

FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions

CONFIRMATION

1. Who is to be confirmed?

"In accord with the ancient practice followed in the Roman liturgy, adults are not to be baptized without receiving Confirmation immediately afterward, unless serious reason stands in the way" [RCIA 215; canon 866; U.S. Statutes 35]. This also applies to unbaptized children of catechetical age [U.S. Statutes 18-19].

When Candidates are received into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church they are to be confirmed at the time of their *Profession of Faith* and reception of their *Confirmation* is not to be deferred [U.S. Statutes 35 and canon 885.1].

2. Who has the responsibility to confirm?

The diocesan bishop is the proper minister of the sacraments of initiation for adults. However, any priest who baptizes someone who is no longer an infant, that is, of catechetical age or older, or receives someone into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church, by law has the responsibility to confirm this person [canons 883 and 885].

Priests who do not exercise a pastoral office but participate in a catechumenate require a mandate from the diocesan bishop if they are to baptize; they then do not require any additional mandate or authorization in order to confirm, but have the faculty to confirm from the law, as do priests who baptize in the exercise of their pastoral office [U.S. Statutes 12].

3. Can a priest confirm a baptized *but* uncatechized Catholic?

A priest who wishes to confirm a baptized but uncatechized Catholic must explicitly request this faculty from the diocesan bishop [canon 884.1]. The only exception is in the case of a baptized Catholic who has, without fault, been instructed in a non-Catholic religion or in the case of the re-admission to communion of a baptized Catholic who has been an apostate from the faith [U.S. Statutes 28, 29]. In the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana currently the bishop has granted the faculty to pastors to confirm baptized, uncatechized Catholics on the single occasion of the Easter Vigil.

4. If candidates being received into full communion have already been confirmed in the Church of their baptism, do they need to be reconfirmed?

The Roman Catholic Church only accepts the *Confirmation* of the Orthodox Church and the Old Catholic Church. All others need to be confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church. If there is doubt, pastoral ministers should consult with the chancery.

A Catechumen or a Candidate who is not now invalidly remarried nor intends to remarry is not in need of a declaration of nullity to be accepted for the *Rite of Election or the Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion* and consequently, the sacraments of initiation. However, the implication of future attempts to remarry without a declaration of nullity must be carefully explained before the discernment for the rite is completed.

11. If an Inquirer, Catechumen or Candidate is engaged to be married, should the initiation process be abbreviated to allow for initiation before the marriage is celebrated?

No. The process of formation required for Christian initiation should not be abbreviated simply for the reason of being a fully initiated Roman Catholic in time for the wedding. It may be more appropriate to concentrate on the preparation for *Christian Marriage* and postpone or extend the catechumenate. Christian Marriage is a serious vocation and its preparation should not be neglected or weakened because of one's participation in the catechumenate. It is always pastorally prudent to refer the newly married couple to their respective pastor who can then assume responsibility for seeing that the inquirer, catechumen or candidate has the opportunity to complete their initiation.

THE RCIA AND CHILDREN

12. How are children of catechetical age initiated into the Church?

Children of catechetical age are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults [canon 852.1 and U.S. Statutes 18]. Their formation should follow the general pattern of the catechumenate as far as possible. Given their young age a catechumenate for children may need to be longer than one designed for mature adults [RCIA 253].

The permission of the parents, or at least one of them, is required before they are accepted into the catechumenate and before they are initiated into the Church. Parents are encouraged to participate in the process of formation to whatever extent they are able and to offer the support and example the children will need [RCIA 254].

Pastors should be reminded that once a child has reached catechetical age, the *Rite of Baptism for Children* is no longer the proper ritual book to use. Part II, Chapter 1 of the [RCIA 252-329] is the appropriate rite.

13. Are children of catechetical age to be confirmed and receive Eucharist at the time of their baptism?

Yes. In the dioceses of the United States it is clearly expected that, when a child of catechetical age is baptized, the child is to be confirmed and share in the Eucharist at the same celebration [U.S. Statutes 14, 18, 19]. It is preferable that the sacraments of initiation are celebrated at the Easter Vigil [RCIA 8 and 256; U.S. Statutes 18].

MARRIAGE

5. **When two Catechumens marry, what is required of them?**

One must presume the same kind of pastoral care will be provided for when Catechumens are preparing for marriage as for any individuals we would minister to prior to marriage. Although no canonical papers are required by Church law and no dispensation needs to be granted, it is strongly encouraged that the prenuptial questionnaire be completed and carefully filed with other parish marriage records. It should be noted on the questionnaire that the two individuals being married were Catechumens at the time of their marriage. Pastoral ministers should consult with their chancery about any particular diocesan legislation on this matter. The marriage should be celebrated at a Liturgy of the Word. Chapter III of the *Rite of Marriage* is to be used [U.S. Statutes 10]. The marriage should be properly recorded in the parish Marriage Record Book and in the Book of Catechumens.

6. **When Catechumens marry non-Catholic Christians or unbaptized persons, what is required of them?** The answer is the same as given above.

7. **When a Catechumen marries a Catholic, what is required?**

Along with the usual pastoral care offered to all who are preparing for marriage, the Catholic party who marries a Catechumen must request a dispensation [*disparity of cult*].

8. **If a Candidate or Catechumen is in an irregular marriage that needs to be convalidated, when should this be done?**

The convalidation of any irregular marriage 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.

9. **What can be done pastorally if one party does not want to be subjected to a convalidation ceremony?**

As long as both parties intend to be faithful to their marriage bond, it may be possible to obtain a *radical sanation* from the chancery. The *sanation* declares the marriage as valid from the beginning and needs no further public rite [canons 1161-1165]. Pastoral ministers should consult with the chancery or tribunal officials.

10. **Should inquirers who need a declaration of nullity be accepted into the RCIA process?**

Inquirers who need a declaration of nullity from their previous marriage are free to enter into the catechumenate. However, they cannot be accepted for the *Rite of Election or the Rite of Calling to Continuing Conversion* until the declaration of nullity is granted. Pastoral staffs should uncover the need for a declaration of nullity through personal interviews early in the process. Inquirers in need of a declaration of nullity who are received into the catechumenate must clearly understand at the outset that they may not be initiated at the approaching Easter.

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

14. In regard to children, can the diocesan bishop dispense from the RCIA?

Children of catechetical age are the subject of the RCIA and not the *Rite of Baptism for Children*. Consequently, all that is prescribed in the RCIA [252-330] should be applied to the children with pastoral sensitivity for their particular needs and with the approval and cooperation of the parents or at least one of them or those who lawfully take their place. This also means that when children of catechetical age are baptized, they are to be confirmed and offered Eucharist at the same celebration. The diocesan bishop cannot reserve the *Confirmation* to himself without also reserving the *Baptism* to himself. The priest who baptizes is to confirm the children and does not need special permission to do so [RCIA 305 and 308; canons 885.2 and 866 U.S. Statutes 13, 18 and 19].

15. How are baptized Christian children of catechetical age received into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church?

Because children of catechetical age are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults [canon 852.1], the *Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church* [RCIA 473-504] is used. Their formation may be similar to unbaptized children preparing for the initiation sacraments. "*Some elements of the ordinary catechetical instruction of baptized children before their reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist may be appropriately shared with catechumens of catechetical age*" [U.S. Statutes 19].

These children may be confirmed with the newly baptized [RCIA 308]. Children of parents being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church are ordinarily received into the Church with their parents.

16. How are children below catechetical age received into the full communion of the Catholic Church?

Presuming the children are being received into the Church at the time one or both parents are being received into the Church, nothing is required of them. Their original *Baptism*, however, should be carefully recorded in the baptismal register with a note of their becoming Catholic through their parents' initiation into the Church. It is presumed that they would be confirmed and receive *Eucharist* along with the other children of the parish at the customary time.

17. Should children enrolled in the catechumenate be included in the Rite of Election held for adult catechumens?

The *Rite of Election for (only) Children* is an optional rite [RCIA 277-290] designed specifically for their state. However, we do not celebrate this rite in the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. Therefore, the children should be included in the *Rite of Election* held for adults, especially when their parents are Catechumens.

A separate celebration for children may be appropriate when their numbers are large, and one celebration would be difficult to plan without overlooking the particular focus which an adult group would require. As stated above, however, this has not yet been the case in our diocese.

18. Are children who are completing their initiation through Confirmation and Eucharist expected to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Children who were baptized as Roman Catholics are expected to celebrate the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* before their first reception of the *Eucharist* [canon 914 and U.S. Statutes 27].

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

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

GENERAL PASTORAL ISSUES

19. Is special permission required to use the abbreviated form of the RCIA for Catechumens in exceptional circumstances?

Yes. When there are extraordinary circumstances that would prevent the Catechumen from completing all the steps of the catechumenate, or when the Catechumen has reached a depth of Christian conversion and a degree of religious maturity that would seem not to require the complete catechumenate, the diocesan bishop can permit the use of the abbreviated form of the RCIA. Permission should be requested from the diocesan bishop or the appropriate diocesan authority [RCIA 331-369; U.S. Statutes 20-21]. The concern is the spiritual loss for the Catechumen should the abbreviated form of the RCIA be used too freely.

"Those who have already been baptized in another Church or ecclesial community should not be treated as Catechumens or so designated. Their doctrinal and spiritual preparation for reception into full Catholic communion should be determined according to the individual case, that is, it should depend on the extent to which the baptized person has led a Christian life within a community of faith and been appropriately catechized to deepen his or her inner adherence to the Church"[U.S. Statutes 30].

20. Can lay catechists preside at the minor exorcisms and the blessing of Catechumens?

The diocesan bishop can depute catechists who are truly worthy and properly prepared, to give the minor exorcisms and blessings [RCIA 34]. Pastors can obtain this faculty from the diocesan bishop. Each diocese may have its own norms and expectations governing the preparation of catechists [RCIA 12, 16, 34.5, 91, 96; *Book of Blessings* 519-521].

21. Are baptized but uncatechized Candidates for reception into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church obligated to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to their profession of faith?

The requirement for *Reconciliation* would be the same as for all Catholics. They would need to celebrate the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*, if they were guilty of serious sin [RCIA 482]. Candidates should receive a thorough catechesis on the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* and be encouraged in the frequent celebration of the sacrament [U.S. Statutes 27 and 36].

22. Where do we record the names of Catechumens after the "Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens" is celebrated?

Because Catechumens are joined to the Church and are part of the household of Christ [RCIA 47], their status is taken seriously. Their names should be recorded in the parish register of Catechumens, along with the names of the sponsors and the minister and the date and place of the celebration [RCIA 46].

23. Where do we record the names of the elect after the Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated?

Their names are recorded in the parish Baptismal Register. Notations are recorded in the Confirmation Register, and also in the Communion Register.

24. Where do we record the names of the baptized Christians who enter into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church?

The name of the person received into full communion with the Catholic Church by means of a *Profession of Faith* is to be recorded in the parish register under the date of profession together with the date and place of the *Baptism*; along with the other information required for the Baptismal Register. If the parish maintains a Profession of Faith Register, the name of the person is also recorded in it. Information is also recorded in the Confirmation and Communion Registers.