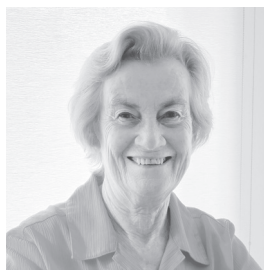


Becoming + Catholic



A LEADER'S GUIDE TO BAPTISM,
CONFIRMATION, EUCHARIST
& RECONCILIATION

Kathy Horan



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Introduction

This book is aimed at leaders who may be volunteers, and lay educators who are working with children in after-hours school Sacrament preparation programs. These leaders are not necessarily trained classroom teachers and may or may not have the support of a Religious Education coordinator dedicated to this role.

This book is designed to be used in conjunction with the 'Becoming Catholic' series, which includes the following titles by Kathy Horan:




- *A parent's guide to Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist & Reconciliation*
- *Baptism – A practical guide for parents and godparents*, Fr Geoffrey Plant
- *Eucharist – A practical guide for families*
- *Reconciliation – A practical guide for families*
- *Confirmation – A practical guide for families*
- *Sacred Objects & Symbols*

Purpose of this Leader Guide

The purpose of this Leader Guide is to assist new teachers, catechists and group leaders to make effective use of the 'Becoming Catholic' series by providing background theology of the sacraments, a learning process, skills, and classroom-based activities designed to assist the students in their preparation for the celebration of the sacraments.

The learning process used throughout this series is based on naming and understanding the human experience and then reflecting on this in the light of the gospels. Throughout each theme there are references to the story of Jesus: this is highly important because as Christians we are initiated into the community of believers who are followers of Jesus. We are also initiated into the Christian story. Therefore, it is important as educators that we nourish the lives of young people with many of the rich stories of Jesus.

In addition to hearing and reflecting on the stories of Jesus in the gospels, we need to lead children to a deeper relationship with Jesus in prayer and help them to make connections between the human experience and what it means to be Christians who live as Jesus lived. When the Catholic community gathers together to pray, Scripture or the Word of God always forms a central part of the Mass and sacrament celebrations.



It is the Word of God that continues to nourish us, and challenges us to make a difference in our world.

Catholic Identity

The Leader guide invites educators, leaders, families and students to engage in a process of reflection on the local school context, naming and understanding human experience, engaging and dialoguing with the Catholic tradition, particularly the Scriptures, and imagining a way forward that calls the whole community to action on behalf of the gospel message. This is a process that calls us to 'do theology' in our local context, mindful of the challenges, the signs of our times and the complexities of each local community.

It is the Word of God that continues to nourish us, and challenges us to make a difference in our world.

Introduction to the theme

In this section, the leader is provided with a summary, at an adult level, of the content and theological meaning of the theme.



LEARNING INTENTIONS

At the beginning of each theme, you will find some learning intentions. These represent objectives to assist you in your teaching of the theme, and are designed to focus on what it is about that theme that you wish the children to experience and understand by its conclusion. As they move closer to the celebration of each sacrament, there are some key ideas for them to grasp. These key ideas are also useful for your own reflection and self-evaluation at the conclusion of your teaching of this theme.



SHARING MY STORY

This part of the learning process begins with a focus on the human experience as the basis for further discussion and reflection. A leader may choose to draw on a real-life story, a scenario that has been developed for exploring the topic, or a story from a picture book that is relevant to the topic. The purpose of this aspect of the learning process is to engage the children and introduce them to the theme.



EXPLORING MY STORY

This part of the process seeks to explore the human experience a little more by asking further questions about the original experience, for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of the experience, and later making connections with the story of Jesus.



PRESENTING THE CHRISTIAN STORY

This is the central part of the process, together with the introduction at the head of the theme, which provides some background knowledge and theology for the leader. Gospel stories relating to the topic are explored to help lead them to an understanding of the meaning of the gospel story for the Christian community. Further questions allow for deeper insights into how Jesus lived and what that might mean for his followers today.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

In this section, the leader draws together the already shared reflections on the human experience. The insights gained reflect on Jesus and the gospel message and an understanding of the wisdom of the Christian community enables students to make connections for their daily lives. Possible activities are provided to help students make these connections.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In this final section of the learning process, the challenge is to think about the topic or theme in terms of addressing the following questions: what does this mean for me as a Christian living in today's world and learning to be a faithful follower of Jesus? How can I make a difference in the world today?

PRAYER TIME

At the end of each theme there are some suggestions for prayer with the class. It is good practice to have a prayer focus in the classroom or wherever the children gather. This could consist of a table with a cloth, a crucifix, candle and a Bible. The suggestions for prayer in this section would normally include a prayerful reading of the gospel passage used in the lesson; other aspects of the prayer time could include prayers of petition or thanksgiving, or prayers that reflect the needs of the community.

Sometimes incorporating a simple Penitential rite during prayer time draws our attention to what God invites us into – that is, into the family of God and a relationship with God. When we attend

Mass, we hear this same form of prayer in the Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass.

Suggestions for using Scripture in prayer

Lectio Divina

This is an ancient form of prayer that has a focus on the Word of God from Scripture. A passage is read and participants are invited to listen.

The passage is read again and this time participants are encouraged to focus on a word or phrase that means something significant to them.

Sometimes people name the word or phrase they have chosen, but often it is enough for individuals to simply repeat that word or phrase to themselves.

Christian meditation

Christian meditation is a way of engaging children in Scripture. For this exercise, it is good to read a gospel story to the children and then to have a chat with them about the story and what it might mean to them.

Following this, re-read the gospel story and invite children to imagine themselves in the scene, taking part. At the end of the reading, encourage them to share what they heard, saw, felt, or were thinking, as a result of meeting Jesus in the telling of the story. Sometimes this exercise can be followed up by journal writing.

There are many strategies for developing mindfulness in children. They begin with a focus on breathing and a slowing down of breathing. This enables children to become calm and focused and therefore open to prayer. Introducing children to



the notion of a mantra, which is a word or phrase that can be repeated over and over, silently, is a way of developing greater consciousness and awareness.

Sometimes the use of reflective music can be a signal that it is time to slow down, to become calm and aware of our breathing and to take time to become mindful of what is happening inside us and around us. This can be a good exercise to lead into a time of prayer, or simply as a way of becoming focused.

Journalling

Journalling is a good way of promoting further reflection on a gospel story, a real scenario from the student's daily life, or on issues that affect our world. Students may like to record their thoughts freely in response to a story or a class discussion. Sometimes it is useful to provide some structure or scaffolding to guide their reflections, such as in the following outline:

- What did you hear?
- What did you learn?
- What did you like – or not like – about this story/lesson/discussion?
- How do you feel about what you have learned and shared with others?

Additional gospel stories

Stories of healing

Royal official's son	John 4:46-54
Peter's mother-in-law	Mark 1:29-31
Healing a paralytic	Mark 2:3-12
Blind man at Bethsaida	Mark 8:22-26
Two blind men	Matthew 9:27-31

Nature miracles

Feeding of 5000	Matthew 14:13-21
First catch of fish	Luke 5:1-11
Jesus stills the storm	Matthew 8:23-27

Parables

Good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37
Lost son/forgiving Father	Luke 15:11-32
Lost sheep	Luke 15:3-7
Pharisee and tax collector	Luke 18:9-14

Working with parents

The Second Vatican Council of the '60s affirmed the role of parents as first and on-going educators in faith for their children. The Council also named the family as the 'domestic Church'.

In the light of this, leaders and Catechists are called to work in partnership with parents to support them in the formal religious development of their children, particularly with reference to sacrament preparation.

Families come in all shapes and sizes; in this important ministry of religious education, communication and on-going relationship with families is essential. In practical terms, this may mean the Catechist or leader ensures all communications reach both parents, particularly when family arrangements are complex.