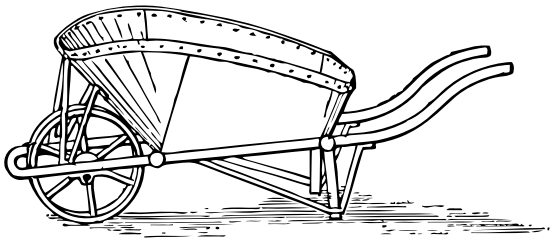
Conversion-Oriented, Family-Inclusive Sacramental Prep

The purpose of Sacramental Prep is to help participants desire to receive what the Sacrament offers.
The purpose of the Sacrament is relationship.

What is the most “wheelbarrow” thing you’ve ever experienced, offered, seen, heard of, imagined?
Where conversion is both invited and accompanied.



How might something like this be adapted for families in sacramental prep?

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The most common context for conversion is shared experiences.

Family-Inclusive Sacramental Prep should be made up of mostly shared experiences.

Whole Family Together Shoulder-to-shoulder experiences that build shared memory and identity	• Fun that's bigger than one family can create alone • Community-building with other parish families • Service with a shared mission beyond themselves • Facilitated meaningful family conversations • Captivating prayer experiences families can't easily create at home • Object Lessons	
Parents with Peers Their own peer community, because their faith matters, not just their child's	• Cultivating relationships • Intentional mentorship and witness • Support, accompaniment, encouragement for raising families that grow in faith • Prayer time for their own needs • Space to ask their own questions about God	
Child with Peers Age-appropriate formation and belonging, still essential	• Age-appropriate catechesis at their developmental level • Peer belonging and Catholic identity formation • Sacramental content and ritual familiarity • Object lessons unpacked through embodied learning • The experience of being known by peers in faith • Space to ask their own questions about God	

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Family Culture is also built on shared experiences.

At-home Sacramental Prep components should be rooted in shared experiences.

Cultivate desire for the Sacrament and for the Lord	• send home stories to be read out loud
	  ◦ saint stories
	  ◦ scripture stories
	  ◦ any stories that could help communicate truth, beauty, goodness	

Cultivate wonder	• encourage families to experience something specific in nature together	
Cultivate family reflection and dialogue	• ask families to reflect on those experiences and share together	

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Family-Inclusive Sacramental Prep - Avoiding Extremes

Instructions: It's easy for programs to drift toward extremes without noticing. You might be meeting so infrequently that families never build momentum, or so often that you're burning everyone out. You might keep families together every session, or split them into peer groups every time — both miss something important.

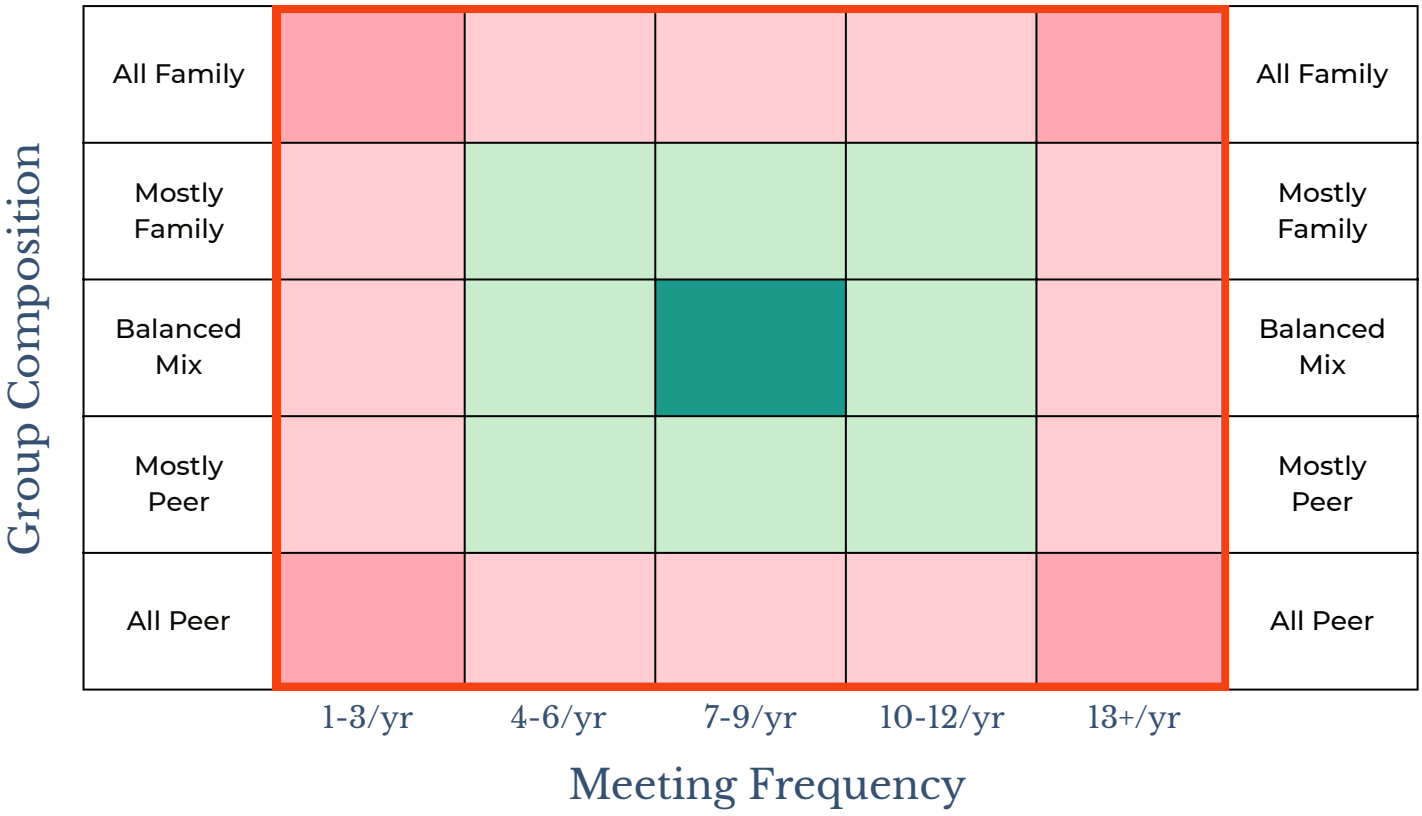
This chart helps you see where your program actually sits, identify if you're too close to an "edge," and set a realistic goal for this year. You don't have to overhaul everything at once — just one step closer to the center.

1. Put an **X** where your Sacramental Prep program is now for both parameters, the frequency of your meetings and the composition of your groups.
2. Put a ★ where you can realistically move THIS COMING YEAR.

Program: _____

Understanding the Chart

Think of this chart as a table surface. The red edges are extremes where programs "fall off" into imbalance. The green center represents the balanced approach that bears the most fruit.



Reflection

You don't have to leap all at once. What is **one concrete step** to move toward the green?

_____

_____

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Conversion-Oriented Sacramental Prep

Sacramental Mystery Box Reflection

Why This Approach Matters

Sacramental preparation is most fruitful when it is:

- **Incarnational** — God uses signs, symbols, and embodied experience
- **Relational** — trust and belonging make faith possible
- **Family-centered** — parents are primary witnesses
- **Experiential** — wonder and encounter precede explanation
- **Intentional** — small moments can lead to lasting conversion

Capture Ideas

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Conversion-oriented Sacramental Prep

Sample Sacramental Prep Moments - Part 1

These examples are not scripts or curricula. They illustrate how ordinary objects, used intentionally, can open space for encounter and conversation within sacramental preparation.

1. Baptism - “Marked and Claimed”

Objects: Bowl of water and small towel
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Families gather around a bowl of water. Parents dip their fingers into the water and gently trace the sign of the cross on their child’s forehead.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): “Before your child could choose God, God chose them. Before they could speak their faith, the Church spoke it for them.”
Parents are invited to briefly share something they remember or cherish about their child’s baptism day.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Community
Outcome: Children experience belonging and care. Parents are reminded of their role as primary witnesses of faith.

2. Reconciliation - “Coming Home”

Objects: Piece of aluminum foil
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Each person holds a flat piece of aluminum foil, representing our relationship with God and with others. The leader explains that sin does not make us bad, but it damages relationships. The leader names a few age-appropriate examples (disobeying parents or teachers, being unkind, putting ourselves first) and invites families to name others quietly. Each time an example is named, everyone folds or crumples their foil. Eventually, the foil becomes a small ball. The leader asks if anyone can make their foil smooth and new again.
Families then walk together to the confessional. Inside is a basket or container where they place the crumpled foil. As they leave, they receive a new, smooth piece of foil.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): “God gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to do what we cannot do for ourselves — to heal what sin has damaged and to restore our relationships.”
Parents are encouraged to share how forgiveness has mattered in their own lives.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Community
Outcome: Children associate confession with mercy, healing, and welcome — not fear.

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3. Eucharist - “Recognizing Jesus”

Objects: White cloth, small chalice, small paten, paper host, small bell
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Families gather around a table, which serves as a symbolic altar. Together, they place the white cloth on the table and prepare the gifts of bread and wine. Each family member takes a turn making the gesture of the epiclesis — silently lowering their hands over the gifts — while another family member gently rings the bell.
A brief moment of silence follows.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): “Jesus often comes quietly. In the Eucharist, he gives himself to us and stays with us.”
Parents and children are invited to share where they notice Jesus’ presence — at Mass, at home, or in moments of love and care.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Community
Outcome: Children begin to associate the Eucharist with presence, reverence, and relationship — not just ritual

4. Confirmation - “Sealed and Sent”

Objects: Small bottle of oil
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Parents place their hands gently on their child’s head in silence. Then, using a small amount of oil, they trace a cross on the child’s hand. Afterward, parents gently turn the child’s hand outward, extending it slightly away from the body — a physical gesture of being sent.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): “The Holy Spirit strengthens us not to stay the same, but to be sent.”
Parents are invited to share a moment when they needed the help of the Holy Spirit — courage, wisdom, patience, or strength.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Mission
Outcome: Children understand Confirmation as strengthening and commissioning for mission, not graduation.

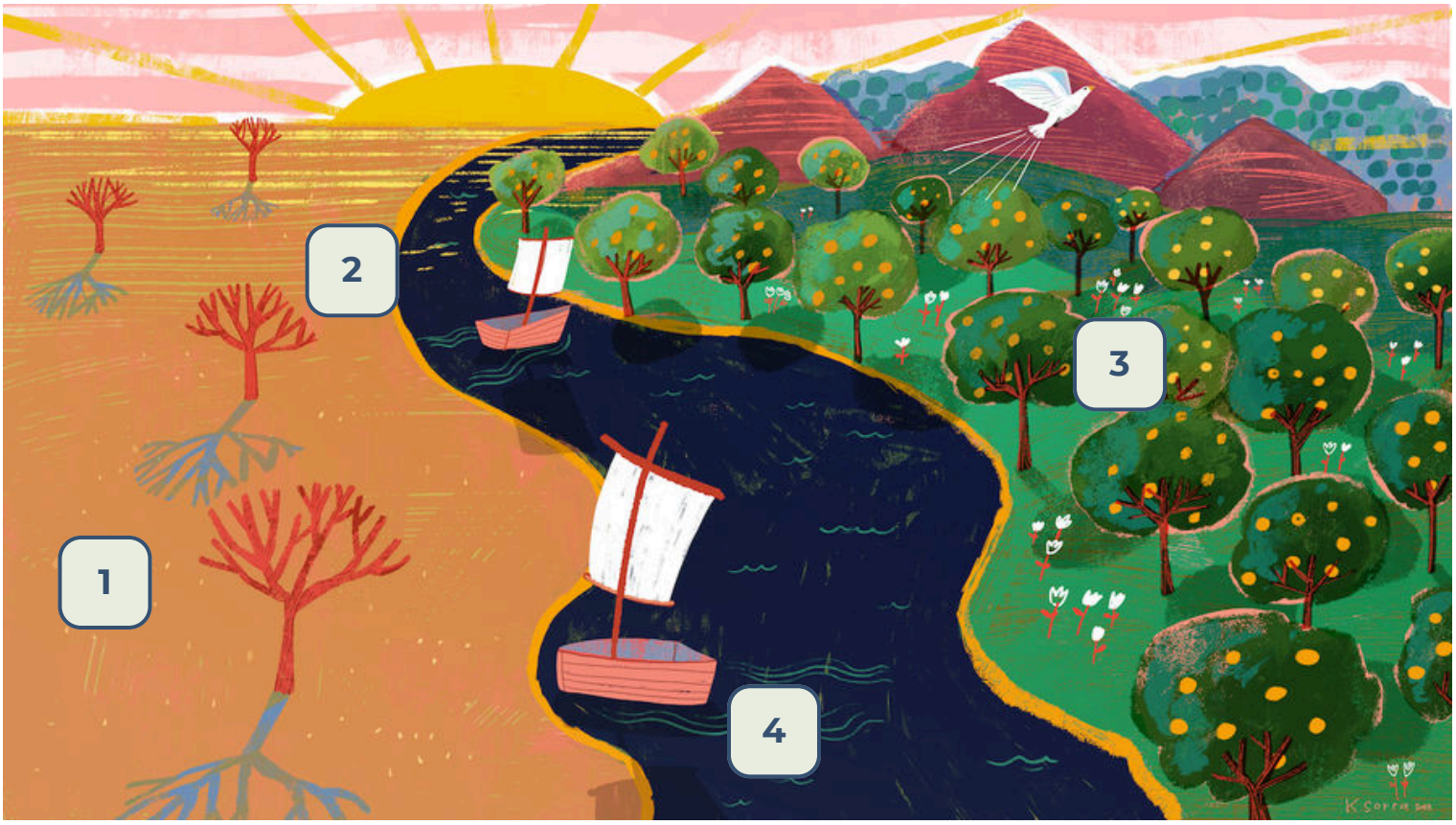
A Final Encouragement

These moments are simple by design. When sacramental preparation becomes more embodied, relational, and prayerful, families are more likely to move from participation to discipleship.

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Conversion-Oriented Sacramental Prep

Including and Inviting Families



Step	Stage of Discipleship	Jesus' Method	Pivotal Question for Family-Inclusive Sacramental Prep:
1	Pre-encounter	Connect	Where and when do parents and families experience being known, not just enrolled?
2	Encounter & Response	Captivate	What moments are designed to really move someone, not just inform them?
3	Growth	Catechize	How do we teach the Faith in small, delicious bites that are satisfying, not stuffing?
4	Mission	Co-mission	How does this send parents home with a role, not just information or an assignment?

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