THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

DIOCESE OF TRENTON

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Revised and Translated into Spanish: Summer, 2009

Diocesan Pastoral Center
701 Lawrence Road
P.O. Box 5147
Trenton, New Jersey 08638-0147

609-406-7400
THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS
THE DIOCESE OF TRENTON
A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults

Chapter One  Christian Initiation: Introduction  1
Chapter Two  General Pattern for Adults  8
Chapter Three  Children of Catechetical Age  18
Chapter Four  Ministries  25
Chapter Five  Special Cases  28
Chapter Six  Particular Questions  32
     A. Marriages, Annulments, Convalidations  32
     B. Funeral of a Catechumen  36
     C. Non-Catholic Baptisms, Conditional Baptism,
        Non-Catholic Confirmations  36
     D. Eastern Catholic Candidates and the
        Orthodox Churches  38
     E. Record-Keeping  40
Appendix A  Catechetical Resources  42
Appendix B  Liturgical Resources  43
Appendix C  Church Documents and Reference Works  44
Appendix D  Forms  45
Appendix E  Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking
            Sacraments of Initiation  52
Appendix F  Inquirers/Catechumens in our Catholic High Schools  53
THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS
THE DIOCESE OF TRENTON
A PRACTICAL GUIDE

CONTENTS

Chapter One  Christian Initiation: Introduction

Who Should Use This Guide
Initiation into the Christian Life
Two Models of Initiation
Unity and Order of the Sacraments
A Summary of How the Various Groups are Addressed by the Rite
Who Does Not Belong in the Catechumenate
The Ritual Book

Chapter Two  General Pattern for Adults

Nomenclature
The Precatechumenate
The Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming)
The Catechumenate Period
The Rite of Sending
The Rite of Election
The Call to Continuing Conversion
The Period of Purification and Enlightenment
The Sacraments of Initiation
The Period of Mystagogy
Notes About Teenagers

Chapter Three  Children of Catechetical Age

The Relationship of the Rite for Adults to the Rite for Children
Who Are the Children
Special Needs of Children of Catechetical Age (7 years or older)
Role of the Family
Role of Catholic Peers
The Shape of the Catechumenate for Children
Adapting the Rites for Children

Chapter Four  Ministries

The Community
The Catechumenate Director/Coordinator
Catechists
Sponsors and Godparents
Team Development
### Chapter Five

Special Cases

- Use of the Short Form of Adult Initiation
- Christian Initiation of Persons in Danger of Death
- Persons with Special Needs
- Illiteracy
- Schools and Institutions

### Chapter Six

**Particular Questions**

A. Marriages, Annulments, Convalidations
   - Collaboration
   - Rules Concerning the Marriage of Catechumens
   - Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking the Sacraments of Initiation
   - Types of Annulment Cases
   - Time Frame for the Annulment Process
   - Convalidation of Marriages

B. Funeral of a Catechumen

C. Non-Catholic Baptisms, Conditional Baptism, Non-Catholic Confirmations
   - Criteria for a Valid Baptism
   - Conditional Baptism
   - Those Churches or Communions Whose Baptism is Recognized as Valid by the Roman Catholic Church
   - Non-Catholic Confirmations

D. Eastern Catholic Candidates and the Orthodox Churches
   - Eastern Catholics (Defined)
   - Eastern Catholics Who Wish to Transfer to the Latin Rite
   - Orthodox Christians (Defined)
   - Rules Concerning Eastern Orthodox Christians

E. Record-Keeping
   - Initiation Questionnaire
   - Register of Catechumens
   - The Book of the Elect
   - The Recording of Candidates Being Received

### Appendix A

Catechetical Resources

### Appendix B

Liturgical Resources

### Appendix C

Church Documents and Reference Works

### Appendix D

Forms

- Initiation Questionnaire
- Request for Delegation to Preside at Rite of Election
- Request for a Dispensation from One or Two Scrutinies
- Request for Permission to Use the Short Form of Adult Initiation

### Appendix E

Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking the Sacraments of Initiation
OUTLINE FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the catechumens accept the Gospel of Christ publicly and the Church receives their intention to respond to God’s call to follow the way of Christ.

Period of the Catechumenate

This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens’ faith and conversion to God. Celebrations of the Word, prayers and blessing are meant to assist the process.

Second Step: Election Enrollment of Names

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens’ readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation and the catechumens, now the Elect, express the will to receive these sacraments. This rite generally follows the Rite of Sending, which is celebrated in the parish.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This is the time immediately preceding the Elect’s initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil. It is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the Scrutinies and Presentations of the Creed and The Lord’s Prayer and of the Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday.

Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the Elect are initiated through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

This is the time, usually the Easter season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.
CHAPTER ONE
CHRISTIAN INITIATION: INTRODUCTION

Contents:
Who Should Use This Guide
Initiation into the Christian Life
Two Models of Initiation
Unity and Order of the Sacraments
A Summary of How the Various Groups are Addressed by the Rite
Who Does Not Belong in the Catechumenate
The Ritual Book

Who Should Use This Guide

This Practical Guide was written to provide directors/coordinators and pastors in the Diocese of Trenton with information and guidance on questions about the Christian initiation of adults and children of catechetical age.

Although the responsibility for Christian initiation of adults belongs to all the baptized (RCIA ¶ 9), pastors and directors/coordinators are charged with a special responsibility to see to it that the liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral norms of the catechumenate and Church laws governing it are carried out.

In order to do this with pastoral sensitivity, RCIA teams must understand the spirit of the rite, be fully conversant with its directives, and attend well to the particular needs of those who are seeking initiation.

No directives can substitute for experience and pastoral training. It is our hope, however, that this Diocesan Guide will help the reader to come to a clearer understanding of the mind of the Church (expressed in its documents) concerning Christian initiation, and that it will articulate a standard of practice for the catechumenate in the Diocese of Trenton. In this way, our practical decisions in various circumstances may be based on a firm and common foundation.

Initiation into the Christian Life

Christian initiation is not only a matter of intellectual assent to the teachings of the Church, but is incorporation into a living community of faith, represented by the parish. Private instruction and/or convert classes are no longer the acceptable vehicle for Christian initiation, but are to be replaced by full implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
The goal of Christian Initiation is the understanding and living of the Christian life. Reception of the Sacraments, therefore, will hopefully be accompanied by conversion. It is for this reason that the Code of Canon Law not only requires that before an adult is baptized s/he must be admitted to the catechumenate, led through its various stages (Canon 851.1) and sufficiently instructed (Canon 865.1), but also that s/he must be tested in the Christian life by means of the catechumenate (Canon 865.1) and exhorted to have sorrow for personal sins (Canon 685.1).

Cultivation of the practice of prayer, doing good works, and taking an active part in the community life and mission of the Church are not auxiliary, but are essential elements of the formation offered by the catechumenate (RCIA ¶ 75). The catechumenate provides catechumens and candidates with catechesis, training in the Christian way of life, and companions and mentors (sponsors, godparents, catechists, and other members of the community) who will help them on their journey of faith. The Code of Canon Law affirms that “Through instruction and an apprenticeship in the Christian life catechumens are suitably to be initiated into the mystery of salvation and introduced to the life of faith, liturgy, charity of the people of God, and the apostolate.” (Canon 788.2)

The liturgical rites of the catechumenate (RCIA ¶ 81-82) are essential elements of Christian initiation. They gradually incorporate the candidates into the full sacramental life of the Church and are the means of grace which enable them to live as Christians in the world. The rites should be celebrated in the midst of the community, and according to the norms set forth in the RCIA.

Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults constitutes a substantial challenge for both clergy and parishioners. Serious and consistent effort should be made to implement it fully in all the parishes of the Diocese.

Two Models of Initiation

Within the total life of the Church at present, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults presents one of two rites for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation.

These two Rites may be summarized as follows:

1. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist celebrated together, preceded by a catechumenate of considerable duration which includes rites appropriate to each of its stages, and followed by a Period of Mystagogy.

2. Infant Baptism, when the child is under seven (7) years of age, followed by Eucharist and Confirmation some time after the baptized child has reached the age of reason. (In this process the Sacrament of Reconciliation, though not a sacrament of initiation, is administered before Eucharist.) Each of these sacraments is preceded by its own proper catechesis.
Each of these rites, in whole or in part, is appropriate to different groups seeking initiation and is governed by distinct norms and directives.

1. The first rite is used for adults and children of catechetical age and is described in detail by the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.*

2. The second rite is used for infants of Catholic parents and is described in detail by the Rite of Baptism for Children, Diocesan norms concerning the reception of First Eucharist, and the Rite of Confirmation.

It is important to understand that each of these rites has a different history and its own legitimate existence today in the Church. Much confusion can result if we try to collapse these two rites into one using the rules of the other.

In both rites of initiation and indeed, in all cases, the sacraments are integrally related to one another and through them God brings about the work of salvation in the Church. Although there are many different categories of persons who seek initiation into the Church today, and several ways of initiating them, a basic unity underlies all these practices. “There is one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism; one God who is Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all.” (Ephesians 4:5-6)

**Unity and Order of the Sacraments**

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist were celebrated together in the early Church. After the baptismal washing and anointing of the whole body (usually by deacons or presbyters), the bishop anointed the forehead with chrism. The new Christians were then welcomed into the assembly for participation in the Eucharist. This sequence has been preserved to the present day in the liturgy of the Eastern Churches.

In the West, the sequence of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist remained almost entirely intact until the 20th century. While the sacraments were separated in time, the sequence remained the same. Baptism was separated from both Confirmation and Eucharist by a period of about ten years. In 1910, Pope Pius X mandated that children be welcomed to the table by the age of seven, but no mention was made of when Confirmation should be celebrated. The result was that the order of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist was inverted in many parts of the world.

(One should note, however, that the practice of celebrating Confirmation before Eucharist was maintained in some places, such as parts of Latin America. The Code of Canon Law also has consistently referred to the Sacraments of Initiation in their traditional order.)

In 1971, the new Rite of Confirmation reiterated the traditional order: “The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation, and finally are sustained by the food of eternal life in the Eucharist.” The whole process of initiation culminates in the celebration of the Eucharist. The ongoing life of faith is then continually nourished on the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
The Apostolic Constitution on Confirmation stresses that:

...Confirmation is so closely linked with the Holy Eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by holy Baptism and Confirmation, are incorporated fully into the Body of Christ by participation in the Eucharist.

In 1972, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* gave further support to this sequence, as did the National Catechetical Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* states the purpose of celebrating the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation together, in this way:

The conjunction of the two celebrations (Baptism and Confirmation) signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two Sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized. (*RCIA* ¶ 215)

The celebration of the Eucharist that follows then, is the event in which “the newly baptized reach the culminating point in their Christian Initiation.” (*RCIA* ¶ 217)

This sequence is followed both in the initiation of adults and in the initiation of children of catechetical age.

**A Summary of How the Various Groups are Addressed by the Rite**

This guide is concerned with issues and questions pertaining to the initiatory pattern described in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The needs of several distinct groups of persons are addressed in this rite.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* includes the norms and all the ritual celebrations of initiation for the following groups:

1. Unbaptized Adults (*RCIA* Part I);
2. Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age (*RCIA* Part II Chapter 1);
3. Baptized but Uncatechized Adults (Catholic or other Christians) preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist (*RCIA* Part II Chapter 4);
4. Baptized Christian Candidates for Reception into Full Communion of the Catholic Church (*RCIA* Part II Chapter 5)
The following is a summary of how the various groups are addressed by the rite:

1. **Unbaptized Adults** are normally led through the full-length catechumenate described in Part I of the rite. The combined length of the catechumenate period and the period of Purification and Enlightenment is expected to be twelve months or more (NCCB Statutes ¶ 6). Although a shorter period may be pastorally acceptable for certain individuals, parishes should set a standard of twelve months or more, and take care not to create the expectation that a shorter period of preparation will be sufficient.

In exceptional cases, an abbreviated catechumenate as described in the rite (RCIA Part II Chapter 2) may be used with the Bishop’s permission (RCIA ¶ 331, National Statutes ¶ 20), and if a person is in danger of death, the sacraments may be celebrated at once (RCIA Part II Chapter 3).

2. **Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age** are normally accepted into a catechumenate for children, catechized in a way that is appropriate for their age level, celebrate a penitential rite (scrutiny) or rites, and receive the three Sacraments of Initiation together at one time (RCIA Part II Chapter 1).

3. **Baptized but Uncatechized Adults (Catholic or other Christians) Preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist** are so similar to the unbaptized in their catechetical status that the rite permits them to participate in most of the formation outlined in RCIA Part I (see RCIA Part II Chapter 4). They are called candidates, not catechumens (National Statutes ¶ 2). They are never referred to as converts (National Statutes ¶ 2). Clear distinctions between catechumens and candidates must always be kept in the celebration of the rites (National Statutes ¶ 31). Such candidates may receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil or at a time during the Liturgical Year, when the person is ready, the season or feast is appropriate, and where the Sunday Assembly is gathered (RCIA ¶ 409).

Baptized but uncatechized children are also in some cases addressed by this portion of the rite. For more information see p.18 of this guide.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated with these candidates at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist.
(National Statutes ¶ 27).

For information on the faculty of administering Confirmation, see Chapter 2 of this guide, under the subheading “Sacraments of Initiation.”

4. **Fully Catechized Christians Baptized in Another Tradition** who are not described in number 3 above, are normally received into the Catholic Church at a Sunday Eucharist (National Statutes ¶ 32) at which they make a profession of faith, are confirmed (with very few exceptions - see Chapter 6 of this guide) and receive Eucharist. If, for pastoral reasons, such persons take part in a catechumenate, their reception, Confirmation, and Eucharist may take place at the Easter Vigil.
(National Statutes ¶ 34).
For information about children who are to be received into full communion of the Catholic Church, see page 19 of this guide.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated with these candidates at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist. (National Statutes ¶ 36).

For more information on the canonical status of Baptisms celebrated in other Christian denominations, see Chapter 6, Part C of this guide. For information on Confirmation for candidates coming from Protestant denominations, see Chapter 2 of this guide under the subheading “Sacraments of Initiation.” For Orthodox candidates for reception, see Chapter 6, Part D of this guide.

**Who Does Not Belong in the Catechumenate**

The catechumenate is a process of initiation and conversion centered on the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Its steps and periods are designed for the welfare of catechumens and candidates proper, whose progress in faith it is meant to serve. Although its principles and structure may give inspiration to other processes and programs in the Church, the catechumenate itself must maintain a clear identity and should not be asked to take on tasks for which it was not intended.

The implementation of the catechumenate comes at a time when the Church is increasingly aware of the pastoral and catechetical needs of many of its members. These needs are real and important, but should be addressed by other means.

1. **Alienated Catholics** who are interested in exploring the possibility of a return to the Church and the practice of their faith do not belong in a catechumenate. Their experiences of the Church, their questions, and their pastoral needs are different from those of catechumens and candidates and require a different pastoral response on the part of the Church. Some programs (such as “Landings” and “Another Look”) are available to help parishes work with returning Catholics.

2. **Adult Catholics Seeking Updating** or a deeper knowledge of their faith belong in an adult faith formation group or a faith renewal process, not the catechumenate. If such Catholics are interested in becoming involved in the catechumenate through a particular ministry, such as hospitality or sponsorship, that is another matter and should be decided, based on the person’s gifts and desire to serve.

3. **Adult Catholics Seeking Confirmation Only** belong not in the catechumenate, but in a program of preparation for the reception of Confirmation. Normally, these adults should receive an appropriate catechesis and be confirmed by the Bishop.

Although these adults may have received only an elementary catechesis during their Catholic upbringing they are nonetheless different from the “Baptized but Uncatechized Adults” who have received no Christian formation, and normally have never participated in the Eucharist.
Because of the variety of ages at which the Sacrament of Confirmation is administered in the Church at present and because of the mobility of our society, an increasing number of young Catholics reach adulthood without having been confirmed. Their lack of Confirmation frequently goes unnoticed until they prepare for marriage. When large numbers of unconfirmed Catholics seeking marriage are introduced into the catechumenate, they alter the focus of the process and create time pressures that are not appropriate for a conversion journey. Therefore, it is especially important that the needs of such candidates be considered separately.

The statements above describe the general expectations of the Diocese. Individual cases may arise in which a pastoral decision to include in a catechumenate someone who falls into one of these categories may be the best solution available at the time. Pastors/catechumenate directors/coordinator should use their best judgment in such special cases, keeping in mind the general concerns outlined above.

The Ritual Book

The revised *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was first published in 1972 for the universal Church. The first approved English translation appeared in 1974. The edition published in 1988 for the dioceses of the United States is authoritative for our country however, and replaces all previous editions. It contains explanatory material concerning each of the periods of the initiation process as well as all the rites. It is an indispensable guide for every pastor/catechumenate director/coordinator.

A Spanish translation of the 1988 version specifically for use in the dioceses of the United States is also available. In Spanish-speaking communities this edition should be used in preference to the one published by the episcopal conference of Spain.

The National Statutes for the Catechumenate are included as an appendix in both the English and Spanish versions of the RCIA. They are binding in all the dioceses of the United States.

Communities in the dioceses of the United States that worship in languages other than English or Spanish are not (thereby) exempt from initiating adults according to the norms and rites contained in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Pastors of such communities should obtain translations of the rite from their community’s country of origin and follow the NCCB National Statutes contained in the English edition for use in the dioceses of the United States. In situations where the episcopal conference of the country of origin has not translated the Rite, consult the Diocesan Office of Worship.

The ritual book has only one proper title: *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The process of initiation may be called by several different names, however, such as adult baptism, Christian initiation, the catechumenate, and the order or rite of Christian initiation of adults.
CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL PATTERN FOR ADULTS

Contents:

Nomenclature

The Precatechumenate

The Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming)

The Catechumenate Period

The Rite of Sending

The Rite of Election

The Call to Continuing Conversion

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

The Sacraments of Initiation

The Period of Mystagogy

Notes About Teenagers

Nomenclature

During the precatechumenate, both the unbaptized and those who are baptized but uncatechized may be called inquirers. During the catechumenate period, the unbaptized are called catechumens and the baptized are candidates. During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the unbaptized are called the Elect, and the baptized are called candidates. During the Period of Mystagogy, the newly baptized are called neophytes, a Greek word which means “the newly-planted.” Those who have been received into the Church or have completed their Christian initiation with the catechumenate at the Easter Vigil may be called by a variety of names: the newly-received, the newly-confirmed, new Catholics, or neophytes.

The Precatechumenate

The Initial Interview (Initiation Questionnaire - Appendix D)

The RCIA director/coordinator should interview each inquirer. This layperson, priest or deacon should be thoroughly familiar with the initiation process and able to put the inquirer at ease.

The interviewer should have a basic knowledge of the Church’s marriage laws and an understanding of the Church’s annulment process in case questions about marriage arise. But the interviewer need not be versed in canon law, and should not express any opinion about the
marriage situation in the interview. Questions on marital status need to be discussed with the pastor and referred to the Diocesan Tribunal.

The person conducting the interview should also attend the meetings of the precatechumenate, so that he or she can introduce the new inquirer to others who are in the group.

The purpose of the initial interview is three-fold:

1. To welcome and put the inquirer at ease
2. To find out the inquirer’s background
3. To provide information and answer questions

1. Welcome will be conveyed by conducting the meeting in a comfortable setting, by the warmth of the interviewer, and by the interviewer’s use of good listening skills.

2. The information needed will include:

   A. **Religious and Sacramental Background** To what religion, if any, does the inquirer belong? Has the inquirer ever been baptized? When and in what Church? Has the inquirer ever celebrated the Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming)? N.B. Proof of Baptism must be provided before the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates.

   B. **Catechetical Background** Has the inquirer received any religious education? What are the sources of his/her understanding of the Catholic faith?

   C. **Marital History** Is the inquirer presently married? Are there any previous marriages of either the inquirer, the inquirer’s spouse or the inquirer’s intended spouse?

   D. **Motivations and Expectations** Why has the inquirer come forward at this time? What is s/he hoping to find?

The initiation questionnaire (Appendix D) can be used at this time. The interviewer, not the inquirer, fills out the questionnaire. This will help to insure greater accuracy and clarity on the marriage issues.

Based on the information gathered at the initial interview, several important questions can begin to be addressed by the catechumenate team, such as:

What does the church need to provide for a full formation?

Who might be an appropriate sponsor?

What religious issues might be important here, given the inquirer’s background?

Will the inquirer need to speak to a qualified member of the parish staff about any marriage issues during the precatechumenate?
3. Information provided to the inquirer should include the time and place of the meetings of the precatechumenate and a general description of the process. Any questions that can be answered on the spot should be answered. Long discussions should be deferred to the group meetings.

**Group Meetings of the Precatechumenate**

Group meetings are essential to the precatechumenate and should include some members of the parish as well as the inquirers themselves and a catechist. If the inquirer has a sponsor, the sponsor should attend the meetings. Sponsors may also be found from among the parishioners who take part in the precatechumenate group meetings.

These meetings should be informal and flexible. Although their structure and the tools used to conduct them may vary, the meetings should always take place in a setting which conveys hospitality, and in them the inquirers should be encouraged to share their stories and questions. This sharing is of the first importance. It not only establishes trust within the group but also uncovers the needs and faith questions of the inquirers.

The goal of the precatechumenate is evangelization. Inquirers should hear the good news proclaimed both in the central stories of scripture and in the witness of the faithful who take part in the process. The precatechumenate process also must invite those participating to discover, express, and cultivate the faith that is already present in their own hearts.

The time frame of the precatechumenate will vary from person to person and from year to year. It takes time to become acquainted with believers, to get to know what it means to be a Catholic, and to hear the good news in one’s own life situation. A time limit should not be set in advance, and individuals should not be urged to make a hasty decision about whether or not to continue.

Ideally, the precatechumenate group meets year-round, so that any time an inquirer comes forward there is a group to receive that person. A year-round precatechumenate also ensures that inquirers may pursue the inquiry at their own pace. If the group does not meet year-round, some definite provisions should be made for individuals who do not conform to the schedule.

**Discernment for the Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming the Candidates)**

Several weeks before the parish celebrates the Rite of Acceptance (or the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates), there should be another interview with each inquirer. The purpose of this interview is to discern whether the inquirer is ready to proceed to the next period of the process. The criteria for discernment are found in the rite (RCIA ¶ 42).

If the initiation questionnaire (Appendix D) has not yet been completed, it should be filled out at this time. The interviewer, not the inquirer, fills out the initiation questionnaire.

It is most desirable that the Rite of Acceptance and/or the Rite of Welcoming the
Candidates be celebrated in separate rites, thereby more fully recognizing the baptism of the Candidate.

Inquirers with unresolved marriage cases may be admitted to the Period of Inquiry only. Their initiation cannot be completed until the marriage questions are resolved. Thus, they may not be admitted to the Rite of Acceptance because that gives the right to access to the Rite of Election and the Rite of Election gives the right to full initiation. The inquirer must be informed of this clearly to avoid any misunderstanding or disappointment later. The inquirer's sponsor should also be informed.

The question of who will sponsor each inquirer should be decided by this point. If no suitable sponsors have been found, the rite should be delayed until each candidate has a sponsor.

The law of the Diocese of Trenton says that anyone who is in a marriage which needs the attention of an Annulment Advocate, may not enter the Order of Catechumens, until a Declaration of Nullity is received. They may not celebrate the Rite of Welcoming or Rite of Acceptance until this marital issue is resolved. (This is a ‘Trenton Diocese’ exception to the Church’s RCIA Ritual.)

The Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming)

The Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming may be celebrated at any time of the year. Paragraph # 42 presents the criteria for discerning the readiness of the Inquirer.

This rite may be celebrated more than once during the liturgical year - perhaps as many as three times - as groups of Inquirers in the precatechumenate become ready to celebrate it (RCIA ¶ 18).

It may be celebrated in the context of Sunday Mass, or at some other time when the faithful gather. If it is not celebrated at Sunday Mass, every effort should be made to see that the people of the parish attend and give their support (RCIA ¶ 45). The Rite of Acceptance and/or Welcoming is never celebrated privately (RCIA ¶ 41).

If there are baptized as well as unbaptized inquirers who are ready to make this transition, the combined rite should be used (RCIA ¶ 505). Clear distinctions should be maintained between the baptized and the unbaptized in the celebration of this rite.

The Catechumenate Period

The catechumenate period is the lengthiest period of the whole initiation process. "The duration of the catechumenate period will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances... The time frame of the catechumenate period should not be pre-determined. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough - several years if necessary - for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong" (RCIA ¶ 76). In the dioceses of the United
States the catechumenate period must be at least one full year. Preferably, it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year (National Statutes ¶ 6).

The four ways in which the catechumenate period brings to maturity the initial faith that is manifested in the Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming) are: (1) catechesis; (2) liturgical rites; (3) community life; and (4) apostolic works (RCIA ¶ 75).

Experience has shown that the Word of God proclaimed in the Sunday Liturgy is the most effective basis for weekly catechesis in the catechumenate. The lectionary readings not only contain material for instruction, but they also foster prayer and formation in the common liturgical life of the faithful.

Participation in the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass is an integral part of the catechumenate. After the homily and before the Creed at Sunday Mass, the catechumens are kindly dismissed, together with a catechist, to reflect on the Word they have just heard. Candidates may be dismissed with them, if this is felt to be pastorally helpful. A special petition for them would be included in the General Intercessions. After the dismissal catechesis, a longer catechetical session follows, in which particular issues are explored in depth and the Church's tradition may be presented more fully. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and other resources can be helpful to catechists in preparing for these sessions.

With the help of the sponsor, the catechumen or candidate should be introduced to other members of the parish community, and take part in parish activities to the extent that they are able. The development of the catechumens' and candidates' active participation in the mission of the Church should not be deferred until after their sacramental initiation, but should begin during the catechumenate period, under the guidance of the sponsor.

As soon as an Inquirer become a Catechumen, it is imperative that their name be placed in a Parish Register of Catechumens; details are found on page 48. Should the Catechumen move to another area, this written notation will serve them, if they desire to continue their formation in the Catechumenate. Likewise, it serves as verification if, at a later time they desire Christian marriage, or in the case of their death, the right to a Christian burial. (RCIA ¶ 47) (Canon 1183.1)

Rites Celebrated During the Period of the Catechumenate

A variety of minor rites are available for use during the catechumenate period, and should be employed according to the directions in the ritual book.

In addition to the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass, special celebrations of the Word of God should be held for the catechumens (RCIA ¶ 81, 82) and candidates (RCIA ¶ 406). Celebrations of the Word should provide a context of prayer for catechetical meetings as well (RCIA ¶ 84).

In the Diocese of Trenton, the pastor may appoint the priest, deacon or properly trained lay catechist to preside at these minor rites. For further information, see the RCIA Study Text / Ritual, paragraphs 16, 91 and 96.
The blessings (RCIA ¶ 96) may not be celebrated at the end of the Liturgy of the Word at Mass (Book of Blessings ¶ 28). The celebrations of the Word at which the minor exorcisms and blessings are to be celebrated are those held specially for catechumens (RCIA ¶ 82, 84, 89).

Only a priest or deacon may anoint with the Oil of Catechumens (RCIA ¶ 98). Because of the close connection with Baptism, this anointing is reserved for catechumens, and may not be celebrated with candidates.

The Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer may be anticipated during the Catechumenate period, so that greater attention and prominence may be given to the handing on of these texts (RCIA ¶ 104). When they are anticipated, they may be accompanied by the Ephphatha Rite, according to the provisions of the rite (RCIA ¶ 105, including footnote 1).

**Discernment for the Rite of Election (and Call to Continuing Conversion)**

This final discernment of the progress of each catechumen and candidate should be deeper and broader in its consultation than the one that took place before the Rite of Acceptance (and Welcoming). Those who by means of this discernment, are admitted to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and will receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the next Easter Vigil.

“This deliberation is carried out by the priests, deacons, and catechists involved in the formation of the catechumens, and by the godparents and representatives of the local community” (RCIA ¶ 122). The consultation is made in conjunction with the catechumens and candidates. The catechumenate team, therefore, should set aside sufficient time to undertake this deliberation seriously.

The criteria for this discernment can be found in RCIA ¶ 120. These criteria may be supplemented by a careful review of RCIA ¶ 75, which indicates the ways in which conversion is expected to have occurred during the catechumenate period, and by RCIA ¶ 131, which summarizes the results of the discernment process.

The Diocese asks that a preliminary list of those who will receive the sacraments at Easter be sent in as early as January to assist in planning for the Rite of Election. It is understood that names may be deleted from this preliminary list as the actual discernment progresses, but no new names may be added. More specific instructions are given to the catechumenate coordinator/director and pastor in the information packet concerning the Rite of Election at the annual RCIA coordinator/directors’ meeting.
The Rite of Sending

In the Diocese of Trenton, The Rite of Sending is celebrated in their parishes, only by Catechumens before going to the Cathedral for the Rite of Election. This rite, is the occasion for the parish community to express its approval of the Catechumens, and for the godparents to offer more personal testimony about them. In it the parish offers support for the Catechumens and sends them to the Diocesan celebration of the Rite of Election / Enrollment of Names, at which their names will be enrolled, and the Bishop will formally admit them to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

In the Diocese of Trenton, the catechumens sign the Book of the Elect at the parish Rite of Sending. It should be explained to them that the Book of the Elect symbolizes enrollment for Baptism.

Although listed as an optional celebration, the Rite of Sending is highly recommended. It must be celebrated at some time prior to the Diocesan Rite of Election. In most parishes in our Diocese, it is celebrated on the same day as the Rite of Election at a parish Mass.

The Rite of Election

This rite is presided over by the Bishop or his delegate on the First Sunday of Lent and celebrated in the Cathedral or another designated church in the Diocese for all who are to be initiated at Easter. To ensure the smooth functioning of this large liturgical event, directors/ coordinators and pastors are asked to provide registration information for the Rite of Election to the Diocesan Office of Worship. Packets of information with registration materials are sent to each parish prior to the annual meeting.

If a catechumen is not able to attend the Diocesan Rite of Election because of illness or some other grave reason, the Rite of Election must still be celebrated in the parish. Delegation to celebrate the Rite of Election may be obtained by writing to the Office of the Bishop (Appendix D).

The Call to Continuing Conversion

In the Diocese of Trenton, the Call to Continuing Conversion is celebrated in the parish by Candidates for Full Communion and by Baptized, Uncatechized Catholics. Please note that in such a case the pastor presides (RCIA ¶ 448).

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This period often coincides with Lent, which should have the character of a time of retreat for those preparing for Baptism, for both the candidates who will complete their initiation or enter the full communion of the Catholic Church, and for the faithful who will commemorate their own Baptism at Easter. For candidates, it may occur at other times during the year.
The centerpiece of this period of prayerful preparation is the celebration of the Scrutinies. Various prayer forms and times of reflection, replace the usual times of catechesis held during this period of Purification and Enlightenment. The Elect and candidates are invited to examine their lives in the light of the Gospels, and especially those of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent, Year A.

**The Scrutinies**

Normally the Scrutinies are celebrated on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. At the Masses at which the Scrutinies are celebrated, Cycle A readings are to be used (RCIA #146). The church offers us a Ritual Mass with its own preface for each of these Masses.

If the Scrutinies are celebrated at one of several parish Masses, the other parish Masses may also use Cycle A readings for these Sundays. (See the final rubric for Lectionary ¶¶ 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36).

For a serious reason, the Bishop may grant a dispensation from one or even two of the Scrutinies. To obtain this dispensation, refer to the form provided in Appendix D.

Candidates are not the subject of the Scrutinies, but they should participate in them with the assembly so as to pray for the Elect, and should reflect with the Elect on their meaning. In place of the Scrutinies, candidates celebrate a similar rite called a “Penitential Rite” (RCIA ¶ 459 ff.) on the Second Sunday of Lent (RCIA ¶ 462) or at some other time when the community gathers. This rite serves as a more immediate preparation for First Reconciliation.

**The Presentations**

The Presentations of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer may be celebrated at a Lenten weekday Mass during the week following the first Scrutiny and the third Scrutiny, respectively. The readings proper to these celebrations take precedence over the weekday readings. (RCIA ¶¶ 147-149).

If the Presentations are celebrated during the catechumenate period, they should also take place on a weekday, so that the readings proper to them may be used. (RCIA ¶¶ 157-162 and 178-183).

If the Presentations have been celebrated during the catechumenate period, they are omitted during the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

**The Preparation Rites**

On Holy Saturday, the Elect and the candidates must be encouraged to refrain from their usual activities, to engage in prayer and reflection, and, if possible, to fast (RCIA ¶ 185). The Preparation Rites should assist this process of prayer and reflection. There are several rites to choose from (RCIA ¶ 185) and proper readings are provided for each choice. As an option, a mini-retreat may be held.
The Sacraments of Initiation

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist normally are conferred at the Easter Vigil. The Easter Vigil must in every way be a worthy celebration, especially in its full and lavish use of symbol, both in the celebration of the sacraments themselves and in the preceding Services of Light and Word.

The Elect do not carry lighted tapers as the baptized do during the Service of Light, because they have not yet been enlightened by Christ in Baptism. The candidates, however, do carry lighted tapers, because they are baptized.

After their Baptism and not before, the baptized may be clothed in a white garment: an alb is such a garment. It remains undecorated, for it is itself the symbol. Stoles are not baptismal garments, and should not be used.

Priests who exercise a pastoral office in the Diocese of Trenton are expected by the law of the Church and are automatically granted the necessary faculties by the Bishop to baptize and confirm adults and children of catechetical age. (Canon 883.2).

When the Elect are baptized, the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist must be conferred immediately thereafter, unless a grave reason prevents it (Canon 866, cf. RCIA ¶ 215, NCCB Statutes ¶ 14). The absence of a bishop does not constitute a grave reason (cf. National Statutes ¶ 13-14); nor does the personal preference of the celebrant or candidate for Baptism. A grave reason may arise in emergency situations or missionary situations where the minister of Baptism is a deacon, or the oil of chrism is not available.

It is not permissible at one celebration for one priest to baptize and another to confirm. The faculty to confirm is only granted to the one who baptizes. For the same reason, it is not permissible for a deacon to baptize and a priest to confirm. If there are a large number to be confirmed, the presiding minister may invite other priests to assist him in the anointing (RCIA ¶ 14).

When an ordinary minister of Baptism is available, a lay person is not authorized to baptize. Nor is it appropriate for anyone except the baptizing minister to question the Elect for the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith prior to Baptism.

Priests who are assigned to ministry in the Diocese of Trenton, are automatically granted faculties by the Bishop, to receive into full communion, adults and children of Catechetical age, and they receive from the law the faculty to confirm them. (Canon 883.2). Those who have this faculty to confirm are bound to exercise it. (Canon 885.2).

Priest of the Diocese of Trenton must request faculties to confirm both Catechized Catholics (those who were Baptized and who received First Holy Communion) as well as the un-catechized Catholics, (who are Baptized, but did not yet receive First Holy Communion), when they make this request in writing to the local ordinary.
The neophytes and the other newly-initiated may participate in reading the General Intercessions (RCIA ¶ 217) and take up the gifts at the Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts and the Altar. Communion should be offered under both forms.

The Period of Mystagogy

The period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy refers to the fifty days of the Easter Season, concluding at Pentecost (RCIA ¶ 249) and also to the first year of the neophyte’s life as a baptized Christian (National Statutes ¶ 24), concluding on the anniversary of the neophyte’s initiation (RCIA ¶ 250). The mystagogy that takes place during this first year is also called “extended mystagogy.” Extended mystagogy includes monthly meetings (National Statutes ¶ 24). Seasonal gatherings may also be appropriate.

The neophytes and their godparents should participate as a group in the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season, and special places in the assembly should be reserved for them (RCIA ¶ 248). They may wear their baptismal garments at these celebrations, so as to make their presence more visible to the assembly. These “Neophytes’ Masses” are the main setting of the mystagogy (RCIA ¶ 247). Candidates whose initiation was completed in the catechumenate participate in this period in the same way as the newly-baptized. Their sponsors should support them and participate in the Neophytes’ Masses with them.

In the Diocese of Trenton, the Bishop reserves the right to gather with the neophytes for a Eucharistic celebration during the Easter Season.

Notes about Teenagers

Although teenagers of the age of fourteen and older are to be initiated according to the norms for adults, it is an open pastoral question whether these young people should form their own group or be included with the adults. This decision should be based on the maturity and the pastoral needs of the teenagers involved. If a separate group is formed, it should follow the catechetical and ritual pattern set by the steps and periods of the rite and be linked with the adult group whenever possible, especially for the major rituals.

Teenagers need adults to mentor them, as well as peers to support them. The role of the sponsor should usually be taken by an adult, and the teenager’s peers should be involved as a community of support and encouragement.
CHAPTER THREE

CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

Contents:

- The Relationship of the Rite for Adults to the Rite for Children
- Who are the Children
- Special Needs of Children of Catechetical Age
  (7 to 14 years of age)
- Role of the Family
- Role of Catholic Peers
- The Shape of the Catechumenate for Children
- Adapting the Rites for Children

The Relationship of the Rite for Adults to the Rite for Children

The catechumenate as it is described for adults is the model for the catechumenate for children. What is contained in the section devoted to children (RCIA Part II, Chapter 1) is a set of adaptations to render the adult catechumenate better suited to the pastoral needs of children. It does not constitute a different model. Whenever the introductory material in the chapter on children does not provide enough information or guidance concerning the periods or the rites, the reader should refer to the corresponding section of the rite for adults for more information.

From apostolic times, families have come to the grace of Baptism together. Families that are undergoing initiation should, as far as possible, celebrate the rites of the catechumenate and the Sacraments of Initiation together as a family, provided that each member is truly ready for the next stage of the process. In these cases, the rite followed is the one for adults, with appropriate adaptations made for the children who are participating.

The catechumenate for both adults and children is a single reality: adults and children may always participate in the rites together. When the children's parents are not part of the catechumenate, however, the parish may celebrate the rites for them in gatherings separate from the adult catechumenate, where the fullest use of the adaptations for children may be exercised. This is a pastoral decision.

Who Are the Children

Children of catechetical age are those children who have reached the age of reason, which is generally considered to be age seven.
The category of “children of catechetical age” extends up to the fourteenth year. The initiation of young people who have completed their fourteenth year and older should follow the rite for adults (Part I and Part II, Chapters 2-5) in every respect, rather than the rite for children (Part II, Chapter 1).

Children of catechetical age are old enough to hear and understand the call of Christ, and to respond with faith at their own age level. Consequently, their initiation is not based, as is the baptism of infants, entirely on the commitment of parents and the faith of the Church, but requires a genuine faith response on the part of the child. At the same time, the child is still dependent on his or her parents, and will need continued nurturing in faith.

**Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age**

This is the primary group of children involved in the catechumenate. Their special concerns are addressed by Part II, Chapter 1 of the rite. They should, without exception, participate fully in the children’s catechumenate and celebrate all three of the Sacraments of Initiation together. Due to the nature of this process, it is expected and encouraged, that unbaptized children of catechetical age with parents/guardians, be involved for a period of two or three years. (RCIA ¶ 253; National Statutes ¶19.)

**Baptized Children Seeking Reception into Full Communion of the Catholic Church**

The process of formation for those children baptized in another Christian tradition and seeking reception into full communion of the Catholic Church begins with an inquiry period that leads to the celebration of the Rite of Welcoming. These children are then incorporated into the RCIA process for children that runs parallel with regular attendance in the parish religious education program or in the Catholic school. They must have the clear understanding that they are baptized candidates and not catechumens.

As with adults who are coming from another Christian tradition, they are then prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (National Statutes, Appendix III, #36). An age-appropriate Profession of Faith may be made at the Easter Vigil or at a Sunday Eucharistic liturgy, preferably during the Easter Season. At this liturgy they must be confirmed and celebrate First Eucharist. (RCIA Appendix III, #33, 34, 35). Notation of their reception into the Catholic Church is recorded in the baptismal, Eucharist, and Confirmation registers. A certificate for full initiation is issued.

**Baptized but Uncatechized Catholic Children of Catechetical Age**

The fact that these children may be out of grade level at which the sacraments are usually celebrated should not be seen a barrier to receiving Confirmation and Eucharist with children of other ages. This confirms our understanding and the practice of celebrating these
sacraments based on readiness, as described in the rite, and not on chronological age or grade level. At an appropriate time, these children then celebrate First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. (RCIA #256). This readiness is determined after appropriate catechesis and dialogue has taken place, not only with the child, but also with the parents or family. In many cases these other family members may be in need of much pastoral care and support as they carry out their duty of continuing to foster faith in this child. Sacramental guidelines for baptized but uncatechized Catholic children of catechetical age are available from the Diocesan Office of Catechesis.

**Children Younger Than Catechetical Age**

**Unbaptized** children younger than catechetical age are to be baptized according to the Rite of Baptism for Children, which is the rite used for infant Baptism. Their Confirmation and Eucharist are then deferred until a later age, according to parish and Diocesan policy.

**Children baptized in another Christian tradition** younger than catechetical age whose parents are being received into the Catholic Church do not participate in a catechumenate. They are received into the Church on the same date as their parents. Notation of their reception and record of the date and place of their Baptism should be made in the parish baptismal register and a certificate of reception should be issued. Although no rite is required of them, these children should be warmly welcomed and may be recognized in various ways at the celebration of the parents’ reception. They then receive the remaining Sacraments of Initiation with their Catholic peers.

**Children baptized in another Christian tradition, whose parents (baptized Catholics) have returned to the Catholic Church**, now also become members of the Roman Catholic Church. The child may make a private Profession of Faith prior to reception of First Eucharist. Notation of the Baptism and Profession of Faith should be recorded in both the baptismal and First Eucharist parish registers.

**Special Needs of Children of Catechetical Age (7 to 14 years of age)**

The Christian initiation of children of catechetical age must therefore take special care to evaluate the following elements of the child’s conversion, so that the child’s special needs may be met:

1. What is the attitude of the child’s family? Is there a commitment on their part to the child’s growth in faith and in the community of the Church? How can this commitment be developed?

2. What is the child’s relationship to the parish community and to Sunday worship? Is there an ongoing relationship? How can such a relationship be developed?

3. How has the child expressed faith in Christ? How has the child expressed the desire to belong to the Church? How can a personal relationship to Christ and to the Church be developed?
Role of the Family

The catechumenate for children should incorporate ways for the family of the young catechumen to be involved in the process of initiation.

The catechumenate coordinator/director or pastor should meet with the family and enlist their active support from the beginning of the process. A commitment to bring the child to the catechumenate gatherings is essential. The coordinator/director or pastor should make clear what the process involves for the child, and that the family is expected to participate with the child in the rites and the catechetical process.

In determining reasonable expectations for family involvement, the Church needs to take into account that families today take a great many different forms. The family structure also varies according to culture. Families today are frequently subject to economic pressures and experience time pressures due to both parents working outside the home.

For children to be initiated into the Church, it is always necessary to have the consent of their parents, or at least one of them, or those who lawfully take their place. Children who have the consent but not the active involvement of their parents in the process of initiation should not on that account alone be barred from the process. If these children have grandparents, responsible older siblings or other key family members who will support their conversion consistently, these factors should also be taken into account.

Role of Catholic Peers

The support of the child’s community of peers and their families will strengthen the young catechumen’s experience of the Church and of conversion, and should be sought whenever possible.

The special role of a “peer companion” does not substitute for an adult sponsor, but can provide a helpful informal support for the catechumen and should be used judiciously.

When the child is enrolled in a Catholic school or catechetical program, the child’s classmates should be made aware of the special journey of the child and invited to participate in liturgical celebrations of the catechumenate for their classmate whenever appropriate. This may take the form of participation in one of the major rites held in the parish church, or one of the minor rites, which may be celebrated with a group of children in a school or catechetical center.

The Shape of the Catechumenate for Children

Initiation is a gradual process for children as well as for adults, and care should be taken to allow enough time for the children to grow secure in their new faith and develop bonds to the Church community. Frequently, the time needed by the children is longer than the time needed by adults.
Initiation is a gradual process for children as well as for adults, and care should be taken to allow enough time for the children to grow secure in their new faith and develop bonds to the Church community. Frequently, the time needed by the children is longer than the time needed by adults.

The catechumenate begins with an inquiry period that leads to the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance (or the combined Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming). The inquiry, or precatechumenate, should introduce the child to ingredients basic to our faith: ‘Who God is’, ‘Who Jesus is’, and ‘Who we are as Church’.

The Catechumenate begins after the Inquiry Period with the Rite of Acceptance. When possible, the Rite of Welcoming should be celebrated for those children baptized in another tradition at another time, in another ceremony.

After the Rite of Acceptance, the process continues with the catechumenate period, which is linked with the Sunday Liturgy of the Word. This period includes dismissals and minor rites, as does the catechumenate period for adults. The child’s experience of worship is very important to this period. Special attention should be given to cultivating a sense of wonder at God’s presence in the central symbols of our faith: light, water, oil, bread and wine, and the people gathered to worship. Catechesis about what it means to follow Jesus in our daily lives springs naturally from the lectionary readings Sunday by Sunday in the course of the liturgical year. At least one full year should be devoted to the catechumenate period (National Statutes, No. 7). The pastor, catechumenate coordinator/director, catechists, and other members of the team should carry out a discernment of the children’s progress and readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation. Those who are truly prepared then enter into the Lenten Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

The Rite of Election is considered an optional rite for children. That does not mean that each child may decide whether or not to attend. Rather, the pastor or catechumenate director/coordinator, in consultation with the catechumenate team, should decide whether and how the children who will receive the sacraments at Easter should participate. Careful consideration should be given to this question as a matter of parish policy.

Unbaptized children may participate in the Diocesan Rite of Election. The Call to Continuing Conversion should be reserved for children who have been baptized in another tradition. If the unbaptized children do not participate with the adults at the Diocesan rite, another option would be to hold a Rite of Election for children in the parish. If the coordinator/director and pastor judge that a parish celebration of Election for the children would be more pastorally suitable than the Diocesan rite, delegation to preside at this rite can be obtained from the Office of the Bishop (see Appendix D). A third option is to omit this rite altogether.

Children younger than seven (7) years of age, whose valid baptism took place in another Christian denomination, and whose parents become Catholic, automatically become members of the Catholic Church if it is their parents’ desire. Age-appropriate catechesis should be offered before, and after this incorporation. A notation of their new membership needs to be made in the parish Baptismal Register.
During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, one or two Scrutinies should be celebrated with the children. These celebrations may be linked with services for the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the children’s Catholic peers.

The Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated for the children at the Easter Vigil, unless serious reasons prevent it, such as inordinately large numbers or pastoral reasons deem otherwise. Children whose parents are being initiated at the Easter Vigil should be included with their family members.

If, for pastoral reasons, any of the children are not initiated at the Easter Vigil, they should receive the three Sacraments of Initiation as soon as possible thereafter, at the Mass of Easter Day or a Sunday Mass during the Easter Season.

Children should share in the joy of the fifty days of the Easter Season, and be visible to the community at Sunday Mass with their godparents and the other neophytes, in a special place reserved for them in the assembly. During the Easter Season, they also participate in post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy. They have a special celebration to mark the end of the Easter Season, at Pentecost. For children, extended mystagogical catechesis will be provided by participation in the parish catechetical program. In addition, extended mystagogy may also include monthly gatherings for a one year period.

**Adapting the Rites for Children**

When celebrating the rites for children, the ritual for children should be used and adapted to the needs of the particular children who participate.

Those who are involved in preparing the rites should take great care in adapting the rites. The following principles should be kept in mind:

- The adaptations for children offered by the rite should be read and understood in light of Part I of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.
- It is the goal of any adaptation to preserve and highlight the central symbols of the rites.
- It is necessary to avoid adding additional layers of symbolism to the symbols that are already in the rite.
- It is necessary to understand the structures of the rites, and keep those structures intact.
- The rite as it appears in the ritual book is always our guide and reference point.

When children celebrate the rites together with adult catechumens, the adult rite is followed, with some adaptations for the children. In order to accomplish this successfully, the celebrant should prepare carefully, perhaps using a text that combines the adult rite with the adaptation for children.

When combining adaptations for children with the adult rite in celebrations where both adults and children will participate, the following guidance is offered:
In the Rite of Acceptance, the opening dialogue with the children should ask the questions that appear in the rite for children, whereas the dialogue with the adults would ask the questions that appear in the adult rite.

The Rite of Acceptance for children incorporates a special affirmation by the parents. This affirmation by the parents should be retained when the children celebrate with the adults.

Special blessings and gatherings using the Oil of Catechumens provide graced moments of support for the young catechumens. These rites would precede the Rite of Election and the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

The Scrutinies for children, unlike those for adults, may be celebrated in the context of their religious education formation setting, where a community is present in prayerful support. The priest presides at the scrutiny. (¶ 295)

Further assistance in adapting the rites may be obtained from the Diocesan Office of Worship.
CHAPTER FOUR
MINISTRIES

Contents

The Community

The Catechumenate Director/Coordinator

Catechists

Sponsors and Godparents

Team Development

The Community

The community is the primary minister of the catechumenate. RCIA ¶ 9 describes this ministry in detail. Consistent effort should be made to enable the parish community to be aware of and undertake their responsibility for the initiation of new members.

Efforts to enable parishioners to explore their faith in parish groups, such as small faith sharing groups and adult education, can promote awareness of the crucial role of the faithful in giving witness and nurturing conversion.

With or without special programs, the people of the parish should pray for the catechumens and candidates, socialize with them, and give them good example of the Christian life. The ongoing ministry of preaching and catechesis in the parish should build up the sense of the faithful, that it is important and necessary for the community to care for catechumens and candidates in the process of initiation.

The Catechumenate Director/Coordinator

It is expected that, in addition to the pastor, there is one person who is responsible for overseeing the work of the Initiation Process in the parish. A person in this position should have experience working in initiation ministries, as well as having appropriate theological and spiritual preparation.

The director/coordinate is responsible for working with the pastor and the catechumenate team to see that the ministries of the catechumenate are carried out, and that the norms and directives of the rite are observed. S/he will also arrange for the team’s training and ongoing development, provide resources for the team, and serve as contact person for the Diocese. A “Director” is ordinarily one who has an undergraduate or graduate degree in Theology or Religious Studies. When the leader does not have this academic background, they as the Coordinator are encouraged to pursue Certification through the Office of Catechesis and/or apply for candidacy in ILEM.
Catechists

The catechist in the Initiation Ministries must have a thorough knowledge of and love for the teachings of the Church, as well as the practical skills necessary to work effectively with adults and/or children. Catechists who work with adults should understand the principles of adult learning, and those who work with children should apply pedagogical skills that are appropriate to the age group of the children. Because the catechumenate is intimately bound up with the liturgical life of the Church, and draws substantially on the scriptures proclaimed in the Sunday assembly, catechists in the catechumenate need to be solidly grounded in good principles of liturgy and scriptural interpretation, as well as theology, morality, and spirituality.

The catechist has a special responsibility to show forth the Church’s respect for non-Christian religions, and to exemplify and foster an ecumenical spirit within the group. At the same time, the catechist should affirm and clearly explain the distinctive witness of Catholicism and the unique gift of Christ, so that indifferentism or relativism may be avoided.

A commitment to ongoing formation is essential for the catechist. In the Diocese of Trenton certification as a catechist is a requirement. Special presentations, workshops, and institutes sponsored by the Diocese and the North American Forum on the Catechumenate help the catechist to grow in this ministry. For information about what offerings are available, contact the Diocesan Office of Worship and the Office of Catechesis in order to maintain an updated Certification status.

Sponsors and Godparents

For Adults

Any fully-initiated adult Catholic who is willing to assist in the process of initiation and is able to set a good example of the life of faith may be a sponsor. The sponsor’s role is described in (RCIA ¶ 10). The sponsor is usually a member of the parish and accompanies the candidate through the entire process of initiation, beginning with the Period of Inquiry, up to the Rite of Sending where the godparent begins their role.

The godparent of an adult catechumen should also assist in the initiation process and set a good example. The godparent’s role is described in (RCIA ¶ 11). The godparent must be a fully-initiated Catholic in good standing and is usually chosen by the catechumen. The godparent may be the same person as the sponsor, and continue their role of good example, support and prayer through the journey to the Sacraments of Initiation, Mystagogy and for years to follow, as desired.

For Children of Catechetical Age

The godparents of unbaptized children, whose role is analogous to that of the godparents for adults (RCIA ¶ 11), cannot be their parents. The godparents, parents or sponsors should be involved during the catechumenate process and will accompany the child at the Rite of Election and at the Sacraments of Initiation. Godparents or sponsors participate with the child
in the Rite of Acceptance as suitable members of the Church who act on this occasion and throughout the process for the benefit of the children.

To qualify for these ministries, adults should be willing to assist in the process of the child’s initiation and be able to provide a good example and witness to the faith. They must be fully-initiated adult Catholics in good standing.

**Formation of Sponsors and Godparents**

The director/coordinator is responsible to see to it that sponsors and godparents receive adequate formation for these important ministries.

**Team Development**

From year to year the catechumenate team will need to incorporate new members and provide ongoing formation for those who continue to serve in the Initiation Ministries. Some of the orientation of new team members and ongoing formation of experienced team members can be accomplished at the parish under the guidance of the director/coordinator and the pastor. Participation in workshops, seminars, and courses offered by the Diocese and by national organizations such as the North American Forum on the Catechumenate will also provide valuable help to team members. The parish should encourage its team members to grow in their ministry and support their participation in outside events and workshops that will enrich their understanding of the RCIA.

All catechists in the Diocese of Trenton are to be certified or working toward it. This requirement is expected of all coordinators/directors and those who are teaching formally in the Initiation Ministries. The Office of Catechesis continually sponsors sessions in all Faith Enrichment Centers in the four counties of the Diocese. Evaluation and Accreditation forms may be found in Appendix F and G. Consult various publications for assistance.

The catechumenate team may also become involved with assessing the needs of the parish in the area of Christian initiation, religious education, and liturgy. Because of their work with the Christian initiation of adults, their observations will be valuable to the pastor and the parish council in planning parish initiatives such as small communities, family catechesis, evangelization, and outreach to the alienated.
CHAPTER FIVE
SPECIAL CASES

Contents

Use of the Short Form of Adult Initiation

Christian Initiation of Persons in Danger of Death

Persons with Special Needs

Illiteracy

Schools and Institutions

Use of the Short Form of Adult Initiation

This adaptation may only be used by permission of the Bishop (RCIA ¶ 331). Permission will not be granted on the basis of change of residence from parish to parish or diocese to diocese (National Statutes ¶ 20). The use of this form is to be on the most limited basis possible and will be restricted to extraordinary cases (National Statutes ¶ 20). Please see Appendix D.

Christian Initiation of Persons in Danger of Death

Priests and chaplains should become familiar with the form of initiation to be used in the case of a person in danger of death. Once the sacraments are celebrated, the celebrant must take responsibility for (a) finding out whether or not the person recovered from the dangerous illness, and (b) if the person recovered, seeing that the person is placed in a functioning catechumenate.

When a person initiated in this way recovers and returns to complete the catechumenate under the direction of the parish director/coordinator, the norms for the formation of baptized but uncatechized adults should be followed (RCIA ¶ 374).

Persons with Special Needs

Persons with special needs seeking initiation should be warmly welcomed by the community of the Church. Their participation in the catechumenate and in the Sacraments of Initiation should be encouraged to the fullest degree possible. Persons of the age of fourteen and older are to be treated as adults, regardless of their disability, and initiated according to the norms for adults, with appropriate adaptations.

Although the support and active involvement of the family is desirable and should be sought, no one should be barred from the initiation process because of a perceived lack of faith or Church involvement on the part of their parents or guardians. The permission and basic cooperation of parents or guardians should be sufficient. Often the parents of persons with
disabilities have experienced hurt and rejection in the Church and will only be won back to the Church by a long and patient process. The first priority and responsibility of the minister of Christian initiation is to respond generously to the desire of the one who is seeking the Sacraments of Initiation. A resurgence of interest in Church involvement may very well develop in the family during the course of the initiation process.

Because one of the goals of the catechumenate is to integrate the person into the community of the Church, persons with special needs should as much as possible take part in the catechumenate process with others, rather than as a separate group. If a separate group is deemed necessary, however, participation in the common liturgical rites and a common course of catechesis (adapted to the participants' abilities) will help to underline the fact that they journey together with the other catechumens and candidates. Contact with parishioners through sponsors and involvement in parish life should also be fostered, so that they will be fully accepted by the parish community.

Special efforts by the parish may be required in order to accommodate the needs of persons with special needs in the catechumenate. Since disabilities and individuals vary widely, what is needed will also vary. A special catechist may be needed to present the catechesis in simple form to adults with developmental disabilities. A sign language interpreter may be needed for hearing impaired persons. Braille or audio-taped resources might be needed for those who are visually impaired. Transportation to the catechetical sessions or the Sunday liturgy may be needed. A person who has difficulty speaking may need special help to participate fully in discussion. The catechumenate team should develop sensitivity to the needs of persons with disabilities and find creative ways to meet these needs through the resources of the parish. The Offices of Worship and Catechesis may be able to offer guidance for catechumenate teams in this regard.

Illiteracy

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults does not presume literacy of any participants except the ministers of the rite (note that even at the Rite of Sending, a catechist may write the names as they are called out). Catechumenate directors/coordinators and pastors should take care to ensure that adults who cannot read are nonetheless welcomed and included in the process of initiation.

Schools and Institutions

Catholic Elementary and High Schools

After the initial Period of Inquiry, the catechumenate must always be closely connected to the Sunday worship of the Church. Enrollment in a Catholic school and/or a Religious Education Program therefore, is never sufficient in and of itself to fulfill the requirements of the Catechumenate. While these programs provide a source of valuable on-going formation, catechesis for initiation normally is in addition to regular, on-going religious education. Formation for initiation is normally separate from the regular, sustained religious education, and is specially suited to the particular goals of the initiation process.
Catholic school personnel and parish catechists, nonetheless, have an important role to play in facilitating the faith journey of the students who are catechumens and candidates enrolled in the parish catechumenate. They should understand and respect the special status of the catechumens and candidates, who do not yet participate in the Eucharist, but who are the focus of the Church’s special care and may receive blessings and other sacramentals. They should encourage the Catholic peers of the catechumens and candidates to support and affirm the faith journey of the young catechumens and candidates in their midst. Although the major rites (Acceptance, Election, Scrutiny, and Initiation Sacraments) always take place at parish liturgies, some of the minor rites (such as blessings, minor exorcisms, anointings, the Presentation of the Creed and the Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer) may be celebrated with the catechumens’ classmates in various settings where class prayer is conducted. These rites should be planned collaboratively with the director/coordinator to assure continuity and avoid duplication.

The Catholic school principal and Parish Religious Education Director/Coordinator have a special responsibility to identify needs and encourage families to pursue the initiation process through the parish catechumenate.

Catechists who are responsible for the Catechumenal formation of these children must continue in their own ongoing certification process.

Catholic High Schools

Catholic High School Campus Ministers and Theology teachers are to become sensitive to those non-Catholic/unbaptized students who may be receiving a call to become Catholic. Efforts should be made to connect with the parishes from which these students come, and the RCIA director/coordinator there, with whom they may minister together to meet the needs of these Inquirers.

Colleges and Universities

Catholic campus ministry personnel may conduct a catechumenate adapted to the needs of resident students, commuting students and faculty families who wish to participate regularly in the worship and community life of the campus ministry. Out of pastoral concern for the ongoing Church life of student catechumens and candidates, campus ministers should foster a connection with an appropriate parish where the student will participate in Church life outside of the school year and after graduation.

None of the regular features of the catechumenate are to be abridged because of the institutional setting. The academic calendar, however, may impose a necessity for adapting the time frame of the catechumenate, and even the time of the celebration of the rites.

The records of Baptisms, Receptions, Confirmations, and celebrations of First Eucharist are to be kept in the registers of the parish which corresponds to the campus ministry where the sacraments were celebrated.

Candidates being received into Full Communion or completing their Catholic Initiation should be prepared for and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to full initiation. (RCIA ¶ 459-470.)
Nursing Homes, Residences, Correctional Facilities

Those charged with the pastoral care of people in nursing homes, specialized residences or correctional facilities should fully adapt the Catechumenate to the needs of those who seek initiation in these settings. Information presented in this guide will assist them in obtaining faculties and permission required by the rite.

Those catechumens and candidates who will only be in these institutions for a short period of time, or who begin their catechumenate near the end of their stay, should be helped to find a parish catechumenate in which to continue their formation after they are released.
CHAPTER SIX

PARTICULAR QUESTIONS

A. Marriages, Annulments, Convalidations

B. Funeral of a Catechumen

C. Non-Catholic Baptisms, Conditional Baptism, Non-Catholic Confirmations

D. Eastern Catholic Candidates and the Orthodox Churches

E. Record-Keeping

A. Marriages, Annulments, Convalidations

Contents: Collaboration

Rules Concerning the Marriage of Catechumens

Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking the Sacraments of Initiation

Types of Annulment Cases

Time Frame for the Annulment Process

Convalidation of Marriages

Collaboration

Clergy and Initiation directors/coordinators should work closely together to assure that the marriage situations arising in the catechumenate are addressed in a pastorally sensitive and expeditious manner.

Clergy should inform Initiation directors/coordinators of the progress of the annulment cases, and consult them concerning the needs and progress of those going through the Inquiry Stage of Initiation.

When two Inquirers, husband and wife desire entrance into the church and they were married by a Justice of the Peace, they are validly married. As each is baptized, their marriage is sacramentalized. Rites may be supplied by a “Renewal of Vows”, if desired.

In planning for the marriage of catechumens or the convalidation of marriages for those who are in the Inquiry Stage, the Initiation coordinators'/directors' advice and cooperation should be sought by the parish priests and deacons so that the formation process can be integrated with these important events. In the case of an invalid marriage which will be
validated in a Catholic Church, it is to be noted that the state of New Jersey requires that the couple get a RE-MARRIAGE License from the locale where living, as part of the process. Further questions in this matter should be directed to the Diocesan Tribunal:

**Rules Concerning the Marriage of Catechumens**

See p.18 of this Guide for the Particular Law of the Diocese of Trenton regarding Entrance into the Order of Catechumens.

Once a person has become a catechumen (the result of celebrating the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens), that person is a member of the household of faith and has certain rights in the Church. Among them is the right to be married according to the Catholic Rite of Marriage.

When a catechumen is married, the language of the rite is adapted to reflect the fact that the catechumen is unbaptized. The marriage should take place in the context of a marriage ceremony, not a Mass.

When a catechumen marries an unbaptized person, no dispensation is needed; when a catechumen marries a baptized person, the dispensation for a **disparity of worship** is necessary.

**Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking the Sacraments of Initiation**

As people enter into the Christian initiation process, they begin examining many aspects of their lives, including their marriage relationship. In forming people for the Christian way of life, the Church is concerned about bringing all aspects of life into relationship with Christ, including marriage. Specific qualities of marriage are proclaimed by the scriptures, including permanence and indissolubility. St. Paul proclaimed marriage a mystery that manifests the love of Christ for each of us (Ephesians 5:32). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to marriage as a sacrament of the communion of the Church. Those who minister to divorced persons seeking initiation should keep in mind these pastoral and theological concerns.

A person who is divorced but not remarried may celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. That person should clearly understand, however, that the Church considers him/her bound by the bond of the previous marriage and that a future marriage would not be possible unless the previous marriage was dissolved by death or by a Church annulment. The time of preparation for initiation may be an appropriate time to present their case so they can know of their freedom to enter into a future marriage within the Church. (Appendix E)

Anyone who was married and divorced and is now remarried, must seek an annulment of the prior marriage or marriages before the Rite of Acceptance or Welcome can be celebrated. (N.B. If the ex-spouse has obtained a Church annulment, that annulment frees both parties.) Also, anyone who is married to someone who was previously married and divorced cannot celebrate the Rite of Welcoming unless the spouse obtains an annulment of the previous marriage. (Appendix E)

An annulment is a declaration by the Church that the marriage in question was not binding in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church. It affirms that a required intention or
capability was not present. An annulment (declaration of nullity) does not deny that a real relationship existed, or imply that the relationship was entered into with ill will or moral fault. It is a statement that says the Church has judged that the relationship lacked at least one of the elements considered essential for a binding union. An annulment has absolutely no effect on the legitimacy of children.

The person seeking initiation should understand that the process of getting an annulment is not the same as getting a divorce. Civil law views marriage as a contract that can be broken or dissolved. The Church understands marriage to be a covenant relationship that is indissoluble. A covenant relationship demands more than the establishment of a contract. Only when the practices involved bring certain intentions and capabilities to the relationship is the covenant real and genuine.

Any questions about the annulment process (or anyone needing to begin the process) should be referred to the parish priest, deacon, the Diocesan Tribunal Office, or the Office of Family Life.

Types of Annulment Cases

Those who minister to people in the process of Christian Initiation should always refer annulment cases to those who are professionally competent to assess them. It is helpful, however, for the directors/coordinators to know some of the possible reasons for granting a Church annulment.

Some possible reasons for an annulment are:

1. Lack of ability or intention to enter into a lifelong commitment;
2. Lack of ability or intention to be faithful to one’s spouse;
3. Lack of freedom in entering into the marriage;
4. Intention against having children;
5. Lack of complete commitment (placing conditions or restrictions on the commitment);
6. Lack of ability or intention to form a relationship based on love and respect for the good of one another;
7. Psychological, mental, or emotional illness or personality disorders.

There are certain cases, in addition to the situations listed above, in which an annulment may be obtained. The Judicial Vicar of the Diocese may offer further clarity in such cases.

Lack of Form

This type of annulment can only be sought in cases where one or both of the parties are Catholic. It is based on the rule that in order for a Roman Catholic’s marriage to be considered valid and binding in the Roman Catholic Church, that person must be married before a Roman Catholic priest or deacon and two witnesses. If the person was married in any other way, such as a civil ceremony or a non-Catholic ceremony, without the necessary permission or dispensation, the marriage may be declared invalid.
Privilege Cases

There are two types of privilege cases, both dealing with either one or two unbaptized people.

Pauline Privilege

The Pauline Privilege comes from an ecclesiastical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:12-15, and applies to the marriage of two unbaptized persons, one of whom is later baptized. The first marriage of the newly baptized party is dissolved with this privilege only when the baptized party enters into a new marriage. A Catholic who wishes to marry one who was previously unbaptized and married to another unbaptized person could invoke the use of the Pauline Privilege. This can be handled at the local level, i.e., the Diocesan level: it does not have to be sent to Rome.

Privilege of the Faith (Petrine Privilege)

This is the dissolution of a legitimate marriage where at least one party is unbaptized and is granted only by the Pope in favor of the faith. It pertains only to those cases in which one of the parties remained unbaptized during the entire marriage. For further information, contact the Diocesan Tribunal.

Time Frame for Annulment Process

Much depends on the cooperation of the parties involved and how quickly testimony is given and collected, however, twelve to eighteen months can be expected before an annulment is granted.

Convalidation of Marriages

Convalidation of an invalid marriage of an Inquirer, i.e., the speaking of the wedding vows in the presence of a Catholic priest or deacon and two witnesses, should be completed before the Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated. One cannot enter into the full sacramental life of the Church unless one is completely free to receive the sacraments. It is pastorally advisable to convalidate the marriage as early in the process as possible.

If one party of the marriage does not want to be subjected to a convalidation ceremony, it is usually possible to obtain a radical sanation, i.e., the official recognition of the Diocesan bishop to a marriage not recognized by the Church, from the Tribunal Office, provided that both parties intend to remain faithful to the marriage bond. Ordinarily, the sanation involves a dispensation from any further public rite and it effects a valid marriage between the parties (Canons 1161-1165).

In both situations the spouses have to be free to marry in the Church as the Church defines that freedom.
B. Funeral of a Catechumen

Once an unbaptized person has passed through the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, that person becomes “part of the household of Christ” (RCIA ¶ 47) and may receive blessings, use sacramentals and be married according to the Rite of Marriage. Catechumens may also be buried as a Christian (RCIA ¶ 47). Within the funeral rites, catechumens are to be considered members of the Christian faithful (Canon 1183.1). The language of the Order of Christian Funerals which refers to Baptism is to be adapted.

C. Non-Catholic Baptisms, Conditional Baptism, Non-Catholic Confirmations

Contents:
- Criteria for Determining a Valid Non-Catholic Baptism
- Conditional Baptism
- Those Churches or Communions Whose Baptism is Recognized as Valid by the Roman Catholic Church
- Non-Catholic Confirmations

Criteria for Determining a Valid Non-Catholic Baptism

There are three criteria for determining that any Baptism is valid, whether Catholic or not. These are: the pouring of or immersion in water, the use of the Trinitarian formula, and the intention to do what the Church does when it baptizes. It is the Church’s intention that the person literally dies to sin and becomes one with Christ and His Church in Baptism. If there is any question about the validity of the formula used, it should be addressed with the Diocesan Tribunal Office.

If the ritual books of a non-Catholic church or communion prescribe Baptism by water and the Trinitarian formula, the only way one can question the validity of a Baptism in such a church or communion is to have reasonable proof that the minister did not use the proper matter or form or did not intend to baptize, or in the case of an adult recipient, that the proper intention was lacking in the one being baptized (Canon 869.2).

Inability to obtain a baptismal certificate from a particular church or communion in question does not in itself constitute reasonable proof that a Baptism was invalid. Ordinarily a certificate should be able to be obtained, but sometimes there are valid reasons why written records do not exist or have become unavailable. Each case should be considered individually, and the Diocesan Tribunal should be consulted in doubtful cases. The certificate of Baptism needs to be obtained before the Rite of Welcome.

If, however, there is a doubt about the fact or validity of Baptism, and the doubt remains after serious investigation, Baptism may be conferred conditionally (Canon 869.1).
Conditional Baptism

The sacrament of Baptism may not be repeated and conditional Baptism is not permitted unless there is prudent doubt of the fact of the validity of the Baptism already received. If, after serious investigation, it seems necessary - because of such prudent doubt - to confer Baptism again conditionally, the minister should explain beforehand the reasons why the Baptism is conferred conditionally in this instance and he should administer it in the private form (RCIA, Appendix n.7; Canon 869.3).

If water and the Trinitarian formula were used, however, one can presume that the intention of the minister was to do what the Roman Catholic Church does when it baptizes, unless there are contrary indications. A baptismal certificate is sufficient proof of Baptism in ordinary circumstances.

Those Churches or Communions Whose Baptism is Recognized as Valid by the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church regards as valid the baptism of the following churches or communions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthodox Churches (see page 39)</th>
<th>Evangelical Churches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventist</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Methodist Episcopal (AME)</td>
<td>Evangelical United Brethren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amish</td>
<td>Liberal Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly of God</td>
<td>Missouri Synod Lutheran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist (Adults only) (Children are “Dedicated”, not baptized)</td>
<td>Old Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Brethren</td>
<td>Old Roman Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God</td>
<td>Polish National Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Nazarene</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Church</td>
<td>Reformed Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples of Christ</td>
<td>United Church of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For information about other churches or communions that are not listed here contact the Office of Worship. Additional questions may be referred to the Office of the Bishop.
Non-Catholic Confirmations

The only non-Catholic churches whose Sacrament of Confirmation is accepted by the Roman Catholic Church are: Orthodox churches (see p. 45), the Polish National Catholic Church, Old Catholic Church and the Society of Pius X. All candidates from Christian churches other than these must be confirmed when they are received into full communion of the Catholic Church.

D. Eastern Catholic Candidates and the Orthodox Churches

Contents: Eastern Catholics Who Wish to Transfer to the Latin Rite
          Rules Concerning Orthodox Christians Becoming Roman Catholic

**Eastern Catholics (Defined)**

A Christian is a member, canonically, not of a rite, but of a specific Church that follows in its worship a certain pattern of liturgy called a “rite.” Thus, in Catholicism there is a Latin Catholic Church and Eastern Catholic Churches. They are all Catholic, but they follow different liturgical rites and canonical traditions.

There are six families of liturgical rites in the Catholic Church. They are: Latin, Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochene, Chaldean, and Armenian.

More than twenty ritual Churches comprise the Catholic Church: Armenian, Bulgarian, Byelorussian, Chaldean, Coptic, Ethiopian, Greek-Melkite, Hellenic Byzantine Rite, Hungarian Greek Catholic, Italo-Greek and Albanian, Krizevtsky (Yugoslav, Croatian, Russine, Macedonian, Ukrodian), Latin, Malabar, Malankar, Maronite, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Byzantine-Catholic USA, Slovak Greek Catholic, Syrian, and Ukrainian. Each of these Churches uses one of the rites that exist in the six families listed above.

Members of any of the Eastern Catholic Churches listed above who wish to become members of the Latin Church are not candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church, since they already belong to the Catholic Church. There are rules that govern the circumstances of their membership, however, which must be followed. Contact the Office of the Bishop with questions referring to the transfer of rite.

**Eastern Catholics Who Wish to Transfer to the Latin Rite**

Catholics, one and all, everywhere in the world should retain their own rite, cherish it, and observe it. In special cases, however, individuals, communities, and even regions have the right of recourse to the Holy See, which is the supreme arbiter of inner-ecclesial relations. The Holy See will itself, or through other authorities, provide for the special needs of an ecumenical spirit by issuing timely norms, decrees, or rescripts (Orientalium Ecclesiarum ¶ 4). If adopting parents wish their new “Eastern Orthodox” children to become members of the Latin Rite, they must state that they both desire this for the child under 14 years of age. The child must then make an age appropriate Profession of Faith. This statement must be recorded in the Baptismal
Register next to the date of their Profession of Faith. It is to be noted that these children were fully initiated at the Baptism and are free to receive all of the Sacraments in the Latin Rite.

Eastern Rite Catholics do NOT make a Profession of Faith.

A transfer of rite (except for ¶ 2 or 3 below) normally requires permission of the Holy See and should not be encouraged. Such a transfer is not to be treated under any circumstances as a part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Information about this topic is included in these guidelines for the orientation of the catechumenate director, who may be in the position of answering inquiries about this matter. Further information can be obtained by calling the Office of the Bishop.

After receiving Baptism, the following are enrolled in another ritual Church (Canon 112):

1. One who has obtained permission from the Holy See. (Anyone who does not fall into categories 2 or 3 below, should contact the Office of the Bishop to seek permission from the Holy See.)

2. A spouse who declares at the time of marriage or during marriage that he/she is transferring to the ritual Church of the other spouse. When the marriage has ended, however, that person can freely return to the Church of his/her Baptism.

3. Children under the age of fourteen, whose parents have legitimately transferred to another ritual Church. When they reach the age of fourteen, however, they may return to the Church of his/her Baptism.

Anyone to be baptized who has completed the fourteenth year of age can freely choose to be baptized in any of the ritual Churches and in this case the person belongs to that Church which is chosen (Canon 111).

(from John Huels, The Pastoral Companion to Canon Law pp. 28-29)

**Orthodox Christians (Defined)**

There are several Churches in the East that are not in communion with the Catholic Church. There are those Churches which call themselves Orthodox (usually Byzantine Churches). There are other Churches sometimes known as non-Chalcedonian Churches, which may or may not use the term Orthodox (such as the Coptic Church, the Syrian Jacobite Church, the Ethiopian Church, and the Armenian Church). There is also the Church of the East, or Assyrian Church. None of these churches is in union with Rome: they are not Catholic Churches.

For information on the reception of candidates from these Eastern Churches, see “Rules Concerning Eastern Christians,” which follow.
Rules Concerning Eastern Christians

Orthodox Christians, when they are received into full communion of the Catholic Church, must become members of the ritual Church indicated by their Baptism. Thus, all Protestants must become members of the Latin Church (our rite). Someone who is Greek Orthodox must become a member of the Greek Catholic Church. A Syrian Orthodox person must become a member of the Syrian Catholic Church, etc. Exceptions constitute a transfer of rite and require the permission of the Holy See. If such permission is necessary, it should be sought before any participation in the formation process of the catechumenate.

In the case of uncatechized Eastern non-Catholic candidates, if and when permission to join the Latin Church is granted, these candidates may participate in the formation process of the catechumenate, but not its rites. Such candidates are received with a simple profession of faith, and no liturgical rite (RCIA ¶ 474). The simple profession of faith is made before a priest and the date should be recorded in the parish records as the date of reception.

For pastoral reasons, these candidates should be warmly welcomed by the parish community and catechized in an appropriate way before their profession of faith. The Baptism and Confirmation of Orthodox Christians are considered valid by the Catholic Church and must not be repeated.

E. Record Keeping

Contents:

Initiation Questionnaire

Register of Catechumens

The Book of the Elect

The Recording of Candidates Being Received

Initiation Questionnaire

In order to help the catechumenate director/coordinator and the pastor keep an orderly record of important facts about the catechumens and candidates throughout the initiation process, a model Initiation Questionnaire is provided in Appendix D.

A minister of initiation, never an inquirer, ought to fill out the questionnaire.

Register of Catechumens

Since those unbaptized persons who are accepted into the Order of Catechumens have a standing in the Church, their names should be kept in a formal register, along with the names of their sponsors, the minister, the date, and the place of celebration (RICA ¶ 46; see also Canon 788.1). The register of catechumens is not a sacramental register. It is solely a record book of those who have been received into the catechumenate.
If for any reason someone who is enrolled in the catechumenate drops out and later returns for marriage, burial, or the resumption of their formation for Baptism, the register of catechumens provides a record of the person's status within the Church.

The names of the baptized candidates are not written in the register of catechumens, since they are not catechumens. Their status as Christians is determined by their Baptism, the record of which is found where the Baptism took place.

For practical purposes, the Initiation director's/coordinate's file of initiation questionnaires will keep a sufficient record of who is participating in the catechumenate as a candidate.

**The Book of the Elect**

The Book of the Elect is both a ceremonial book and a record book. It is used ceremonially when the catechumens sign it at the Rite of Sending and when it is held high at the Cathedral at the Rite of Election. The priest who presides at the Rite of Sending may sign the Book of the Elect at the bottom of the page. It is kept by the parish as a record book of those who will approach the waters of Baptism at the Easter Vigil. Both adults and children who are Elect may sign the book. A catechist or godparent may write the names of the Elect if for any reason the Elect cannot sign their names themselves. Candidates do not sign the book.

When a serious reason necessitates, the Rite of Election may be celebrated in a place other than the Cathedral. The form to receive proper delegation for the priest to preside, may be found in Appendix D.

**Recording of Candidates Being Received**

Candidates' names are enrolled in the Baptismal Book with the date of reception into the Catholic Church noted with the date and place of their Baptism.

A certificate of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church should be issued to the newly received Catholic.
APPENDIX A

CATECHETICAL RESOURCES


Episcopal Diocese of Colorado.  *Living the Good News.*


Initiation, Reception, And The Eastern Churches.  Prepared on behalf on the Christian Initiation Steering Committee by the Tribunal and the Office of Worship, Diocese of Lansing. Text by Eileen Jaramillo, JCL and Rita Thiron, MA.


APPENDIX B

LITURGICAL RESOURCES


APPENDIX C

CHURCH DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCE WORKS


The Documents of the Liturgy


_The Statutes of the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Trenton_
APPENDIX D

FORMS

(These forms may be duplicated.)

Contents:  

- Initiation Questionnaire
- Request for Delegation to Preside at the Rite of Election
- Request for a Dispensation from One or Two Scrutinies
- Request for Permission to Use the Short Form of Adult Initiation
INITIATION QUESTIONNAIRE
(Please type or print)

1. Name ____________________________
   (Last) (Full First) (Middle Initial) (First)

2. Address __________________________

3. Phone (H) ( ) (W) ( ) (C) ( ) ______

4. Date of Birth ____________ City ____________ State ______

5. Father’s Name ________________ Mother’s Name ____________
   (First) (Maiden)

6. Have you ever been Baptized? ________ If yes:
   Name of church __________________________
   Address __________________________
   Denomination __________ Date of Baptism __________

   An official certificate of Baptism (with notations, if applicable) must be presented before the Rite of Welcoming.

7. Have you ever been Confirmed? ________ Date __________
   Denomination __________________________ An official certificate is required.

8. Have you ever been accepted as a catechumen or a candidate in the Catholic Church? ________ (yes) ________ (no)
   If yes, when? __________________________
   Church __________________________ Address __________________________

9. Who sponsors you for initiation? __________________________
   From the parish of __________________________ City __________________________

10. Please indicate marital status at the present time:
    Single ______ Engaged _____ Married ____ Separated ____ Divorced ____ Widowed ______

11. If engaged, what is present or previous marital status of your fiance?
    Never married __________________________ Previously married __________________________
If your fiance was previously married and the former marriage was dissolved or declared null by the Roman Catholic Church, indicate:

Diocese and Protocol No. __________________________ Date __________________________

If not dissolved, check here. ______

12. If you are married, spouse’s full name _______________________________________________________________________

Date and place of marriage ____________________________________________

Officiant __________________________ (Name) __________________________ (Title)

Prior to this marriage, have you ever been married to another person in church, civilly, or in common law? ______

If yes: How many times were you married? __________________________

To whom? _______________________________________________________________________

Date __________________________ Place __________________________

Officiant __________________________

If your former spouse is deceased, please indicate:

Date of death __________________________ Certificate Number __________________________

This former marriage was dissolved or declared null by the Church. __________________________

Diocese and Protocol No. __________________________________________

Date of decree __________________________

Former marriage was never dissolved or declared null by the Church ________________

If not dissolved, check here. ______

Has your spouse ever been married (prior to your marriage) to another person in church, civilly, or in common law? ________________ If yes, please indicate:

How many times s/he married? __________________________

To whom _______________________________________________________________________

Officiant __________________________

If his/her former spouse is deceased indicate:

Date of Death __________________________ Certificate Number __________________________
If his/her former marriage was dissolved or declared null by the Roman Catholic Church, indicate:

Diocese and Protocol No. ____________________________________________

Date of Decree ____________________________________________

This former marriage was never dissolved or declared null by the Church. _______

13. Have you ever received religious instruction? If in a church that was not Catholic, please name the denomination. ______________________

Catholic School _______ Parish Religious Education _______

Sunday School _______ How many years total? ________

If you are a baptized Catholic, did you receive any formal religious training?

_____ In your home? Describe.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

_____ Catholic School _____ years

_____ Religious Education _____ years
REQUEST FOR DELEGATION TO PRESIDE AT
THE RITE OF ELECTION

Please send a letter containing the information below or use this form.
(N.B. No delegation is needed to preside at the Rite or Call to Continuing Conversion.)

1. Name of the parish or place where the rite will be celebrated:

2. Date on which the rite will be celebrated:

3. Priest who is requesting the delegation:

Position (e.g., pastor, associate, chaplain, etc.)

Address and telephone number:

4. Number of adults and children who will become the Elect in this celebration:
   Adults _______ Children of catechetical age _______

5. Will the rite, adapted for children be followed? Yes _______ No _______

6. Reason for seeking this delegation:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of the priest seeking delegation

Please return this form to: Office of the Bishop, Diocesan Pastoral Center, P.O. Box 5147,
Trenton, New Jersey 08638-0147
REQUEST FOR A DISPENSATION
FROM ONE OR TWO SCRUTINIES

Please send a letter containing the information below or use this form.

(N.B. 1. The pastor or his equivalent must make this request. If his address or telephone number is different from that of the parish or place where the Scrutiny would have been held, it should be added at the bottom of the page, following his signature.

2. Ordinarily the dispensation is only granted for an individual because of a particular reason, named in No. 4 below. If there is some reason why dispensation is sought for a group, a list of names may be attached in place of No.1 below.)

1. Name of the Elect for whom this dispensation is requested:

________________________________________________________________________

2. Name of the parish or place where the Scrutiny would have been celebrated:

________________________________________________________________________

(Address)

________________________________________________________________________

3. Which Scrutiny or Scrutinies would be omitted?

________________________________________________________________________

4. Reason for omitting the Scrutiny

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Pastor/Date

Please return this form to: Office of the Bishop, Diocesan Pastoral Center, P.O. Box 5147, Trenton, New Jersey 08638-0147
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO USE
THE SHORT FORM OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Please send a letter containing the information below or use this form.

(N.B. Pastor or equivalent must make this request.)

1. Name of the candidate for initiation with whom the short form will be used:

2. Place where the sacraments will be celebrated:

3. Reason for requesting the use of the short form:

4. Pastor's name, address, and telephone number:

________________________
Signature of Pastor/Date

Please return this form to: Office of the Bishop, Diocesan Pastoral Center, P.O. Box 5147
Trenton, New Jersey 08638-0147
Appendix E

Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking the Sacraments of Initiation

If an Inquirer is divorced and not remarried, s/he may be admitted to the Rite of Acceptance, the Rite of Election, and the Sacraments of Initiation, as long as s/he is fully aware that s/he will be unable to remarry in the Roman Catholic Church without an annulment, or the dissolution of the first marriage by death.

(A written statement to this effect would be helpful in working with an individual in this situation.)

If the Inquirer is divorced and has remarried, they cannot be admitted to the Rite of Acceptance (thereby, the catechumenate) until the previous marriage(s) in question have been declared null by the proper Diocesan Tribunal, or dissolved by death or papal decree.

Any additional questions may be referred to the Office of the Bishop.
Appendix F

Inquirers / Catechumens in our Catholic High Schools: Pastoral Notes

For consideration by:
Campus Ministers, Principals, Pastors and Parish RCIA Leaders

A. Formation in and information about the Catholic Faith are expected in our High Schools, and Inquirers are welcome.

B. Good communication is to be fostered among all involved.

C. Understanding the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as adapted for teenagers, is imperative for those involved.

D. Leaders are to invite and encourage attendance at Sunday Mass as a regular part of the RCIA process.

E. Appropriate attention for follow-up in college needs to be addressed.

F. The parish where the Sacraments are celebrated is responsible to record this information.

The above is based on the following points:

1. Parental consent for the student to become Catholic is essential and some parent participation is encouraged.
2. Leaders are to remain sensitive and flexible to the multi-faceted and sometimes disjointed family situations of the Inquirers, in the midst of the process.
3. Steady peer-group support in matters of faith is encouraged over the duration of the process, normally a two-year period, or as needed.
4. Guidance is essential in selecting a qualified adult sponsor / godparent.
5. These adult(s) need support and training before / during the Catechumenal process.
6. Minor Rites take place at the Catholic High School and major Rites are celebrated within a parish community: high school and parish staff would participate, when possible in these rituals.
7. The parish affiliation of the Catechumen would be where they are welcomed into the process.
8. Where possible, have the parish youth group involved.
9. When clarity is needed, Campus Ministers are encouraged to connect with the Diocesan Office of Worship and the parish RCIA leader.
Guiding Principles for Pastoral Notes
For Inquirer/Catechumens in Our Catholic High Schools

The Current Situation

1. It is a pastoral reality that some students “come to faith” or have their faith rekindled during their High School years. These students / “Inquirers” express a desire to be Initiated or received into the Catholic Church.

2. The Catholic High School provides a substantial faith formation through: the environment of the school, the specific Religious Studies instruction, and campus ministry activities such as liturgical celebrations, prayer and retreats. In addition, involvement in service activities, relationships with other Catholic students and the building of Christian community all work together to form students in the Catholic faith.

3. Ideally, students who ‘come to faith’ or whose faith is rekindled would be formed and initiated in a parish community where the members gather every Sunday for the celebration of the Eucharist. It would be in this local parish community that these students would undergo the journey of Christian Initiation and celebrate the Rites associated with the RCIA process.

4. However, the current reality is that many of the students in this situation do not have a connection to a parish community. Often students have particular situations, such as multiple residences or multifaceted family situations, which make a connection to a regular parish community challenging. Their only connection to a community of faith is their connection to the Catholic High School. These unique situations call for specific adaptation of the process of initiation to respond to the pastoral needs of the students.

The Pastoral Response

To respond to this situation and meet the needs of these students / “Inquirers” the following process is encouraged:

1. Each Catholic High School would have someone on staff who would take on the responsibility of ministering to any student who is inquiring about Initiation or Reception into the Catholic Church. Ideally this person would be the Campus Minister. He/she would involve other members of the High School community as appropriate, e.g. the Chaplain, Principal, and students who could act as a peer-group to support the student during the Initiation process.

2. When a student inquires about Initiation or Reception, the responsible staff member will make a determination on a case by case basis how best to proceed.
3. Taking into account the unique needs of the student, the responsible staff member would engage the student in a process of Initiation which include and adapt the following:
   ➢ Inviting and encouraging the student to participate regularly in Sunday Mass.
   ➢ Celebration of the Rites. The minor rites could be celebrated in the High School. Every effort should be made to celebrate the major rites in a parish with an active RCIA process. This may necessitate making a connection with a parish local to the High School.
   ➢ The process of Initiation would normally be for a duration of at least a year, i.e. a student beginning the process in September or January of his/her Sophomore year would normally celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil of his/her Junior year.
   ➢ This process should be liturgically based and occur in a group setting.
   ➢ The process would involve an opportunity for pre-catechumenal inquiry, a formal catechesis, a period of purification/enlightenment and a period of mystagogy. All these periods would be surrounded by the celebration of rites appropriate to each part of the process.

4. Students under the age of eighteen must obtain parental permission to engage in this process.

5. The diocesan Offices of Worship and Catechesis will be available to assist the High School with this process including offering in-service sessions on the RCIA and assistance in working with parishes for collaboration.

6. It is strongly encouraged that the High School develop a process of transition and support for the newly initiated as they move beyond the High School into a college setting. Some contact with the college campus ministry community would facilitate this transition.

7. High School students who are already Baptized Catholics seeking to complete their Initiation by preparing for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation should normally get their Pastor’s permission to participate in catechesis for Confirmation in the High School. The actual celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation would be worked out in response to the needs of the student.