



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Vicar General

19 August 2013

To All Priests

**Parental Authority for Children to Receive the Sacraments
'Family Law Issues'**

Dear Monsignor, Father and Deacon

In recent months the issues in relation to family law requirements and reception of sacraments by children in our parishes has been a matter of significant discussion. As a result of these discussions Mr Pat Mullins who is providing legal advice to the Archbishop and the Archdiocese has prepared a summary of the issues that need to be considered by Parish Priests, Associate Pastors and Deacons when celebrating the sacraments of initiation with children. I have included his briefing paper for your reference.

I have also prepared a brief statement that should now be included in all Baptism, Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation application forms that are distributed to the parents of children wishing to receive any of these sacraments in any of our parishes. This statement needs to be signed by both parents, as outlined in the briefing paper. The Archbishop has asked that this statement be included and that careful attention be paid by priests and deacons to ensure that any court orders in relation to children receiving the sacraments are carefully observed.

If you have any further concerns about this matter I would ask that you would contact either Mr Pat Mullins 0419 711 843 or myself.

With every best wish,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Rev Monsignor Peter J Meneely VG

Parental Authority for Children to receive the Sacraments – Family Law Issues

These days separated families are common and it may be that Court Orders are in place from the Family Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit Court of Australia which outline whether both parents have a role to play in the making of significant decisions in the life of their children. In the absence of such orders, the civil law position is that both parents have an equal say in making these important decisions concerning the life of their child.

It is possible (but reasonably unlikely) for such orders to outline arrangements for the reception of sacraments by the children. What is more common is that the orders outline that a separated parent may continue to have a say in these important decisions. Accordingly, it is in the best interests of Pastors and Parishes that both parents sign a clear statement that they consent and give permission for their child to be administered a particular sacrament.

In these days marriages between persons of different denomination are common, so these matters can have particular sensitivity. There is potential for Parishes and Parish Priests to be drawn into inter-family disputes concerning children receiving the sacraments (particularly the sacrament of Penance and first Eucharist and Confirmation).

The Archdiocese has drawn up and distributed for use a clear statement of agreement/consent to be signed by both parents as part of the sacramental program. The form requires that if orders are in place, the copy of all relevant orders are provided to the Parish Priest when the form is signed and returned. Where both parents sign the document, there is no difficulty with the administration of the nominated sacraments to the particular child. Care needs to be taken if one or other parent does not sign the document.

The best approach is that if both parents do not sign the document, then the child should not be admitted to the sacrament. It is recommended that if one or other parent declines or refuses to sign the form of consent, then civil legal advice ought be sought. This is available on a 24/7 basis from Mr Pat Mullins (contact phone numbers 3224 0350 or mobile 0419 711 843).

Application Insert - August 2013

FAMILY LAW MATTERS

A copy of any Court Orders concerning residence arrangements for the Candidate, time spent by the Candidate with either parent, or parenting issues must be supplied with this Enrolment Form.

Are there any such Orders? Yes/No

Has a copy of every such Order been attached to this Enrolment Form? Yes/No

I hereby give my consent for the Candidate to be admitted to the Sacraments of the Catholic Church as indicated below:

- Baptism
- Sacraments of Penance
- Confirmation
- First Holy Communion

Father's Signature Date

Mother's Signature Date