Celebration of the Quince Años
Diocese of Toledo
Guidelines

Introduction:
The celebration of the Quince Años, although not a sacrament, is an important traditional celebration for a young person turning fifteen years of age in Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean as well as in parts of the United States. It is typically a celebration of gratitude to God for the gift of life and is constituted of a special blessing given at Mass or during a Liturgy of the Word service often accompanied by the gift of significant religious items. It offers an opportunity for the young person to receive in a special way from the Church the spiritual strength and moral guidance she will need to make adult decisions.

The young woman, the quinceañera, in the presence of her family and friends, and frequently accompanied by fifteen girls or fifteen couples who are “companions of faith” (Compañeros de Fe), renews her Baptismal promises and professes her desire to live out the rest of her life according to the teachings of Christ and the Church. Signs of faith (e.g. a blessed medal, Bible, rosary, prayer book) may be given to her. A special blessing is given at the conclusion of the service and afterwards she is presented to the community. Although not a pastoral necessity, the celebration is a teachable moment in the life of the family and the young woman and honors the deep cultural tradition that continues to foster adherence to the Catholic faith.

Occasionally a young man who is fifteen, a quinceañero, may ask for the ceremony. This document will, however, refer to a young woman.

Purpose:
The celebration of Quince Años offers both the young woman and her family and friends an opportunity to reflect on the way their Catholic faith is lived. It is a time to recognize, affirm, support and challenge the youth and to witness as a community to the presence of Jesus among us. It is an appropriate time to encourage the youth to become more involved in the life of the church.

Requirements:
- The family wishing to present their daughter for a Quince Años celebration should be Catholic and ideally registered and involved in a parish. In the event that this is not so for valid reasons, they should be vouched for by someone of good standing in the community.
• At least four months prior to the intended date, the family should contact the parish about preparation for the celebration. (N.B. The pastor, pastoral staff member or deacon in charge of preparation should make immediate response to the family.)

• The young woman who is to celebrate Quince Años must have passed her fifteenth birthday, is baptized Catholic, has received First Reconciliation and First Communion and preferably is already confirmed. If she is not yet confirmed, she should become active in confirmation preparation prior to the Quince Años celebration and be confirmed before or within a reasonable time thereafter.

• The young woman should have been attending Mass with her family on a regular basis. It is ideal if she is also involved in some aspect of ministry in the parish.

• The parents are expected to attend most or all of the formation sessions with the young woman. Padrinos/madrinas are not expected to attend sessions but should be available for the rehearsal if there is one.

• Compañeros de Fe (young women who attend the Quinceañera) should preferably be fifteen years of age and normally should be Catholic. Non-Catholic Compañeros may be part of the group, but if the celebration is during a Mass, the Catholic norms for reception of communion should be observed.

The Quince Años Celebration

The rubrics in both Spanish and English for the celebration both within and outside a Eucharistic Liturgy may be found in the USCCB document “Bendición Al Cumplir Quince Años” (attached).

The liturgy planning guide (attached) prepared by the Office of Worship may be used.

Preparation for the Celebration

The following is an outline for a four session preparation for the Quinceañera:

izia First Session

Participants: parents, young woman, padrinos/madrinas, Compañeros de Fe, family members may attend

Purpose: to allow pastor, team or staff person to become acquainted with the family and to assess their understanding of the faith and the purpose of the Quince Años celebration.
Process:
- have family tell story of the family and of their faith formation
- speak of importance of family in the formation of the faith of the young
- introduce parish as extension of family, as a community of faith
- allow family to present their reasons for wanting the celebration and some of their expectations
- provide printed material on the quinceañera for reading in preparation for the next session

Second Session
Participants: parents, young woman

Purpose: to further explore the meaning of the quinceañera through discussion of the materials

Process:
- ask parents and youth to talk about what they learned from the materials on the Quince Años celebration
- provide supplemental or corrective information where opportune or necessary
- speak specifically to the young woman about what her Quince Años celebration means to her; how her life will be different
- engage the family and the young woman in a discussion of human sexuality, a “theology of the body” and moral decision making
- provide various scripture readings that could be used at the Mass or Liturgy of the Word (if a Mass the readings can be from the Mass of the Day or from Masses for Special Need or Occasion: “In Thanksgiving”) in preparation for the next session

Third Session
Participants: parents and young woman

Purpose: to explore appropriate readings and music for the celebration and to familiarize the quinceañera with the dedication/blessing prayer and its intent

Process:
- invite participants to talk about which of the readings were meaningful to them and why
- have quinceañera speak of any challenges the scriptures presented for her in her life
- review the Baptismal promises that were made for or by the young and discuss their meaning
- give the participants a copy of the “act of thanksgiving and personal commitment” that the quinceañera will pray at the celebration and talk about its meaning
Fourth Session

Participants: parents and young woman
Compañeros de Fe (if possible)

Purpose: to take the opportunity to go through the Eucharistic liturgy to gain further understanding of the sacrament as well as to choose the readings, prayers of the faithful and the appropriate ministers (e.g. lectors)

Process:
- provide an outline of the Eucharistic liturgy and invite the participants to talk about what various parts of the liturgy mean to them
- give the liturgy preparation sheet to the participants and invite them to choose the readings (first, psalm, gospel) and to personalize the prayers of the faithful
- set particulars for rehearsal (date, time, place)

Optional:
It may be both advantageous and appropriate to provide a penance service for the family, the Compañeros de Fe and others involved in the celebration, especially if the celebration is within a Mass. This provides an opportunity for catechesis about the sacrament as well as participation in the sacrament for the special occasion.

An evening of reflection or a retreat might be planned especially if the Quince Años preparation is being done with several families or several parishes. The content of sessions three and four might be done in the retreat format.

Resources for materials for preparation:

“Mis Quince Años/My Fifteenth Birthday: Teaching Material for Quinceañera Formation” from the Diocese of San Bernardino, CA, Pauline Media, Boston, 2002, is a bi-lingual teaching manual for preparation. There is also a companion booklet for the young woman. Order online at www.pauline.org/store or contact a Pauline Books and Media Store.

A complete set of lesson plans prepared by Father Ken Morman and Sister Joy Barker, OSF is available from the Office of Hispanic Ministries.
Other Considerations

- In celebrating the Quince Años, it is important to avoid any appearance that the celebration is a sacrament, especially a wedding (no veil or male companion for the quinceañera. Her dress, although it may be white, should not be or look like a bridal gown). Flowers and decorations should be subdued. Floral arches should be discouraged or prohibited.

- The readings used at a Mass may be chosen from the Mass of the day or from Masses for Various Needs and Occasions: “In Thanksgiving.” The Quince Años celebration is usually not celebrated at a Sunday celebration of the Eucharist or its vigil.

- A funeral or wedding celebration takes precedence over a celebration of Quince Años. To avoid conflicts, the celebration is best scheduled well in advance and at a time other than that popular for weddings. It is very important to coordinate the schedule since the religious ceremony is commonly followed by a dinner and a party and the family may want to rent a facility and have food prepared.

- Whether it is a Mass or a Liturgy of the Word service, the celebration is fittingly held in the church. A Liturgy of the Word service could appropriately be celebrated in a home where a Small Faith Community gathers of which the family is a member. A Deacon may preside at the Liturgy of the Word service.

- If there is a Mass, the procession at the beginning may include the following in the order described:
  - the cross bearer
  - candle bearers
  - Padrinos/Madrinas bringing the religious gifts that will be presented to the youth
  - Compañeros de Fe
  - the quinceañera, accompanied by her parents. If she is the lector for the first reading she may carry the lectionary.
  - the Presider (and Deacon).

- The quinceañera as well as the family, the Compañeros de Fe and the Padrinos/Madrinas should be seated in the congregation, such as reserved first rows, not in the sanctuary.

- The Compañeros de Fe consist of no more than fifteen young women (there may be fewer) who accompany the quinceañera as companions and as support in living out her faith commitment. The young women may be accompanied by young men as escorts.

- Religious articles presented to the quinceañera may be blessed before the service and simply presented to her, or they may be blessed during the service using the simple blessing for a religious article: “May these articles and the one who uses them be blessed, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” (#1462, Book of Blessings) It would not be appropriate to bless jewelry or other non-religious articles, including the crown worn by the quinceañera.
It is appropriate to require that the clothing worn by those participating be suitable and reverent for a religious celebration and fitting for someone who is committing her life to following Jesus.
LITURGICAL PREPARATION
QUINCE AÑOS CELEBRATION

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Phone number ___________________ E-mail __________________________

Parent’s Names __________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Godparents’ Names _______________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Names of Compañeros de Fe:

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

The celebration will be _____ Mass _____ Liturgy of the Word service
Mass Preparation

Opening Hymn

Lord, have mercy  _____ sung  _____ recited

Gloria  _____ sung  _____ recited

First Reading:  

First Reader:

Responsorial Psalm:

Cantor:

Second Reading:

Reader:

Gospel Acclamation:

Gospel

Prayers of the Faithful Reader:

Presenters of Bread and Wine

Offertory Song:

Holy, Holy, Holy  _____ sung  _____ recited

Our Father  _____ sung  _____ recited

Who will receive the Sign of Peace from the Quinceañera?
Lamb of God _____ sung _____ recited

Who will be Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist?

________________________________________  _______________________
________________________________________  _______________________
________________________________________  _______________________

Communion Song: ___________________________________________________  

What will be presented at time of the blessing after communion?

________________________________________  _______________________
________________________________________  _______________________
________________________________________  _______________________

Will there be a song at presentation at Mary’s altar? If yes, indicate ____________

________________________________________  _______________________

Recessional Song: ___________________________________________________  

Will there be a song leader? ___yes ___no

If yes, please give name _________________________________

Musicians _________________________________________________

________________________________________  _______________________

________________________________________  _______________________
Preparation for Liturgy of the Word Service

Opening Hymn

First Reading:

First Reader:

Responsorial Psalm:

Reader:

Second Reading:

Reader:

Gospel Acclamation:

Gospel:

Prayers of the Faithful Reader:

Will there be a song at presentation at Mary’s altar? If yes, indicate

Closing Song:
ORDER FOR THE BLESSING
ON THE FIFTEENTH BIRTHDAY

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/Quinceanera.pdf