

Sacramental Program over? – Now what?

Keeping families connected

Some ideas for you from the Youth & Children's Ministry (YCM) Team

So your parish has had big celebrations for Confirmation and First Communion and now you're wondering if you'll ever see those children and their families again? Is there anything the parish can do to keep these families connected and involved? It's a question we are asked over and over again. The answer is YES YES YES!

Ideally, planning needs to commence long before children begin their preparation for Confirmation and First Communion. As the saying goes, 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail'.

The responsibility for initiating children into the faith community belongs to the whole community and is not the task of the sacramental team alone. It's good to have a plan or a *pathway* in which the parish can identify all the opportunities families have to be involved and keep connected to one another and to the parish. Here are some ideas to keep families connected:

- INVITE children and their families to a special celebration (Mass and morning tea), perhaps a month after they have been fully initiated. Hopefully, you have already obtained email addresses from these families.
- INVITE both the children and their families to become more fully involved in the life of the parish. Create a list of opportunities for families to share their time, talent and treasure and send this to every family. Depending on what is available in your parish, the list may include these things:
 - I wish to be on the hospitality roster
 - I am available to hand out parish newsletters
 - I wish to be trained as an altar server
 - I want to join the choir
 - I am a musician and can play at the Mass
 - I want to be trained to be a State School RE teacher.
 - I volunteer to be a computer/data projector operator
 - I can help with children's liturgy of the word celebrations
 - I want to be trained to be a minister of the Word
 - I want to be trained to be a minister of Eucharist
 - I am interested in joining a social justice group
 - I am happy to help organise a Kids' club session for older primary aged children
 - I would like to assist with the Sacramental preparations for next year
- To assist families to continue to be formed in their faith, consider the following:
 - Send via email a weekly prayer or verse from a Psalm. See *Praying Together* for ideas. (Available from YCM team)
 - Organise a post-sacramental Family camp
 - Offer an Activity day during the school holidays
 - Organise an annual Family retreat
 - Provide opportunities for families to come together in prayer
 - Arrange prayer groups for parents. These could be offered in various liturgical seasons, eg Lent or Advent

- Arrange for guest speakers to address topics of interest or concern to parents eg family spirituality, meditating with children, parenting.
- Invite families to attend 'Building Families Seminars' September/October 2009 at Marsden, Clear Island Waters, and Hervey Bay. Go to <http://bne.catholic.net.au/familyandlife/> for more details.
- Teach people to become biblical storytellers (YCM can assist with this).
- Plan an Advent or Christmas activity day/session in which families focus on the readings of a particular Sunday and come together for a Family Mass that Sunday. Include fun activities such as music, craft, and biblical storytelling.
- Provide after-school or weekend sessions for children attending State Schools so they continue to learn about their faith.
- Plan talks about topics /themes introduced in the Sacramental preparation time. This can be a time to depth these topics (eg Eucharist, Reconciliation, Spirit, Prayer, Spirituality) for parents. Invite the whole parish to attend. This could be offered on a Deanery basis.
- Plan Lenten prayer and discussion sessions for the whole family. Resources are available from YCM team.
- Borrow a DVD (free for parishes) from the Multimedia centre at Brisbane Catholic Education Centre (phone 3033 7405). Currently their database contains more than 800 topics including, movies, bible stories, lives of the saints, prayer, spirituality and much more. Arrange for discussion sessions and refreshments!
- Organise sessions to explore different prayer experiences. (Faith & Life teams can assist).
- Attend 'Ignite Conference' with live music, dynamic speakers, drama, multimedia and prayer opportunities in 24-27 September for primary and secondary students at Clairvaux MacKillop College, Mt Gravatt. Check out www.igniteconference.com.au
- Encourage parishioners to be linked with newly initiated families for hospitality (welcoming, supporting, encouraging)
- Investigate 'KidsGames' holiday program for your parish. For more details go to www.brisbanekidsgames.org.au
- Find out about the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Check out http://parishes.bne.catholic.net.au/central/Catechesis_Good_Shepherd.htm

Do you know about the Youth & Children's Ministry team? We have a vision and we have a plan – it's called PATHWAYS and we are here to help. Go to our website www.ycm.org.au or contact any one of us directly:

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