy Spirit showed up, symbolised by a dove in the passage.  Page 38  **Through Jesus’ baptism, he instituted the sacrament of Baptism.** He changed the meaning of Baptism.  **We join with Christ through baptism, and our Christian lives begin.**  “The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament.” - St Augustine of Hippo said, **“Sacraments are an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.”** The Church uses ordinary things to represent and make present particular gifts from God.  “They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions." - **They always work.** God always shows up in the sacraments. God has bound himself to his sacraments.  But at the same time, we don’t always experience the power of the sacraments because we are not always present or open to the sacraments. The sacraments are efficacious to the degree that we are receptive to their power. |
| DEMONSTRATION [2 MINUTES] |
| Let’s think of it this way: We have a large container here of water. Let us put a rock in it. The rock is wet, but it hasn’t been changed.  Let us take the same container and the same water. Let us put this dry, brittle, crusty, old sponge in the water. What the water does to the sponge is remarkably different from what the water does to the rock. Same water, same container, but different transformation. Why? Because the sponge is disposed to not only being surrounded by water but also being transformed and permeated by the water.  The same is true when it comes to the sacraments. Remember, the sacraments are meeting points with God. God will always surround us. God is always there and present – waiting at the door. We always have complete access to him. But do we always allow him to access us or our hearts? |
| SMALL GROUPS – THE SACRAMENTS [10 minutes] 9.05 / 8.50 pm |
| Q: What did you think about what you just heard?  Q: What do the sacraments mean to you?  The YouCat for Kids defines Sacraments as seven meeting points with God.  The Catechism says: "Efficacious signs 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. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.” CCC 1131  Supplementary COMMENTS AND questions:  It can seem like an ideal. But we know that the reality is that family life is tough. It is hard enough to get to Mass as it is. It’s even harder if we are single parents or if our partner is not Catholic.  Q: How can you help your children be more receptive to the idea of Reconciliation and the practice of Mass attendance? How do you think our attitude to the sacraments affects our children?  Our attitude matters. If we talk about going to church negatively, it will impact our children. For example, if we leave complaining about the priest and their homily, it will have an impact. |
| BAPTISM [2 minutes] 9.15 / 9.00 pm |
| The sacrament of baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime moment. **On page 36 of the handout, we would love you to recall your child’s baptism.** Get everything from that day: photos, the baptism certificate, a candle, or a white garment.  Page 36  **Question 68, in the YouCat for Kids**, asks, “Why are babies baptised when they cannot even decide for themselves if they want to be baptised?” It answers, **“Baptism is a gift from God. Believing parents accept this because they want what is best for their child.”**  Baptism is a choice we make for the good of our children because it gives us access to God in our lives now, not just in heaven. It gifts us with being able to approach God as our Father.  To help our children understand this, **we describe baptism as like opening a door.** At the last session, we referred to the Light of the World picture of Jesus standing at the door and knocking. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection constructed the door.  Page 37a  Jesus made it possible for us to have a relationship with God, our Father. **Baptism is called a gateway to a life with God.** Jesus came to give us life to the fullest–a life full of joy, peace, and hope! Walking through the “door” of baptism, you can experience new life.  **At Baptism, we bring our children to the door and help open it so they can have a relationship with God through Jesus.** It is like we are helping them to reach for the door handle again and again until they are old enough to choose whether to open the door themselves.  Baptism opens you up to God’s presence, God’s Holy Spirit, who helps you through the many challenges that life will throw at you. **Only after Baptism can you receive the other sacraments –meeting points with God received throughout our lives.** It also means that at the end of your life, as you approach the “door” called death, it will not be the end. You will be able to walk through it to eternal life in heaven. |
| Rite of Baptism [3 minute] |
| At your child’s baptism, after the welcome, the priest or deacon asks, “What do you ask of God's Church for your child?” The response is “Baptism”. The church asks this question on purpose. Baptism is a choice.  A little bit later into the liturgy, the celebrant says,  “Dear parents and godparents: You have come here to present this child for baptism. By water and the Holy SPIRIT, he (she) is to receive the gift of new life from God, who is love.  On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring him (her) up in the practice of the faith. See that the divine life which God gives him (her) is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in his (her) heart.  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 this child is about to be baptised.”  The celebrant then asked you to renew your baptismal promises to reaffirm your faith. The priest or deacon asks, “Is it your will that your child should be baptised in the faith of the Church, which we have all professed with you?” This question is asked again halfway through the liturgy because this is our free choice.  The “yes” we say is a yes to turn back to God in that moment and every moment after the baptism. The celebrant then baptises your child, saying, “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people.” It is God’s response to our free choice.  At this point, your child is affirmed as a child of God. It’s an opportunity to confirm who our children are and who we are – beloved children of God – called by name.  As it says in St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (8:15-17): “15For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ 16it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...” |
| SMALL GROUPS - YOUR CHILD’S BAPTISM [20 minutes] 9.20 / 9.05 pm |
| Q: Why did you choose to have your child baptised?  Q: What does it mean to be a child of God?  Supplementary question:  Q: How does it feel to know that you are a child of God?  It says in the Baptism Rite, “On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring [your child] up in the practice of the faith. See that the divine life which God gives [your child] is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in [your child’s] heart.”  Q: You chose to have your child baptised. How are you helping them each day to confirm that choice you made?  Supplementary questions:  Q: How do you pray with your children at home? Or do you read the bible with your children? Do you say grace before mealtimes?  Q: How do you bring God into conversations at home?  e.g., perhaps when they are going through difficult times at school or home? “Jesus was also abandoned and treated badly by his friends”. Do we thank God for the good times? “Hasn’t God made such a beautiful day?” |

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| In baptism, we used our senses (optional) [5 minutes] 9.40 / 9.25 pm |
| To help our children understand the depths of baptism, we will ask you to look at the external signs used to represent the graces given during this essential sacrament.  Page 37b   Water at baptism In the early years of the Church, mainly adults received Baptism. They were taken down to a river and baptised in deep running water. They went right down under the water. Then they came up again and took a great gulp of fresh air.  **As you go down in that water, you leave your Adam life, this original sin – the original choice to turn away from God – life behind, and we come back out of that water with, as St. Paul reminds us, “a new life in Christ”.** It is breathing in life as if for the first time. We ask you to **chat with your child** about how water can be life-giving and how it can be dangerous. Words at Baptism Page 39a  During your child’s baptism, the Priest or Deacon said their name first and again as he poured water over their head. Our children were baptised by name because God knows them by name**. On page 39 of the handout, there is a lovely opportunity to share why you chose their name with your child.**  As the Priest or Deacon poured water over your child’s head, he then said God’s name - “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Through this action, your child became a child of God. Anointing Page 39b  The Priest or Deacon placed blessed oil on your child’s head. In the Old Testament, God had promised to send someone who would renew the world and had the anointing of oil and the Holy Spirit. That is why we call Jesus the Christ, which means the anointed.  **It is this moment when your child becomes “another Christ”.** Like Jesus, your child is “anointed,” a priest, prophet and King. Your child is a priest, meaning they can offer sacrifices and prayers to God our Father. They are a prophet, which means they can speak God’s word to a world that longs to hear from God. And your child has been anointed a King or a Queen, having a place in God’s royal family. Baptismal garment John the Apostle has a vision of heaven in the book of Revelation. It says in Revelation 7:9, “After this, I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.” Later, in verse 13: “Then one of the elders [or angels] addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They were transformed, given a new identity, washed, and made sons and daughters of God.  **When your child received that white garment, it was a sign that your child, too, has been clothed with Christ as a son or daughter of God.** Candle at baptism Page 8A  The priest or deacon will light a baptismal candle from the Easter candle. The Easter candle signifies Christ’s light, life, and resurrection. He hands the baptismal candle to the godparents and says, “Receive the light of Christ”.  He says, “This light is to be kept burning brightly, and you as parents and godparents have to do everything you can to protect this light.”  It is one of the most sobering moments in the Baptism Rite because **it is hard to keep that flame of faith burning in this world.**  For some of us, the reality of family life can work against this. It is an important reminder to us parents that we have this responsibility to protect our children, not just physically but spiritually, and help keep their faith alive. |
| FINAL PRAYER - Blessing [1 minute] 9.45 / 9.30 pm |
| Spend a moment in silence, reflecting on the session. In the Parent Booklet, write one thing you want to share with your child from this session.  **At the end of the handout, we ask you to bless your children**. **As our final prayer, let us bless the people sitting next to us or ourselves.**  Page 40b  *\*Next session’s topic: Reconciliation.* |