

# Not Just for Kids

## SIGNS OF GRACE Evangelizes Parents



***“I tell [parents]: ‘Don’t be asking your children to do something that you are not going to take part in.’”***

**Deacon Kevin Bagley**

St. Andrew Catholic Church, Fort Worth, TX

Deacon Kevin Bagley’s Ft. Worth parish—3700 families strong—has had a FORMED subscription for the past four years. In his role as director of Faith Formation and Evangelization, Deacon Kevin tapped SIGNS OF GRACE as the parish’s First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion preparation program.

“I see SIGNS OF GRACE as good, solid Catholic teaching, helping children understand their relationship with God, with one another, and helping them build their relationship with God and his son, Jesus.”

But while SIGNS OF GRACE is a children’s sacramental program, it includes a thorough family faith formation component.

At St. Andrew, the hours between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on three Sunday afternoons in November and the first Sunday afternoon in December are devoted to preparation for First Reconciliation, which the children will make at the parish’s Advent communal celebration of the sacrament.

Approximately 75 children, each with at least one parent in tow, come in, pray together, and watch the five-minute introductory video to that week’s lesson from *Signs of Grace: You Are Forgiven*.

“The videos are all just great; the kids love them,” Deacon Kevin said.



***“I tell parents, ‘If you want to learn something about your faith, jump onto FORMED. Go get lost. It’s all good, solid Catholic material.’”***



**Deacon  
Kevin Bagley**

The children are then dismissed into groups with their catechists. Deacon Kevin remains with the parents to talk about what the children are learning.

He expects parents to have watched that week's session of *Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession*, which explains to adults the grace and healing offered in the sacrament.

"I tell parents, 'Don't be asking your children to do something that you are not going to take part in,'" Deacon Kevin said.

He asks the parents to sign up to remain after 4:00 p.m. one Sunday during the program. During that time, he opens the doors to the confessionals on the priest and penitent sides, then shows them what's inside and points out the cheat sheets for the Act of Contrition.

"I demystify the confessional," Deacon Kevin said.

During November, the deacon said, the Franciscan friars who serve the parish report an uptick in the number of Reconciliations—many of them parents of children in sacramental preparation who have not been inside a confessional themselves for five or ten years.

The same process unfolds in January with First Holy Communion preparation. Children arrive with at least one of their parents; everyone prays together, then the group watches that week's introduction to *Signs of Grace: You Are Loved*.

In January, Deacon Kevin asks parents to watch an episode of *Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist* before each meeting. He discusses with them what they've seen and learned from that week's video.

Every Sunday, some parents and their children remain after the program. This time, Deacon Kevin gives them a tour of the church, shows everyone unconsecrated wafers, and has parents give their children an unconsecrated host as practice for First Holy Communion.

Can Deacon Kevin see the fruits of this approach to First Holy Communion preparation?

"I want to say there's more reverence," he said, noting that reverence is a commodity that's tough to quantify.

"The Adoration Chapel sees a lot of traffic," he said. "There are 25 seats, and sometimes they're all full."



To learn more, contact **Brian Truckenbrod**  
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