



Catholic Diocese of Columbus-Office for Divine Worship

The Rite of Acceptance: Pandemic Recommendations

Pastors are already under significant pressure to find ways to carry out sacramental rites in a way that is reverent and which accommodates the necessary healthcare precautions. In normal years it can be difficult to work these communal rites of initiation into a busy parish calendar, and this is not a normal year. Prudence and caution should be exercised when planning to carry out these rites because in normal circumstances they require a significant gathering for a period of time and physical contact. The following suggestions and recommendations have been compiled to assist parishes in planning the Rite of Acceptance during the pandemic.

Planning for the Rite of Acceptance

1. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) clearly states, “*The rite that is called the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is of the utmost importance...since the celebration manifests their desire publicly and marks their reception and first consecration by the Church.*” (#41-RCIA) The Rite of Acceptance formally marks the individual’s entry into the catechumenate. It is an important step between an individual being in the pre-catechumenate and their entry into the catechumenate. However, if any of your catechumens are in high risk categories, they should be excused from this public rite.
2. While many parishes in the past have incorporated this rite into one of the parish’s Sunday Masses (usually on the First week of Advent), it is not necessary to place the rite within the context of the Mass (see RCIA #44). Parishes are encouraged to consider moving the rite to a separate time apart from the weekend Mass schedule. Possibilities include moving it to an evening weekday Mass or having it in a separate Liturgy of the Word Service. While these are not optimal in terms of parish inclusion, they do provide for an environment with fewer people in attendance, which is an important consideration at this time.
3. Live stream the event on your parish’s Facebook Page or via YouTube. Make sure to include communication to the whole parish about the event and share information/pictures about the new catechumens.
4. During this time of increased positive cases of COVID-19 in Ohio, it is inadvisable to conduct the rites during a weekend Mass because of the added time indoors with a congregation. If it is determined that the rite will still take place at one of the weekend Masses, make sure to communicate that to the parish community so people may determine whether they wish to attend Mass at that time. Clearly demarcate the seats that will be used for the catechumens and their sponsors as well as for the RCIA team. Keep in mind protocols about social distancing, including seating of those not in the same families. You

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may wish to have the catechumens sit together with their family, while their sponsors sit in a pew behind or across from them.

5. Plan for easy access to hand sanitizer for the celebrant and the participants to use during the rite. Everyone, unless they have a medical condition, should be wearing a mask at all times during the liturgy.

Considerations during the Liturgy

The rite can be carried with the following considerations:

Signing the Candidates with the Cross:

For the signing of the cross on the forehead, it is highly encouraged to use option B in order to avoid physical contact (see RCIA #54). However, the celebrant may also choose to use option A with the catechumen and sponsor wearing masks and the celebrant sanitizing his hands prior to the blessing. If using option A, the celebrant could sanitize his hands in between each signing or each catechumen could sanitize his or her forehead prior to the signing as was advised for celebrating Confirmation. The catechumen and sponsor should also be wearing masks at this time.

Signing of the Other Senses:

It is advisable to omit the rite of signing of other senses. If the signing of the other senses is carried out, it is recommended that the celebrant simply say the words over the catechumens and then make the sign of the cross over them at the end without touching them as the rite prescribes.

The Optional Rite of Exorcism:

It is advisable that the rite of optional exorcism be omitted. If the optional rite of exorcism is done, the “breathing lightly toward the face of each candidate” should be omitted as the rite allows, and as prudence dictates during this time (RCIA #71).

Additional questions or concerns can be sent to the Office for Divine Worship-
mlemiesz@columbuscatholic.org