

Chapter Six

The Front Door: The Sacraments as our Greater Pastoral Opportunity

Key Theme

Our Sacraments are grace filled. We must ensure that our Sacramental formation is fruit filled.

Takeaways

- “I strongly believe that our starting point must be that we never say “no” to any request for a sacrament. To do so is to cut off at the heels even the possibility of conversion and transformation. However, this begs the question of what it means to say “yes”. “Yes” cannot simply mean the fixing of a date, some paperwork and a quick preparation class.” (p. 198)
- Sacraments are meant to be rooted in discipleship. They are to have a connection with conversion, profession of faith, and fruitfulness, not just mere routines. (p. 199–203)
- In our contemporary experiences, there seems to be more of a pastoral concern over the validness of a sacrament, with little or no corresponding concern for the fruitfulness. (p. 202–203)
- “Saint Thomas Aquinas told us, ‘Whatsoever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver.’ Re-education of our people will be vital so that changes in pastoral practices are not perceived as punishing children and families...” (p. 206)
- When we consider those who seek sacraments, we should ask ourselves if having a true encounter with Jesus is important to us and if we are willing to change to ensure that can happen. “The mission of our Church is to make disciples, not to celebrate good liturgy or keep people happy. Sacraments are given to us to initiate and sustain believers into disciples.” (p. 208)
- There is an opportunity to review and enhance our baptismal preparation, confirmation preparation, marriage preparation and RCIA programs with the goal of helping people encounter Jesus and to help them on a path to discipleship. (p. 210–232)

Chapter Six (continued)

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Discussion Questions

1. What does it look and feel like to receive a Sacrament in your parish? What do the Sacraments mean to the recipient of the Sacrament, their loved ones, and to the parish community?
2. What can you do to further the formation of disciples through Sacramental formation? What specific steps will you take to move in that direction?
3. How does catechesis, Sacramental preparation, and youth activities form disciples and engage the whole family? If these actions are not forming disciples, what is getting in the way? How does your parish actively follow up?
4. How does accompanying couples through marriage preparation form them for a life of discipleship? If the process is not forming disciples, what is getting in the way? How does the parish accompany couples after their marriage ceremony to live a life of discipleship?
5. How does your RCIA program and sacramental preparation for adults form disciples? If it is not forming disciples, what is getting in the way? How does your parish connect them to parish life?

Notes
