Children’s Initiation: Are We There Yet?
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Presentation by Linda Khirallah Porter, MTS

Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children, Victoria Tufano Editor with several authors

Christiane Brusselmans          Gael Gensler          Steven Robich
Rita Burns Senseman             Jeanette Lucinio       Frank Sokol
Catherine Dooley                Richard Moudry         Don Neumann
Robert Duggan                   James Dunning          Richelle Pearl-Koller

1. According to the Code of Canon Law and the RCIA in the United States: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist should be celebrated together for candidates age 7 and older.

2. Strong Baptism programs for parents of infants should be available. Good instruction and guidelines utilized.

3. Baptisms of infants should be done at Sunday liturgies.

4. 10-12 month process for children at least if not baptized; maybe shorter for candidates for full communion.

5. should be celebrated with the children also: scrutinies, acceptance, welcome, etc.

6. The Parish and family should be the center of formation for children in this process.

7. Youth leaders should be consulted as children are initiated to integrate them into the life of the parish.

8. Faith formation for children in full communion should be separate for those seeking the sacraments.

9. Parish is the key to initiation.

10. Companions for children should be formed and attend sessions: cousins, friends, siblings, etc.

11. Penance for children who have been baptized should be frequented prior to Confirmation and Eucharist celebration.

12. Children who are candidates for full communion may be brought into the church outside of Easter vigil.
13. Catechesis for Children for Christian Initiation should be
   a. Experiential - life experience
   b. Spiritual Growth - prayer
   c. Social Consciousness - morality
   d. Liturgical Sense – liturgy – celebration of the rituals

14. Classroom model focuses on Intellectual and Social Formation. Catechumenate model focuses on receiving and nurturing a personal faith and recognizing both private and public obligation of conscience.

15. Lectionary-based catechesis is a good resource

16. Speak more of Proclamation and Evangelization rather than Catechesis of Children. Children’s first encounter with the word of God is evangelization.

17. Children are fond of ritual and repetition. Use sacred signs and symbols and actions again and again.

18. Experience and Reflection are the most effective ways of instructing children of catechetical and pre-catechetical age. Daily rituals can be connected to God. Blessing our children at bedtime, when they go to school, or go out with friends, or when they take the car out for the first time. This is EVANGELIZATION – encountering the holy in their everyday lives.

19. The Easter liturgy of light around the Paschal Candle can be linked to the Christmas Celebration of Jesus Birth as the light of the world. Children can light their own candles from the Christ candle. Invite parents to celebrate their child’s baptism, or anniversary into the Church.

20. What should we ask of the child catechumen?
   a. Conversion means a change of heart; a turning toward Christ
   b. This will look different in the child. Children have this capacity.

21. Four Dimensions of Conversion:
   a. **Affective Level** – not cognitive; to know the power of love overcoming death through the example of parents, family, and friends. We share our stories of God creating, loving, making promises, caring, and forgiving. Jesus healing people, freeing people, teaching them, feeding them, and of his suffering, dying, and rising. We ask the children to relate the actions of Jesus to their own lives. In their own lives, the child has moved from a cognitive to an affective level of experience of God. The child has undergone an **affective conversion**.
b. **Social Dimension** – Connected to the community – a sense of others. For the child the social dimension of conversion means moving from seeing oneself as an individual connected only to parents and family to a larger Christian community.

c. **Intellectual Dimension** – ‘suitable catechesis’ for their age; this means the quality of the information is more important than the quantity. Catechesis for children should be centered around three elements:
   i. The Word
   ii. The primary Christian symbols
   iii. The Creed
   These help children Christ in their lives. Rites are integral experiences for the children and should be unpacked following.

d. **Moral Dimension**
   i. Personal response
   ii. Bear witness to the faith
   iii. Give unselfishly of oneself
   iv. Help more at home, at school
   v. Doing kind deeds for loved ones