



Liturgical Directives for Preparing CANDIDATES for the Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion

Revised for 2021¹

I. Introduction

This packet applies exclusively to candidates. A candidate is a person at or over the age of seven who has already received the Sacrament of Baptism and desires to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 41-74 and 260-276].

A candidate may be a person baptized as a Catholic but never received any catechetical instruction or formation and who has neither received the Sacrament of Confirmation nor that of the Eucharist and now wants to complete his or her initiation already begun at Baptism. These candidates ordinarily participate in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, particularly that of the Rite of Sending and the Rite of Calling to Continuing Conversion.

A candidate may also be a person who received Baptism validly in an ecclesial community (*i.e.*, a Protestant denomination). For the validity of Baptism, water must move over the head of a person with the invocation of the Trinitarian formula. To ascertain whether such a person has validly received Baptism, consult the list at the end of this packet. If the answer is not easily found on the list, contact the Office of Sacred Liturgy.

Non-Catholic candidates are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church through a profession of faith and the reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist. Such candidates should *not* be made to wait until the Easter Vigil for the celebration of the Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, but should be received whenever it is discerned they possess Catholic faith and are ready to be received, ideally on a Sunday. **Moreover, “it is preferable that reception into full communion not take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism...” (NSCUSA, no. 33).**

“In the case of Eastern Christians [whether Catholic or Orthodox] who enter into the fullness of Catholic communion, no liturgical rite is required, but simply a profession of Catholic faith, even if such persons are permitted, in virtue of recourse to the Apostolic See, to transfer to the Latin rite” (*RCIA*, no. 474). Should an Eastern Christian come to you seeking full communion in the Latin rite, you may wish to contact the Office of Sacred Liturgy.

Because they have already received Baptism, candidates are *not* accepted into the Order of Catechumens, nor should they be treated as catechumens; they do *not* go through any of the Scrutinies and their formation and catechetical instruction should be tailored to their specific situations. “Anything that would equate candidates for reception with those who are catechumens is to be absolutely avoided” in order to honor the dignity of Baptism which they

¹ *Special Thanks to Fr. Daren Zehnle of the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois*

have received (*RCIA*, no. 477).

Prior to the completion of their Christian initiation, *all* candidates should make a thorough examination of conscience, confess their sins, and receive sacramental absolution (cf. *RCIA*, no. 482).

No permission or delegation is needed to celebrate reception into the full communion of the Church. The Priest who receives a baptized adult or child of catechetical age, however, *must* also administer the Sacrament Confirmation at the same celebration [cf. NSCUSA, no. 35].

After the call to continuing conversion, which is celebrated sometime during the first week of Lent, these baptized Christians are called “candidates.” After reception into full communion, they are called the “newly received.”

II. The Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion

Please read through this packet carefully to find answers to questions you may have concerning the preparation of your candidates for “Celebration of the Rite of Calling to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.” If your question is not answered in this packet, please contact the Office of Sacred Liturgy.

The long title of this rite clearly indicates the two distinct groups of those who are the focus of this liturgy:

- (1) baptized but uncatechized Catholics seeking both Confirmation and the Eucharist; and,
- (2) baptized Christians seeking reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Note: In the Diocese of Birmingham, the Rite of Election (for catechumens) is celebrated separately.

The following universal and particular norms apply, to which diocesan and parish ministers have the duty to attend:

1. Although the Rite of Election is a required step for catechumens, the Call to Continuing Conversion is not; it is one of the optional rites for use in the dioceses of the United States of America. If, however, a baptized Christian will celebrate Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil, it makes good sense to participate in the Call to Continuing Conversion at the beginning of Lent.
2. The Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama normally will have the practice of celebrating the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion multiple times to accommodate the number of people who come. Even more opportunities are provided in 2021 due to Covid19 parameters.

3. The Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion takes place within a Liturgy of the Word outside Mass. Hence, there are no concelebrants.
4. There is reserved seating in the Cathedral, according to the numbers that have registered with Office of Sacred Liturgy. Members of parish delegations who will present the candidates also have reserved seating near the lectern.
5. At the appointed time, parish representatives call the names of all candidates. Each candidate, accompanied by a sponsor, then comes forward and stands before the bishop for the inquiry. Candidates do not greet the bishop individually during the Rite.

A logistical review of the liturgical rite will take place with a Master of Ceremonies 30 minutes prior to the Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion. Please be in place 30 minutes prior to the start of the Rite.

6. From the beginning of the entrance song through the end of the final song, please do not take still or moving pictures either from the pews or by moving about the church. This respects the nature of liturgical prayer and minimizes distractions during this act of worship.

III. Parish Preparation for the Rite

It cannot be assumed that every candidate is ready for the Call to Continuing Conversion and, consequently, reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. If the call to continuing conversion is fundamentally God's work through the Church, then steps must be taken to foster adequate discernment.

A. Discernment Progress

This is done in an attitude of prayer. It is also a mutual process involving the testimony of sponsors and catechists, the wisdom of pastors and pastoral staff and parish catechumenate team members, as well as the reaffirmation of intention by the candidates themselves. It is a mutual listening to God who calls [cf. *RCIA*, no. 119].

Before the Call to Continuing Conversion is celebrated, the candidates who will be a part of that rite are expected to have:

- a conversion in mind and in action;
- a sufficient acquaintance with Catholic teaching;
- a spirit of faith and charity; and,
- the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church [cf. *RCIA*, no. 120].

B. Sponsors

For a baptized but uncatechized Catholic, it is possible that one or both godparents can serve as the sponsor for the Sacraments of Confirmation. If this is not possible, then another sponsor is chosen.

For a baptized but uncatechized Christian, it is possible that one or both godparents can serve as the sponsor for the Sacrament of Confirmation provided, they have been received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Otherwise, one or two sponsors are chosen for the Rite of Sending and/or the Call to Continuing Conversion (if celebrated) and reception into full communion [cf. *RCIA*, no. 483].

For those baptized Christians celebrating the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, the same person who guided the candidate during formation also accompanies the candidate for the rites of Lent and Easter. Otherwise, one or two sponsors are chosen for the Rite of Sending and the Call to Continuing Conversion (if celebrated) and reception into full communion [cf. *RCIA*, no. 483].

IV. Parish Rite of Sending

Since the Call to Continuing Conversion belongs to the diocesan Church, it is normative that the diocesan Bishop presides.

A. Parish Rite of Sending

This rite concerns the sending of both catechumens and candidates to the diocesan Bishop and the gathered diocesan Church. Candidates are sent for recognition by the Bishop. The Rite of Sending affords the parish the opportunity to hear the testimony, to express its approval, to rejoice at decisions made for the Sacraments of Initiation, and to assure the candidates of the parish's care and support.

B. Which Rite Should Be Used?

Having two rites from which to choose does not mean any one of them can be used interchangeably.

a) Sending of the Catechumens for Election [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 106-117] is used if there are *only* catechumens preparing for all three Sacraments of Initiation at this coming Easter Vigil. Only the unbaptized are properly called "catechumens." **Only their names are inscribed in the parish Book of the Elect. Candidates do not sign a Book of Elect.**

b) Parish Celebration for Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 530-546] is used when there are *both* catechumens *and* candidates who will be ready for sacraments this Easter Vigil. Though the Rites of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion are celebrated separately at the

diocesan level, most parishes will appropriate celebrate this combined Rite of Sending.

C. When to Celebrate the Rite of Sending

The ritual text states the Rite of Sending is celebrated at a suitable time prior to the Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 108, 436, 533].

It may take place within a Celebration of the Word of God or within Mass.

The anticipated or morning Masses of the First Sunday of Lent make excellent sense since many of the faithful will be able to participate in the rite. However, the Sunday before Lent begins or a day in that week are alternatives, especially if travel time to the cathedral is a factor.

Ash Wednesday does not seem a suitable day since the receiving of ashes imprints a strong penitential character on the liturgy.

D. The Book of the Elect

Candidates, because they are already baptized, do not sign this book, nor do they have their names inscribed in it.

General Notes on the Rite of Christian Initiation

A. Marriages

We must be certain nothing stands in the way of the completion of Christian initiation. If a declaration of nullity of Marriage is needed, it must be granted prior to the First Sunday of Lent in order to participate in the Rite of Sending and Call to Continuing Conversion. If the declaration is granted later in Lent, contact the Office of Sacred Liturgy for guidance.

If a convalidation of Marriage is required, it is best to celebrate it as soon as permitted by law, even before Lent and Easter. It *cannot* be celebrated during the Paschal Triduum. Contact the diocesan Tribunal about these and other marriage concerns.

B. Conditional Baptisms

If there is a reasonable and prudent doubt whether Baptism has been received and it cannot be resolved after serious investigation and conditional Baptism seems necessary, it must be celebrated privately [National Statutes for the Catechumenate [cf. NSCUSA, no. 37]. It seems best to do this as early as possible in the pre-catechumenate period prior to the Rite of Welcoming and certainly prior to the Rite of Sending. In that way the baptismal status is clear. Because of the nature of conditional Baptism, it is diocesan practice for the priest to request delegation from the Bishop to confirm.

C. Confirmation

The Bishop invites catechized adult Catholics who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation receive it at the Diocesan Celebration of Confirmation of Adults at the **Cathedral of Saint Paul in Birmingham at 5:00 p.m. on the Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost (May 22, 2021)**. Please register your candidates with the Office of Sacred Liturgy.

If they do not come to the cathedral, please be reminded that priests require a special faculty from the diocesan Bishop to confirm a baptized but previously uncatechized Catholic who seeks Confirmation.

The same priest who admits into the full communion of the Catholic Church a baptized Christian, *must* also administer the Sacrament of Confirmation [cf. canon 883]. Priests *cannot* withhold Confirmation, nor can they separate Confirmation from Baptism or reception. No “pastoral” reason permits an exception to this universal norm and no dispensation is possible.

D. Those Who Cannot Participate in the Call to Continuing Conversion

When candidates are legitimately prevented from taking part in the Call to Continuing Conversion, contact the Office of Sacred Liturgy to receive guidance. Unlike the Rite of Election, this Rite is not absolutely required.

Churches and Ecclesial Communities with and without Valid Baptism and Confirmation

For the valid reception of Baptism, both the proper matter and form must be used. The proper matter is immersion in water or pouring water over the head three times. The proper form is the Trinitarian formula as found in the liturgical books [cf. canons 849 and 850; *RCIA*, no. 226].

Some separated Churches and ecclesial communities with valid Baptism

All Eastern non-Catholics (Orthodox)
African Methodist Episcopal
Amish
Anglican
Assembly of God
Baptist
Christian and Missionary Alliance
Church of the Brethren
Church of Christ
Church of God
Congregational
Disciples of Christ
Episcopalian
Evangelical
Evangelical United Brethren
Liberal Catholic
Lutheran
Methodist
Old Catholic
Old Roman Catholics
Polish National
Presbyterian
Reformed
United Church of Canada
United Church of Christ
United Reformed
Uniting Church of Australia
Waldensian
Zion

Some ecclesial communities without valid Baptism

Apostolic Church
Bohemian Free Thinkers
Christadelphians
Christian Community (Rudolf Steiner)
Christian Scientists (no baptism)
Church of Divine Science
Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons)
Church of the Universal Brotherhood (Doukhobors)
Jehovah's Witnesses
Masons (no baptism)
New Church of Mr. Emmanuel Swedenborg (Church of the New Jerusalem in the USA)
Peoples Church of Chicago
Reunification Church
Salvation Army
Shakers (no baptism)
Society of Friends (Quakers; no baptism)
Unitarians

Communities whose Baptism is doubtful because ministers do not observe a uniform practice and for which investigation is required in each case: Mennonite, Moravian, Pentecostal, and Seventh Day Adventist²

Some separated ecclesial communities with valid Confirmation are: All Eastern non-Catholics (Orthodox), Old Catholic Church, and Polish National Church.

²John M. Huels, OSM. *The Pastoral Companion: A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry.*

