

My name is Debbie Gibb. I am one of many volunteers serving our Parish Sacramental Preparation Team. This ministry involves retreat days for First Eucharist and Confirmation preparation. These full day retreats are mandatory for candidates to attend. They take place on a chosen Saturday prior to the celebration of their sacrament. Retreat days begin with the team getting together ahead of time to organize materials and welcome candidates as they arrive. Prior to the retreat, family and sponsors assist candidates in the completion of a workbook - providing the basis of their sacramental knowledge. The retreat day focuses on solidifying the understanding candidates have of their sacrament through interactive stations. Our day concludes with the celebration of Mass where candidates and their supporters are blessed by our Parish Community. As a new parent I was a "cradle catholic" with a deeply rooted respect for my faith, never doubting that I wanted my daughters to receive their sacraments. My plan was to politely get IT done and I looked forward to a big sigh of relief when I could put IT all behind me. Following my youngest daughter's Confirmation, that long awaited sigh of relief was replaced with an undeniable feeling that something was missing. That September I joined youth ministry as a leader which gave way to my involvement with the sacramental preparation teams. The thought of this new endeavour was very exciting and scary at the same time. I was quite satisfied with my position as a "stay-at-home" mom along with self-employment as an in-home childcare provider. Now I was actually going to be joining the people I admired in a ministry for which I had developed a great fondness! That's when I began praying for courage to leave my comfort zone and asked others to pray for me too. This ministry continually strengthens my understanding and appreciation for our beliefs. It enables me to share the joy of the precious gift of the sacraments, while contributing to the future of our parish by assisting families in their faith journey. It also provides me with a deeper sense of belonging within the community by being the visible "hands and feet" bringing God's love to candidates and their supporters. Reading scripture and persistent prayer have proven to be invaluable to me as the Holy Spirit continues to bless my life through this ministry. I pray that members of our faith community will continue to humbly accept God's call to serve. St. John the Baptist, pray for us!