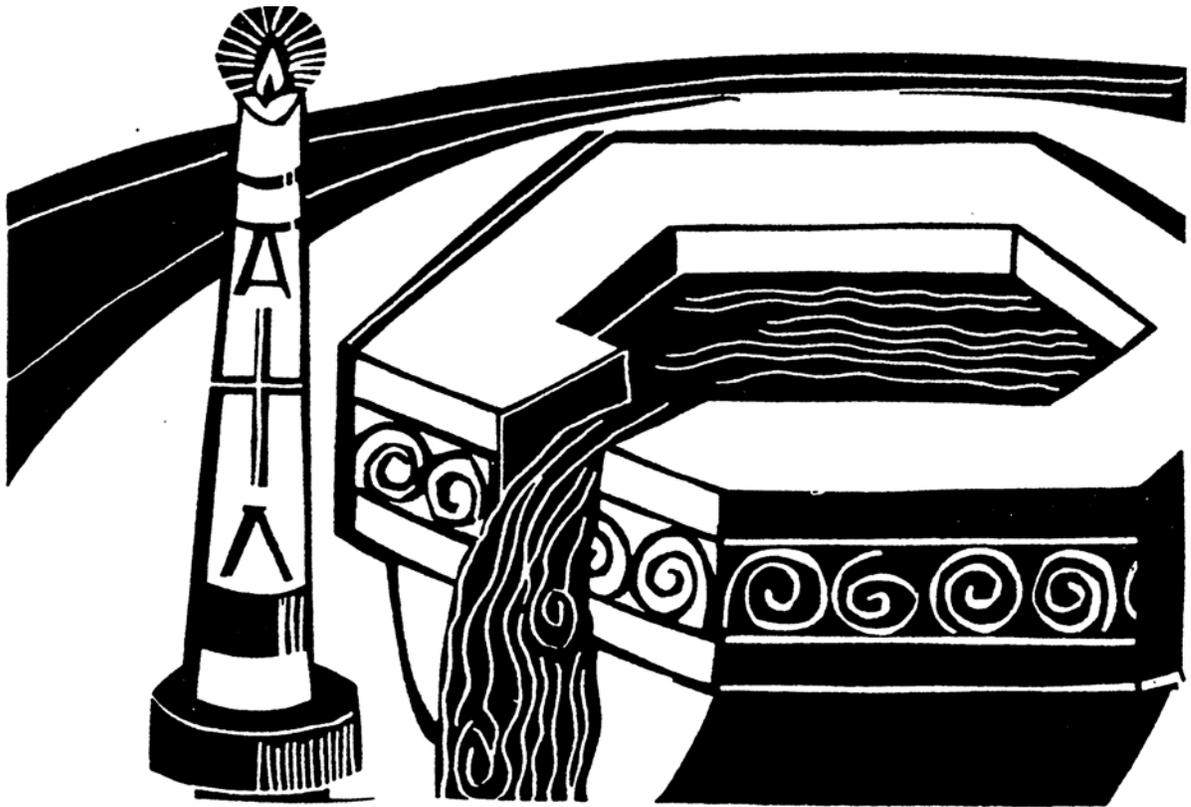


Diocese of Albany
Office of Prayer and Worship

RCIA Handbook: A Guide to the Most Frequently Asked Questions



revised, June 22, 2010

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In the year 2000, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops completed and published a report on the state of the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation in this country, *Journey to the Fullness of Life*. In the concluding chapter of this report, the authors wrote: "The results of this study make it clear that the RCIA is renewing the life of the Church in the United States. It is also clear that the overall implementation as intended by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults must continue to be a major priority in the local churches."

With my brother bishops, I affirm and support the ongoing implementation of the Rite. It is the norm for Christian Initiation in our diocese. While this handbook provides easy access to the particulars of the Rite, the ritual text, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* remains our primary source.

I am grateful to all our priests, deacons and lay ministers who serve as team leaders, coordinators, catechists, sponsors and liturgists in this very important ministry of evangelization. Christ present in his Body, the Church, is a powerful means of formation for those who desire to be like him. I hope this handbook, prepared by the Initiation Sub-committee of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, will assist you and help you to grow as you seek to serve those who long to draw closer to our Lord.

May God's blessing be upon you.

In Christ,

Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is the work of the Christian Initiation Sub-committee of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and reflects their studied and pastoral experience of the RCIA. We are most grateful to the diocese of Rockville Center for allowing us to revise and adapt their handbook for use in our diocese.

To the many ministers who assist in the inquiry, catechumenal and mystagogical process, to paraphrase from the rites of our Church, "May God, who has begun this good work, bring it to completion."

The National Statutes are found in Appendix III of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Key to Abbreviations

RCIA: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
NS: National Statutes on the Catechumenate
CCEO: Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches
Canons: Code of Canon Law

1. The Pre-Initiation Inventory

The Office of Prayer and Worship of the Diocese of Albany has published a **Pre-Initiation Inventory**, designed to help and assist pastoral ministers who serve in initiation ministries. This worksheet not only gathers the necessary information concerning an inquirer, but also alerts the Church minister to issues that call for further attention. The **Pre-Initiation Inventory** should be used in the inquiry stage of the process.

CATECHUMENS

2. Catechumens

The term catechumen is strictly reserved for the unbaptized who have been admitted into the order of catechumens. (NS, 2.)

3. Recording the names of catechumens

Because catechumens are joined to the Church by their admission to the catechumenate and are part of the household of Christ (RCIA, 47), their status is taken seriously. Their names are to be recorded in the parish Register of Catechumens, along with the names of the sponsors, minister, the date and place of the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance (RCIA, 46.)

4. Length of the Catechumenate

Ordinarily, the period of the catechumenate lasts from at least the Easter season of one year until the next; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year (NS, 6.)

5. Abbreviated form of the RCIA for catechumens only in exceptional circumstances

When there are extraordinary circumstances that would prevent the catechumen from completing all the steps of the catechumenate, or when the catechumen has reached a depth of Christian conversion and a degree of religious maturity that would seem not to require the complete catechumenate, only the diocesan bishop may permit the use of the abbreviated form of the RCIA. (RCIA, 331-369; NS, 20-21.) The concern is for the spiritual loss for the catechumen should the abbreviated form of the RCIA be used too freely.

Permission is to be requested from the diocesan bishop, through the Office of Prayer and Worship. The office should be contacted as soon as possible.

6. Funerals of Catechumens

Catechumens are members of the household of Christ (RCIA, 47.) Should they die before the completion of their initiation, the funeral liturgy, including the funeral Mass should be celebrated as usual, omitting only language referring directly to the sacraments which the catechumen has not received (NS, 9.)

7. Marriage of Catechumens

The marriage of catechumens, whether with other catechumens or with baptized Christians or even non-Christians, is celebrated at a Liturgy of the Word and never at the Eucharistic liturgy (NS, 10.) A Catholic party who marries a catechumen must request a dispensation (disparity of worship.)

8. Reconciliation for Catechumens

The Sacrament of Penance is not celebrated for catechumens, although they may take part in non-sacramental penitential celebrations. (Cf. Rite of Penance, Appendix II.)

9. Confirmation for Catechumens

In accord with the ancient practice followed in the Roman liturgy, adults are not to be baptized without receiving confirmation immediately afterward, unless very serious reason stands in the way (RCIA, 215; NS, 35.)

10. The Rite of Election

The diocesan bishop is the proper minister of the Rite of Election (RCIA, 12). The Rite of Sending to Election is provided in the ritual book for parishes to use in sending catechumens to election (RCIA, 106-116; 530-546.) The Rite of Election is not to take place in parishes.

11. Scrutinies

The Scrutinies may not be omitted. For a serious reason, the diocesan bishop may dispense an individual from one scrutiny, or in an extraordinary circumstance, even from two (RCIA, 34.) At Masses where the Scrutinies are celebrated, the "A" cycle of readings is considered normative, even during years "B" and "C" (RCIA, 146.)

12. Dismissals

The catechumens are dismissed after the homily and before the General Intercessions. After the dismissal formulary, the catechumens leave in procession. With the help of some of the faithful, they remain together to share in the breaking open of the Word of God (RCIA, 67; 83.2.)

13. Sponsors

Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the catechumens and stand as a witness to their moral character, faith and intention. A sponsor accompanies any inquirer seeking admission as a catechumen, and continues to walk with the individual through the entire initiation process. This companion is not necessarily the same as the canonical sponsor, or godparent, at full initiation.

14. Godparents

Godparents accompany the catechumen on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. Godparents are persons designated by the catechumens on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest. They are chosen before the catechumen's election, and fulfill their office publicly from the day of election forward. A parent may not act as a godparent. It is pastorally inadvisable that a fiancé, fiancée, or spouse function as a godparent.

To be admitted to the role of godparent, a person must:

1. be designated by the one to be baptized;
2. have completed the sixteenth year, unless it seems to the pastor or pastoral minister that an exception is to be made;
3. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Eucharist, and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
4. not be bound by any canonical penalty;
5. not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

CANDIDATES

15. Candidates

Those who have already been baptized in another Church or ecclesial community are not to be treated as catechumens or called catechumens. Their doctrinal and spiritual preparation for reception into full communion should be determined according to the individual case, that is, it should depend on the extent to which the baptized person has led a Christian life within a community of faith and been appropriately catechized to deepen his or her inner adherence to the Church (NS, 30.)

16. Validity of prior baptism

A baptismal certificate or sworn affidavit of an eyewitness to the baptism must be obtained.

- Some Churches with valid baptism: All Eastern non-Catholic Churches (Orthodox, e.g. Greek, Russian, Coptic, Ukrainian, Armenian), Adventists, African Methodist Episcopal and A.M.E. Zion, Amish, Anglican / Episcopalian, Assembly of God, Baptists, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God, Church of the Brethren, Church of the Nazarene, Congregational Church, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalian / Anglican, Evangelical Churches, Evangelical United Brethren, Liberal Catholic Church, Lutheran Church (includes Missouri Synod), Methodist, Lutheran, Old Catholic Church, Polish National Church, Presbyterian, Reformed Churches, United Church of Christ (Congregationalist, Evangelical and Reformed Church.)
- If the fact of baptism is certain, the baptism is presumed valid. Re-baptism, even conditionally, is not permitted. When received into the Church, they are to be confirmed and admitted to the Eucharist.

The validity of other baptisms apart from those listed above is not accepted without question. For example, in the case of Baptist baptism, it must be shown that baptism was administered in the name of the Trinity and also that true baptism took place and not a "rite of dedication."

Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community are not to be conditionally baptized unless, after an examination of the matter and form of the words used in the conferral of baptism and after a consideration of the intention of an adult baptized person and of the minister of baptism, a serious reason for doubting the validity of the baptism is present. When there is a reasonable and prudent doubt concerning the baptism of such Christians which cannot be resolved after serious investigation into the fact and/or validity of baptism, (namely, to ascertain where the person was baptized with the pouring of water or triple immersion with the Trinitarian formula and whether the minister and the recipient of the sacrament had the proper requisite intentions), the person is conditionally baptized.

If conditional baptism is necessary, this must be celebrated **privately** rather than at a public liturgical assembly. Reception into full communion and confirmation should take place later at the Sunday Eucharist of the community, or at the Easter Vigil. When the priest baptizes conditionally, he is to also receive the person into the full communion of the Catholic Church and be the minister of Confirmation.

17. Orthodox Christian into full communion

Ordinarily, a baptized Orthodox Christian is to be received into the corresponding autonomous Church of the same Rite within the Catholic Church (CCEO, canon 35.) Ritual church membership is complex. Pastoral ministers should consult the Office of Canonical Services.

18. Marriage of candidates

When a candidate marries a Catholic prior to reception into full communion, permission must be obtained from the Office of the Bishop.

19. Sacrament of Reconciliation for Candidates

The requirement for reconciliation would be the same as for all Catholics. Candidates should celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation **prior** to the rite of reception into full communion if they are conscious of serious sin (RCIA, 482.) Candidates should receive a thorough catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and be encouraged in the frequent celebration of the sacrament (NS, 27, 36.)

20. Confirmation of Candidates

The diocesan bishop is the proper minister of the sacraments of initiation of adults. However, any priest who receives someone into full communion of the Roman Catholic Church, by law has the **responsibility and obligation** to confirm this person (Canons 883, 885.). These persons are to be confirmed at the time of their profession of faith and reception. **Their confirmation is not to be deferred** (NS, 35.)

21. Candidates being received into full communion who have been confirmed in the Church of their baptism.

The Roman Catholic Church accepts as valid only the confirmation of the Orthodox church and the Old Catholic Church. All others need to be confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church. If there is doubt, pastoral ministers should consult the Office of Canonical Services.

22. Baptized but uncatechized Catholics.

Those baptized as Roman Catholics in infancy who have received no catechesis may be placed in a process modeled on the catechumenate. Their doctrinal and spiritual formation would be different from those who were baptized as Roman Catholics, who have been receiving the Eucharist, and for some reason did not as yet receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

23. Confirmation of baptized but uncatechized Catholics

A priest who wishes to confirm a baptized, but previously uncatechized, Catholic must explicitly request this faculty from the diocesan bishop (canon 884.1.) A form is included with the annual guidelines for Lent and Easter. For specific situations consult the Office of Canonical Services.

MARRIAGE QUESTIONS

24. A catechumen or candidate in an irregular marriage in need of convalidation

The Pre-Initiation Inventory is one of the most helpful tools in uncovering marriage issues. One cannot enter into the full sacramental life of the church unless one is completely free to receive the sacraments. The convalidation of any irregular marriage should be celebrated before the sacraments of initiation or reception into full communion is celebrated. It is pastorally advisable to convalidate the marriage as early as possible. **This must be done before the Rite of Election or Call to Continuing Conversion.**

25. When one party does not wish to be subjected to a convalidation ceremony

As long as both parties intend to be faithful to their marriage bond, it may be possible to obtain a radical sanation of the marriage from the Office of the Bishop. Radical sanation is the convalidation of an invalid marriage without the renewal of consent. Pastoral ministers should consult the Office of Canonical Services.

26. Inquirers who are in need of an annulment

Inquirers who need a declaration of nullity (an annulment) from a previous presumably valid marriage may be allowed to enter the catechumenate. However, they cannot normally be accepted for the Rite of Election (or the Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion) until the declaration of nullity has been granted.

A divorced or separated catechumen or candidate who is not intending to remarry is not in need of a declaration of nullity to be accepted for the Rite of Election or the Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion and consequently, the sacraments of initiation. However, the implication of future attempts to remarry without a declaration of nullity must be carefully explained before the discernment for the rite is completed.

27. Marriage is to be celebrated before initiation

The process of formation required for Christian initiation should not be abbreviated simply for the reason of being a fully initiated Roman Catholic in time for the wedding. It is more appropriate to concentrate on the preparation for Christian marriage and continue the catechumenal process.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING CHILDREN.

Catechumens who are children

28. Children under catechetical age (below age 7)

For children under catechetical age, the *Rite of Baptism for Children* is followed.

29. Children of catechetical age (at least 7 years old)

Children of catechetical age are considered, for the purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (Canon 852.1; NS, 18.) Their formation is to follow the general pattern of the catechumenate. Given their young age, a catechumenate for children may need to be longer than one designated for mature adults (RCIA, 253.)

The permission of the parents, or at least one of them, is required before they are accepted into the catechumenate and before they are initiated into the Church. Parents are encouraged to participate in the process of formation to whatever extent they are able in order to offer the support and example the children will need (RCIA, 254.) Canon 111.2 states that at the age of 14, a person can freely choose to pursue initiation without parental permission.

It is important to keep in mind that once a child has reached the age of reason, the Rite of Baptism for Children is no longer the proper ritual book to use. Part II, Chapter 1 on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the appropriate rite (RCIA, 252-329.)

In the dioceses of the United States it is clearly expected that when a child of catechetical age is baptized, the child must be confirmed and share in the Eucharist at the same celebration (NS, 14, 18, 19.) It is preferable that the sacraments of initiation be celebrated at the Easter Vigil (RCIA, 8 ,256; NS, 18.)

The integrity and unity of the three sacraments of initiation is maintained by not delaying Confirmation or Eucharist. While this undoubtedly causes concern for consistency in religious education programs where children baptized in infancy are not confirmed until a later age, this in itself is not a sufficient reason to postpone Confirmation (RCIA, 215; Canon 866.)

30. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, adapted for Children.

Children of catechetical age are the subject of the RCIA and not the Rite of Baptism for Children. Consequently all that is prescribed in the RCIA (253-330) should be applied to the children with pastoral sensitivity for their particular needs and with the approval and cooperation of the parents or at least one of them, or those who lawfully take their place. This also means that when children of catechetical age are baptized they are to be confirmed and offered the Eucharist at the same celebration. The priest who baptizes is to confirm the children and does not need special permission to do so (RCIA, 305; Canons 885.2, 866; NS 13, 18, 19.)

31. Children who are catechumens and the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Children who are catechumens preparing for Baptism do not celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to baptism. Nevertheless they may be invited to participate in non-sacramental penitential rites as outlined in the RCIA (291-303) so that they may come to understand the reality of sin and appreciate the comforting message of God's pardon. Baptized children can be invited to celebrate these penitential services with children who are catechumens.

Candidates who are children

32. Baptized children below catechetical age Received into Full Communion

Technically the consent of the parents is sufficient. The children are passed into the faith when the parents are received into the Church. Children can also make a profession of faith in as much as they are able. When parent(s) are not received into the Church, the Catholic parent may make this desire known and/or the child can, as much as he or she is capable, make a profession of faith at the Rite of Reception. Consult the Office of Prayer and Worship for suggestions on how this might be done.

The event of Reception into Full Communion along with the original Baptism of such children ought to be carefully recorded in the Register of Reception into Full Communion. The children are to be confirmed and receive the Eucharist along with the other children of the parish at the customary time.

33. Baptized children of catechetical age received into the Full Communion of the Roman Catholic Church

Because children of catechetical age are considered, for the purposes of Christian initiation to be adults (Canon 852.1), the Rite of Reception of a Baptized Christian into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA 473-504) is used. Their formation may be similar to unbaptized children preparing for the initiation sacraments. Some elements of the ordinary catechetical instruction of

baptized children before their reception of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist may be appropriately shared with the candidates of catechetical age (NS, 19.)

Children of parents being received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church are ordinarily received into the Church with their parents.

If pastoral ministers believe a delay in the reception of confirmation might be necessary, this question must be referred to the Office of Canonical Services. Pastoral wisdom will be given due consideration, relative to the norm, in determining the appropriate course of action.

Children and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Children who were baptized, but not as Roman Catholics, and are now preparing for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church should be adequately prepared and encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation sometime before their formal reception into the Roman Catholic Church (RCIA, 482; NS, 36.)

Children who were baptized as Roman Catholic are normally prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation before their first reception of the Eucharist. (Canon 914; NS, 27.)

OTHER ISSUES

34. Record Keeping

There are different registers used by church minister when recording various events during the RCIA process. It is important that a careful record be kept of the names and dates of what has occurred. The following is an overview of the registers used and what needs to be entered into them.

Registers Used

The following registers are necessary for recording the sacraments of all who celebrate the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults:

- Register of Catechumens
- Baptism Register
- Confirmation Register
- Register of Reception into Full Communion
- Communion Register

Catechumens

Those who are unbaptized are enrolled as catechumens; this may occur at any time of the year. The name and required information for each catechumen are entered into the **Register of Catechumens**.

After they celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation (usually at the Easter Vigil), the following entries are made:

- a) **Baptism Register:** record all information, including Confirmation, and notation of any marriage.
- b) **Confirmation Register:** record all information.
- c) **Communion Register:** record all information.

Baptized non-Catholics

Those who have been validly baptized in a non-Catholic Church are received into full communion, confirmed (with the exception of the Orthodox whose Confirmation is recognized as valid) and welcomed to the Eucharist. The following entries are to be made:

- a) **Register of Reception into Full Communion:** This is a recently published register that contains columns to note all pertinent information, including the original baptism and any marriage.
- b) **Confirmation Register:** record all information.
- c) **Communion Register:** record all information.
- d) **Note:** If the parish has not yet obtained the Reception into Full Communion Register, the back portion of the baptism register may be used temporarily to record Receptions into Full Communion. E.g., use the back of the baptism register and work forward.

Catholics

When Catholics are to be confirmed at the Easter Vigil, the faculty to confirm must be obtained from the Office of the Bishop. The priest applies for the faculty by submitting the request in writing to the Office of the Bishop. The name of the candidate, age, and reason for Confirmation should be included.

- a) **Confirmation Register:** record all information. In the remarks column of each person, place the notation “c. 884.1.” This denotes that the faculty to confirm has been granted.
- b) **Baptism Register:** notify the Catholic church of baptism.
- c) **Communion Register:** if appropriate, record all information.

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Glossary of Terms for Christian Initiation

Adult Confirmation

Celebrated by adult Catholics who have already received their first communion. Their process of preparation is normally separate and distinct from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, and their confirmation is not normally celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

Baptized but Uncatechized Adults

Adults who were baptized during infancy as Roman Catholics or as members of another Christian community, but who did not receive further catechetical formation nor, consequently, the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. They are called candidates. Although they are not catechumens, some elements of the usual catechumenal formation are appropriate to their preparation for the sacraments, in accord with the norms of the ritual, "Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist."

Book of the Elect

The book, in which, the names of the catechumens are inscribed on the day of the Rite of Election.

Candidate

May refer to people of varying backgrounds: 1) A person who was already baptized in another Christian community and who now is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of full communion, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed and receive the Eucharist. 2) A person who was baptized Catholic in infancy but who did not receive further catechetical formation nor, consequently, the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. The catechetical formation of these persons is based on their spiritual background and needs.

Catechesis

The instruction and spiritual formation of persons preparing for initiation into the Catholic Church.

Catechumen

One who is not baptized and is preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through baptism, confirmation and eucharist. When persons become catechumens, they become part of the church, although not fully initiated members. They are entitled to Catholic burial should they die before the completion of their initiation. Marriages of catechumens, whether with other catechumens or with baptized Christian or even non-Christians, should be celebrated at a liturgy of the word and not at the eucharistic liturgy.

Catechumenate

The second period of preparation for entry into the church, which involves formation in word, worship, community life, and apostolic works. For the unbaptized, this period should normally last about a year, from at least the Easter season of one year until Lent of the following year.

This term is also applied to the entire process used in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Children of Catechetical Age

According to canon law, children who have attained the use of reason are considered, for the purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults. Their formation follows the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate with adaptations suited to their age. These adaptations are found in the second section of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (#252, ff). Unbaptized children of catechetical age are to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the other catechumens. Baptized children seeking full communion with the Catholic Church are also treated like their adult counterparts, making a profession of faith and receiving Confirmation and Eucharist.

Companion Children

These are baptized Catholic children who are preparing for Confirmation or First Communion. They are eligible to become companions to child catechumens and candidates who seek entry and full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Although they are not sponsors they accompany catechumens and candidates in their formation process and celebrate the rites with them. If they are to be confirmed at the Easter Vigil, permission of the Bishop is required.

Convert

This term should never be used to refer to those baptized Christians who are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church; it is used only to refer to one converted from unbelief to Christian belief.

Dismissal

Because they are not yet baptized, catechumens are dismissed from the Eucharistic assembly after the homily to continue reflection on the scriptures they have just heard proclaimed. It is often appropriate that candidates participate in dismissal catechesis with the catechumens.

Elect

The name given to catechumens who have celebrated the Rite of Election.

Ephphetha Rite

The rite in which the priest or deacon touches the ears and the mouth of the elect and prays that they be open to hear and proclaim the word of God in faith. This rite may be celebrated as part of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

Evangelization

The task of the church during the precatechumenate, which involves the inviting, the welcoming, the witnessing, the sharing of faith and the proclamation of the gospels to inquirers / candidates.

The term also refers to the constant duty of all the faithful to spread the Good News.

Exorcisms

Prayers during the scrutinies which ask that the elect may be delivered from the powers of evil and falsehood and receive the gifts of the Lord. A priest or a deacon celebrates the exorcisms during the scrutinies. Minor exorcisms may also be used with catechumens on several occasions during the catechumenate. These may be celebrated by a priest, a deacon, or a qualified catechist appointed by the Bishop for this ministry.

First Communion

Refers to the first reception of communion by children of catechetical age who are baptized, catechized Catholics. It is not commonly used with reference to anyone, adult or child, who is entering the church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Godparent(s)

The person(s) selected by the elect, with the consent of the pastor, to accompany them on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation and during the period of mystagogy.

Immersion

A method of baptism in which the candidate is submerged either entirely or partially in the baptismal water. This method is considered by the church to be more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Infusion

A method of baptism in which the baptismal water is poured over the head of the one to be baptized.

Initiation

The process through which a person enters into the faith life of the church. For the unbaptized, this extends from the catechumenate through the normally continuous celebration of the rites of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, and the catechesis following that celebration. For the baptized, it refers to whichever parallel stages and rites are appropriate to their situation.

Inquirers

Those who participate in the precatechumenate of a parish. They are “inquiring” into Catholicism.

Inquiry

Refers to the first period of preparation for entry into the church. See “precatechumenate” below.

Lectionary-based Catechesis

Catechesis in which the topics flow from the Sunday scripture readings. In the course of a year-long catechumenate all of the essential points of faith can be taught.

Minor Rites

Rites during the catechumenate which include the minor exorcisms, prayers of blessing, and anointing of the catechumens. The presiding celebrant may be a priest or a deacon, or, with the permission of the bishop, a catechist may preside at the exorcisms or blessings.

Mystagogia

The postbaptismal catechesis given to the newly baptized during the 50 days from Easter to Pentecost, wherein the neophyte and the local church share the meaning of the initiatory mysteries and experience.

National Statutes for the Catechumenate

Particular law, approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States. The statutes may be found in Appendix III of the rite.

Neophyte

A newly baptized person who is going through the final period of Christian initiation called mystagogy.

Oil of Catechumens

The oil blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass and used in the anointing of the catechumens during minor rituals in the process of initiation.

Ongoing Catechumenate

A catechumenate set up in such a way that new candidates may enter the catechumenate at any time during the year, with catechesis continuing throughout the year, not just September through June.

Penitential Rite

A Lenten purification rite for baptized adults preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist and / or candidates for Full Communion. The rite is normally celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent or on a lenten weekday. It is similar to the scrutinies.

Periods

Times of investigation and maturation marking the initiation process: (1) period of precatechumenate inquiry; (2) period of the catechumenate; (3) period of purification and enlightenment; (4) period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy.

Precatechumenate

The period prior to formal entry into the catechumenate, it is the initial introduction of an inquirer into the Catholic way of life and to the Gospel. It is also a period of evangelization on the part of the church.

Presentations

During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the church hands on its tradition of faith and prayer to the elect, entrusting to them the ancient texts of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Both of these presentation may be anticipated during the period of the catechumenate if that is pastorally more suitable. These presentations may also be made to baptized adults who have received no previous Christian formation.

Purification and Enlightenment

The third period of preparation for entry into the church, which normally coincides with Lent and begins with the Rite of Election. During this period, the elect, the candidates, and the local community give themselves to spiritual recollection in preparation for the feast of Easter and the sacraments of initiation.

RCIA

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. This is the official rite of the Roman Catholic Church for the initiation of adults (including children of catechetical age, i.e., over 7 years of age), the reception of baptized candidates for Full Communion and the completion of initiation of baptized but uncatechized adults. Full initiation through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist is the norm presented in the rite. The reception of adults baptized in another Christian tradition includes a profession of faith, confirmation, and eucharist. The term "RCIA" is more appropriately used in papers, books, and articles about the rite. In pastoral situations, it is preferable to speak of "the catechumenate" or "Christian initiation."

Reception into Full Communion (of the Catholic Church)

The liturgical rite through which a person baptized in another Christian tradition becomes a member of the Catholic Church.

Rite of Acceptance

The rite celebrated with unbaptized persons which admits them into the catechumenate.

Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion

Coincides with the Rite of Election but is the rite for candidates, the already baptized.

Rite of Election

Normally celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, this liturgy presided over by the bishop or his delegate, inaugurates the final period of preparation for the unbaptized before initiation.

Rite of Sending

The rite normally celebrated at the parish on the First Sunday of Lent prior to the Rite of Election with the Bishop or his delegate. The parish is "sending" its catechumens and candidates to the Bishop for election and the call to continuing conversion.

Rite of Welcoming the Candidates

The rite celebrated with the baptized which admits them to a period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate.

Scrutinies

Rites celebrated with the elect on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, petitioning for the spirit of repentance, an understanding of sin and the true freedom of the children of God.

Sponsors

Those persons chosen to accompany the inquirers when they seek admission to the catechumenate and who remain with them as they progress during the catechumenate until the Rite of Election. Sponsors may also be selected as godparents.

Stages

The steps through which a catechumen moves toward full initiation. They are marked by the major rites of the initiation process: (1) when a person is accepted as a catechumen (Rite of Acceptance); (2) when a person becomes one of the "elect" and begins the more immediate preparation for the sacraments of initiation (Rite of Election); (3) when a person receives the sacraments of initiation (Easter Vigil.)

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