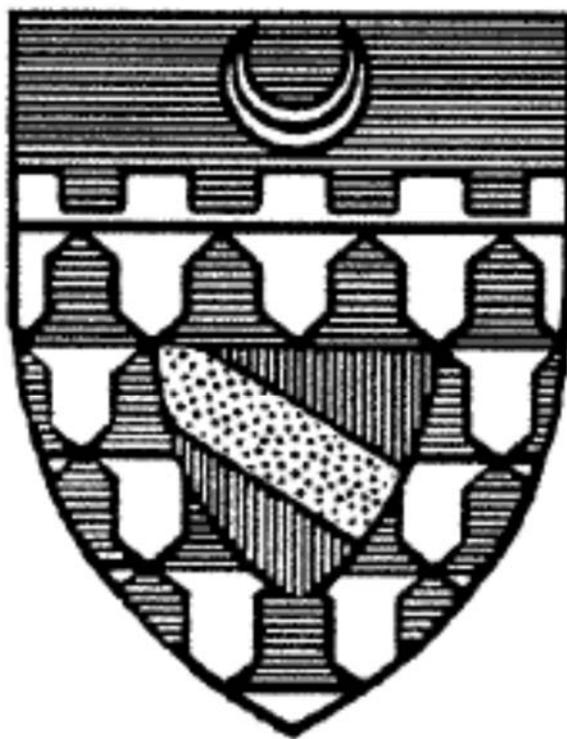


Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Combined **Rite of Election** and the **Call to Continuing Conversion**



DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

Parish Resource Packet

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Preparing the Catechumens for the Rite of Election

Introduction

During the *Rite of Election*, the Catechumens gather at the cathedral to be elected by God and have their names enrolled before the presence of the bishop. During this rite, “*the Church makes its ‘election,’ that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who have the dispositions that make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation*” [RCIA 119].

As the *Rite of Election* belongs to the diocesan Church, it is normative that the bishop presides. Consequently, the *Rite of Election* cannot be celebrated in the parish unless an extraordinary reason calls for it, and delegation has been given by the bishop [RCIA 12, 34, 121].

In terms of formation, what makes a Catechumen ready for the *Rite of Election*? The first part of the rite looks back at the *Period of the Catechumenate*, during which the Catechumens are being formed in preparation for the rite. “*Before the Rite of Election is celebrated, the catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion of mind and action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity*” [RCIA 120]. Therefore, besides knowing Christian doctrine, they also have been imbued with faith that does justice, i.e., charity. More specifically, we find in the questions the bishop asks the godparents and assembly, the very catechesis needed during the period of the catechumenate:

1. Have they faithfully listened to God’s Word proclaimed by the Church?
2. Have they responded to the Word and begun to walk in God’s presence?
3. Have they shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined them in prayer?

All three questions are asking whether the Catechumens are ready for the Easter mysteries—which is the focus of the second part of the *Rite of Election*. In this second part, the rite looks ahead to the period of immediate preparation for the sacraments of initiation at Easter and sets out these prerequisites for the celebration [RCIA 119-120].

1. The Elect have undergone conversion in mind and action.
2. The Elect have an enlightened faith and intend to celebrate the Easter mysteries.

From the day of their election and admission, the Catechumens are called “the Elect.” They are also described as competent (co-petitioners), because they are joined together in asking for, and aspiring to, receive the three sacraments of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are also called *illuminandi* (“*those who will be enlightened...*”) [RCIA 124].

Please note: We have provided an overview of the rite at the Cathedral so that you may practice with those who will participate. In this fashion, people will have a general idea of what they are to do and say during the actual liturgy.

Preparing the Catechumens for the Rite of Election

Discerning the Catechumens' Readiness

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* calls for great responsibility by the catechumenate team prior to the *Rite of Election*, since it is the Church who elects and calls in God's name: *"This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts"* [RCIA 119]. It asks for serious deliberation by the team: *"Therefore to exclude any semblance of mere formality from the rite, there should be a deliberation prior to its celebration to decide on the Catechumens' suitability"* [RCIA 122].

What is this "suitability"? What does this rite celebrate? Prior to this rite, the RCIA calls for *"formation of the catechumens' minds and hearts," "conversion in mind and action" "sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity." "With deliberate will and an enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church"* [RCIA 118-120].

This assumes that the Catechumen has realized the goal of the catechumenate period, i.e., that there is progress in all four dimensions of catechesis described as follows [RCIA 75]:

1. Suitable catechesis...gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the Word...(leading) to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts...and a profound sense of the mystery of salvation.
2. Catechumens learn the Christian life through sponsors and the community, to pray, to witness to faith, hope and love, with a change of conduct manifested in social consequences.
3. Catechumens are helped by liturgical rites which purify and bless, including celebrations of the Word and Sunday Liturgy of the Word.
4. Since the Church's life is apostolic, Catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and to build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.



Discerning the Catechumens' Readiness (cont.)

Types of conversion developed from Rev. Bernard Lonergan, SJ, (1904-1984), philosopher/theologian parallel the four dimensions of catechesis in [RCIA 75]. Teams might ask the following questions based on those conversions:

1. SCRIPTURE, DOCTRINE and PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Religious Conversion	Are the candidates moving <i>from</i> life as problem <i>to</i> the scriptural Good News that life is mystery, wonder, and gift and that God is the giver?
Theistic Conversion	<i>from</i> God as impersonal <i>to</i> God in a personal relationship of love?
Christic Conversion	<i>from</i> Christ as historical figure in pages of Scripture <i>to</i> Christ risen and present in our lives today?
Intellectual Conversion	<i>from</i> Scripture and doctrine as facts <i>to</i> Scripture and doctrine as meaning for life?

2. PRAYER AND MORAL

For prayer, e.g. theistic and Christic conversions above.

Ecclesial Conversion	<i>from</i> the Church as "them" <i>to</i> "us"?
Moral Conversion	<i>from</i> pleasure or law as the criteria for choices <i>to</i> values as the criterion?

3. LITURGY

Intellectual Conversion	<i>from</i> solely analytic, logical thinking <i>to</i> the world of symbols, gestures, and imagination?
Effective Conversion	<i>from</i> blocking <i>to</i> showing feelings?

4. APOSTOLIC WITNESS

Moral Conversion	<i>from</i> egocentricity <i>to</i> values in and for others?
Gospel Conversion	<i>from</i> concern for personal salvation <i>to</i> commitment to the reign of God in the world?

Preparing the Candidates for the Call to Continuing Conversion

Introduction

The RCIA states that participants in the *Rite of Calling Christian Candidates to Conversion* are those who are “*baptized but previously uncatechized adults who wish to complete their Christian initiation through the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist or who wish to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church*” [RCIA 466]. In simplest terms, this rite is a change of membership from a Christian faith tradition to the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Candidates are baptized, they are counted already among the Elect, which is why they do not sign the Book of the Elect. Since they are counted among the faithful baptized, they participate in the Universal Prayer, and if it is discerned that the uncatechized Candidates are to be dismissed, they are dismissed on Sundays following the Universal Prayer, while the Catechumens are dismissed after the homily.

In their culmination of research in the document, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States*, the five U.S. bishops’ committees conclude: “*The study indicates a concern on the part of the bishops that sufficient distinction be made in both the formation and in the ritual between the baptized and unbaptized persons coming forward for initiation*” (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 2000; p.31). The concern of the bishops is rooted in the vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. In particular, the RCIA cautions that “*anything that would equate (the baptized) candidates for reception with those who are Catechumens (unbaptized) is to be absolutely avoided*” [RCIA 477].

Theologically, the Church believes that the Holy Spirit is birthed into the heart of the human person being baptized and the Holy Spirit is sealed in the *Sacrament of Confirmation*. The Church believes, that even though an infant is baptized at a very early age, the child receives the gift of the Spirit. We might say this is the sowing of the seed of faith. Over time, many of us have that seed of faith nurtured in the home and in the Sunday Eucharistic assembly. Some of us never had that opportunity. We might have been baptized, but were never catechized or practiced our faith. The Church believes God works in the sacrament of Baptism, even though we might not be able to articulate what has happened. The *1983 Code of Canon Law* reminds us that the “*Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through Baptism, have been constituted as the people of God, for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one*” [Canon 204].

Mystagogy (or post-baptismal reflection) is a process we all continue to go through until we die. On the Christian journey, we repeatedly unfold the mission of God, which is to bring about the reign of God in the here and now. Experientially, anyone who has ever participated in a well-prepared *Rite of Baptism* has sensed the work of God. God's presence is manifested with "careful" gestures: marking the senses of the child with the sign of the cross; proclaiming God's marvelous deeds in the Word of the prayers and scriptural readings; dipping the child in living water; singing an exuberant "alleluia" as the child is lifted from font and presented to the liturgical assembly. Whether conversion blossoms over time in the Christian assembly or one was never given the opportunity to grow in faith, we are to have faith that indeed God does marvelous things in *Baptism*. As the Introduction to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* states, "*Baptism is a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been signed by it. Because of that unchangeable effect (given expression by the anointing of the baptized person with chrism in the presence of God's people) the Rite of Baptism is held in highest honor by all Christians. Once it has been validly celebrated, even if by Christians with whom we are not in full communion, it may never lawfully be repeated*" [RCIA 4]. In sum, to paraphrase the third century African theologian, Tertullian, in Baptism, Christians are made, not born.

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Preparing for the Rites

Parish Rite of Sending

Parish Rite of Sending. The Rite(s) of Sending involve "sending" the Catechumens and/or Candidates to the Bishop and the people of the Local Church. Catechumens are sent for Election while Candidates are sent for recognition and the Call to Continuing Conversion. The *Rite of Sending* affords the parish the opportunity to express its approval, to rejoice in the decision to receive the sacraments of initiation and to assure the Catechumens and Candidates of the community's care and support.

When to Celebrate the Rite of Sending. The ritual text states that the *Rite of Sending the Catechumens for Election* and the *Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion* may be celebrated at a "suitable" time prior to the rites [RCIA 108,436,533]. It may take place within a Celebration of the Word or within Mass. The anticipated or morning Masses of the Sunday when the rite will take place make excellent sense, because many of the faithful will be able to participate. In all three cycles of the *Lectionary for Mass*, the Church is faced with the temptation of Jesus and his choice for God and for the reign of God. However, the Sunday before Lent begins, or a day in that week, are alternatives. Ash Wednesday does not seem to be a suitable day since the receiving of ashes imprints a strong penitential character on the liturgy.

Option 1: Combined Rite of Sending for Election & Recognition [RCIA 530-546]

Use this rite if there are both Catechumens and Candidates who will be ready for the sacraments this year, and you wish to do the sending in one ceremony. If a parish has both Catechumens and Candidates in formation, this is the appropriate rite to use if sending both groups to the Cathedral for the Combined Rite. If a parish has only Catechumens or only Candidates in formation, use one of the rites below.

Option 2: Rite for Sending Catechumens for the Rite of Election [RCIA 106-117]

This rite is used for the unbaptized.

Option 3: Rite for Sending the Candidates for Recognition and the Call to Continuing Conversion [RCIA 434-445]

This rite is used only for validly baptized Christians seeking the full communion of the Catholic Church with *Profession of Faith, Confirmation, and the Eucharist*. Also included are Catholic adults and children of catechetical age who were baptized in infancy, but received little or no catechetical formation, and are seeking to complete their initiation with both *Confirmation* and the *Eucharist*. These persons are properly called Candidates for Full Initiation.

NOTES:

1. While the *Rite of Sending* is optional for the dioceses of the USA, it does not mean it should not be celebrated. Although it is not required, it makes catechetical sense to involve the broader parish membership in this part of the journey to the Easter Vigil.
2. The Enrollment of Names (signing the Book of the Elect) will take place at the Cathedral, and, therefore, should not be duplicated at the parish.

Reflecting on the Rites

Questions for Discussion

Below are some suggestions for catechesis that may be of help in reflecting upon the rites that the Elect and Candidates have experienced at the Cathedral. It may help them to relate these rituals to their journey of conversion and initiation. For the reflection, it is sometimes helpful if the participant has the opportunity to journal before discussion begins. After reflection, there could be small group discussion before gathering to share as a large group. This sometimes brings about better participation.

REFLECTION

A. Reviewing the actual rite

This can be done by playing the music that was used at the rites; rereading the Scripture and certain prayers used at the Rite; (aids for these are the ritual text, the Lectionary, and the participation aid received at the liturgy).

B. After reflecting upon the rite, these questions can be posed, reflected upon and discussed in small groups.

1. What part of the rite affected you the most and why?
2. How did you feel at the beginning? At the end?
3. What does it mean to be "chosen"?

Keep in mind there are no wrong answers. We are simply trying to help everyone involved, including the team, to reflect on what God is doing "in" and "through" our lives.

CATECHESIS

A. Because these Catechumens, now called Elect, and Candidates were sent for *Election* and *Call to Continuing Conversion*, their initial catechesis is complete. Lent is a "time of retreat" for the Candidates and Elect. It is a time of prayer, deeper conversion, and greater intimacy with God. Further catechesis on the sacraments of initiation should wait for the *Period of Mystagoga* after they have experienced the *sacraments*.

B. Catechists, please review the pastoral notes in the [RCIA 106-110, 118-128, 434-437, 446-449, 530-535 and 547-549]. Some of this material may be helpful.

C. Questions that may be used during catechesis may include:

1. Why does the Bishop preside? Who is he for us? What is his role as shepherd?
2. Why does the Local Church participate?
3. What is the impact of so many Elect (or Candidates) who are being initiated into the Catholic Church? What does that mean for our Church...what does that mean for our parish, our personal faith?
4. What does this Lent hold for us? How can we best prepare for our initiation?
5. How is our church supporting us throughout these 40 days?

History of the Initiation Process

Early Church: Small communities took individuals into their company and introduced them to their way of life. Religious persecution prevailed and so a strong faith was demanded in the face of possible martyrdom.

100-200 AD: Initiation began to take on formal shape and requirements – the beginnings of “catechumenate” as we know it. The conversion of Gentiles called for a more comprehensive formation in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Third-Fourth Century: Initiation developed into a fully structured process, (a minimum of three years). The Peace of Constantine in 315 AD made Christianity legal; now there were large numbers of candidates, but poor quality control. Although this was the time of the most developed structure, during this period there were a variety of models of initiation developed in the various local communities.

Fifth Century: The gradual disintegration of the catechumenate occurred due to large numbers of people being baptized; the practice of infant *Baptism* eventually became normative. In the West, *Confirmation and Eucharist* were separated from *Baptism*.

Twelfth Century: Catechumenate no longer existed. Elements were incorporated into religious community formation and seminary training during intervening centuries.

Sixteenth Century: Dominicans and Augustinians tried to counteract the mass *Baptisms* occurring in some places. In 1538 a synod of bishops urged pastors to return to the missionary principles of Alcuin and establish a catechumenate.

Vatican Council II:

The Council called for reinstating the catechumenate. The bishops' vote on restoration of the catechumenate was: Yes- 2,165; No-9; Null-1

Post-Vatican Council II:

- 1966 – provisional ritual for catechumenate distributed
- 1969 – second draft distributed for experimentation
- 1972 – promulgation of the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* by Pope Paul VI
- 1974 – provisional English translation available titled *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*
- 1986 – U.S. Bishops' Conference approved present edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* with U. S. adaptations, national statutes, and a national plan of implementation
- 1987 – Canadian Bishops' Conference approved the present edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* with Canadian adaptations

Terms for Christian Initiation

GLOSSARY

Candidate: One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who now is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of reception, he or she will make a *Profession of Faith*, be confirmed, and receive Eucharist. In the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, “candidate” is also used for those participating in the Pre-catechumenate (baptized and unbaptized.)

Catechumen: An unbaptized person who has entered the Order of Catechumens in the Church through celebration of the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*. Catechumens are preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through *Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist*.

Catechumenate: *Second period of the RCIA*, which involves intense preparation in Word, worship, community life, and apostolic works.

Children: The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* includes the initiation process adapted for children of catechetical age (defined in the canons [art.97] as a person who has completed their seventh year). A person is considered to be an infant, according to canon law until they have completed their seventh year.

Cycles A, B, C: The 3-yr cycle of liturgical readings: Cycle A: Matthew; Cycle B: Mark; Cycle C: Luke. All three cycles incorporate John.

Easter Season: The 50 days from Easter Sunday through the feast of Pentecost.

Elect: The name given to Catechumens who celebrate the *Rite of Election* signifying their being chosen by God for the initiation sacraments.

Evangelization: In the context of the initiation of adults, evangelization is the task of the Church during the Pre-catechumenate. It involves the inviting, welcoming, witnessing, and sharing of faith, and the proclamation of the Gospel to inquirers/candidates.

Inquirers: Those who participate in the Pre-catechumenate of a parish. They are “*inquiring*” into Christianity in the Catholic Tradition.

Lectionary: The book used in liturgical celebrations that contains the scripture readings of the liturgical year.

Lent: A six-week period extending from Ash Wednesday to sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a retreat time for the Church in preparation for the Easter Triduum.

Liturgical Year: The seasons and cycles of the Christian year. It is the instrument and means for leading God's people along the way to the Lord. The prayers and readings introduce and invite us into the Paschal Mystery. The liturgical year includes: Christmas Cycle (First Sunday of Advent through the Baptism of the Lord), Easter Cycle (Ash Wednesday through Pentecost), and Ordinary Time.

Minor Rites: Rites during the *Period of the Catechumenate* which include exorcisms, blessings, and anointing.

Mystagogy: The fourth and final period of the Christian initiation of adults, which is from Easter to Pentecost. The U.S. National Statutes envision an extended mystagogy for one year.

National Statutes: Particular law (for the Dioceses of the United States of America) for the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the United States approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Neophyte: One who has been initiated at the Easter Vigil. The term comes from the Greek word meaning new plant, as in a new sprout on a limb/branch.

Ninety Days: A term used to mean the combination of the *Period of Purification and Enlightenment* and the *Period of Mystagogy* which corresponds with Lent (40 days) and the Easter Season (50 days).

Pre-catechumenate: *First period of the Christian initiation of adults*, which is the initial introduction of an inquirer into the Christian way of life in the Catholic Tradition. It is also the period of evangelization on the part of the Church.

Presentations: During the *Period of Purification and Enlightenment*, the Elect are presented with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer through special rites. For pastoral reasons, both presentations can be anticipated during the *Period of the Catechumenate*.

Purification and Enlightenment: *Third period of the Christian initiation of adults*, which usually coincides with the Season of Lent. It is the final period of preparation for initiation at the Easter Vigil.

RCIA: Acronym for *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for use in scholarly references to identify the text paragraph. The term RCIA is discouraged for popular usage.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) English title of *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*. This is the official collection of rites of the Roman Catholic Church for initiation of adults (including children of catechetical age) and the reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Rites of . . .

Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens: The bridge between the Pre-catechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.

Welcome: The bridge between the inquiry period and the period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate. It is for those already baptized.

Election: Presided over by the bishop, this rite inaugurates the final period of preparation for the Catechumens (unbaptized) before initiation. It is the bridge between the catechumenate and purification and enlightenment.

Call to Continuing Conversion: Coincides with election, but is the rite for the already baptized (candidates).

Scrutinies: Three rites of exorcism for the Elect (unbaptized) during Lent.

Penitential Rite: Celebration for candidates, similar to rite of scrutiny.

Sacraments of Initiation: Includes *Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist*.

Sunday: The first day in the Christian liturgical week, the original feast day, the heart of the calendar, the basis and nucleus of the liturgical year.

Triduum: The "three days" of the celebration of Easter, which begins with sundown on Holy Thursday evening and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. Includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

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.

Valid Baptism and Confirmation List

The Roman Catholic norm for valid *Baptism* must follow the proper matter and form. The “*matter*” is water baptism by immersion or pouring. The “*form*” is the Trinitarian formula as found in the liturgical books [canons 849 and 850; RCIA 226]

Some separated churches and ecclesial communities with valid baptism

- All Eastern non-Catholics (Orthodox)
- Adventist
- 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 ecclesial communities without valid baptism

- Apostolic Church
- Bohemian Free Thinkers
- Christadelphians
- Christian Community (Rudolf Steiner)
- Christian Scientist (no baptism)
- Church of Divine Science
- Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Sts. (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 Adventist. (John M. Huels, OSM. *The Pastoral Companion: A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry*. 3rd ed. Quincy IL: Franciscan Press, 1995. p. 342.)

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