

**RCIA SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION
OUTSIDE OF THE EASTER VIGIL
DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19
Diocese of San Angelo
June 12, 2020**

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The entire rite of Christian initiation is normally arranged so that the sacraments will be celebrated during the Easter Vigil. Because of unusual circumstances and pastoral needs, however, the rite of election and the rites belonging to the period of purification and enlightenment may be held outside Lent and the sacraments of initiation may be celebrated at a time other than the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday. (RCIA, no. 26)

- B. The priest may choose a date as needed, according to the needs of the people and the parish. Given the restrictions on the number of persons that may be permitted at Mass, it may be best this year to divide them into smaller groups and/or separate the two groups (elect and candidates for full communion) and initiate them on separate occasions.

- C. Ritual Mass
 - 1. When the celebration of the sacraments of initiation takes place on another date, the texts for one of the Ritual Masses for the Conferral of the Sacraments of Initiation may be used on days when Ritual Masses are permitted. In the Ordo, days marked V1 require the bishop's permission, whereas days marked V2 or V3 do not require the bishop's permission.

 - 2. When the Ritual Mass is used, the readings are chosen from those given in the Lectionary for Mass, Volume IV, at no. 751-755 "Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation Apart from the Easter Vigil." (see note in RCIA, no. 208).

 - 3. It is also possible to incorporate the sacraments of initiation into a day which does not allow for the Ritual Mass (e.g.: Nativity of St. John the Baptist on June 24 or Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29).

- D. These liturgies are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church.

- E. Social distancing guidelines should be explained to the candidates and their godparents/sponsors to allow them to make the decision of how they will sit in a pew and whether the sponsor should place their right hand on the shoulder of the candidate during Baptism and Confirmation. The basic rule of thumb is the following:

1. If the sponsor and candidate already have regular close contact with one another, then they can sit side by side and the sponsor can place the right hand on the shoulder.
 2. If the sponsor and candidate do not already have regular close contact with one another, then they should maintain a distance of 6 feet throughout the Mass, and the sponsor should not place the right hand on the shoulder.
- F. Before scheduling a Mass of Christian Initiation for a large group, please wait until a phase when sufficient crowds are allowed inside church buildings to accommodate the group safely.
- G. Smaller Masses of Christian Initiation may be celebrated in Phase One if the number of people will fit into the church under current spacing requirements.

II. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

There are three possible scenarios. If all the candidates require Baptism, use RCIA 218 ff (Sections A, D, & E in this document). If none of the candidates require Baptism, use RCIA no. 473 ff (Sections C, D, & E in this document). If it is a combined group with some requiring Baptism and some not, use RCIA no. 566 ff (Sections A, B, C, D, & E in this document).

A. CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM (RCIA, no. 218 / 566)

The celebration of Baptism begins after the homily. It takes place at the baptismal font, if this is in view of the faithful; otherwise it takes place in the sanctuary, where a vessel of water for the rite should be prepared beforehand.

During this time of COVID-19, two vessels should be prepared. One vessel is filled with water, and the other vessel is empty (this recipient vessel is either the baptismal font or another temporary vessel).

1. PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATES (RCIA, no. 219 / 568)

- a. Option A, B, or C may be used.
- b. If the area where the Baptism is to take place is too small to maintain safe social distancing between candidates, candidates may remain in their pew or stand in an aisle or other location until they are called up one-by-one to be baptized.

- c. Only candidates with their godparents should go to the font. Family members and friends should remain in their pews, unless a child is being baptized and then his/her parent(s) should also go to the font.

2. INVITATION TO PRAYER (RCIA, no. 220 / 569)

See *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil no. 40 for the current translation of the text.

3. LITANY OF THE SAINTS (RCIA, no. 221 / 570)

See *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil no. 43 for the current translation of the text.

Celebrant should disinfect his hands during the Litany.

4. PRAYER OVER THE WATER / BLESSING OF THE WATER (RCIA, no. 222 / 571)

- a. When Baptism is celebrated outside the Easter Vigil, the celebrant may use any of the blessing formularies given in options A, B, and C. (see RCIA, no. 222)

If using Option A, see *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil no. 44 - 46 for the current translation of the text.

- b. Outside the Easter Vigil, the Easter candle is not lowered into the water.
- c. Outside the Easter Vigil, the celebrant simply touches the water with his right hand in formulas A and B. Formula C does not call for the priest to touch the water.

5. PROFESSION OF FAITH (RCIA, no. 223-225 / 572-574)

See *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil no. 55 for the current translation of the Baptismal Promises. Additionally, adapt the wording of the introductory text to leave out the reference to Lent.

6. BAPTISM (RCIA, no. 226 / 575)

- a. During this time, Baptism by immersion (option A) may not be used until further notice.
- b. Option B must be used for all Baptisms.

During this time of safe social distancing, the candidate and his/her godparent should determine whether or not the godparent should place his/her right hand on the candidate's shoulder. See the note above at I. Introduction, D.

- c. The candidate should remove his/her mask prior to being baptized and then should put it back on after he/she is baptized.
- d. Using a shell or other small container, the celebrant, taking baptismal water from the vessel of blessed water, pours it three times on the candidate's bowed head baptizing the candidate in the name of the Trinity. The candidate's bowed head should be over the recipient vessel (which is either the baptismal font or another temporary vessel).
- e. To avoid the spread of germs, do not re-use the water from the recipient vessel to baptize another candidate. Clean baptismal water from the vessel in which the water was blessed must be used for each candidate.

7. EXPLANATORY RITES (RCIA, no. 227 / 576)

a. ANOINTING AFTER BAPTISM (RCIA, no. 228 / 577)

The anointing may not be done with a glove, cotton swab, or cotton ball. The priest is to disinfect his hands after anointing each person. Care must be taken not to place contaminated oil back into the parish oil supply.

b. CLOTHING WITH A BAPTISMAL GARMENT (RCIA, no. 229 / 578)

We recommend that the reception of a baptismal garment be omitted in the current circumstances. Instead, candidates could be instructed to wear something white (shirt, dress, sweater, etc.) and the formulary could be adjusted to reflect that the candidate is wearing white rather than receiving a white garment.

8. PRESENTATION OF A LIGHTED CANDLE (RCIA, no. 230 / 579)

No adaptation necessary.

NOTE: If you do not have any candidates for Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, omit sections B and C below.

B. RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES

1. INVITATION (RCIA, no. 580)

Adapt the wording of the introductory text to leave out the reference to Lent.

2. RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES (RCIA, no. 581 - 582)

See *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil no. 55 for the current translation of the Baptismal Promises.

3. SPRINKING WITH BAPTISMAL WATER (RCIA, no. 583)

Water that is used for sprinkling the assembly must be the clean water taken from the vessel in which it was blessed, not used water taken from the recipient vessel.

C. CELEBRATION OF RECEPTION

1. INVITATION (RCIA, no. 490 / 584)

If the area is too small for all of the newly baptized and the candidates for reception to maintain safe social distancing, they may be spaced out as near to the sanctuary as possible.

2. PROFESSION BY THE CANDIDATES (RCIA, no. 491 / 585)

No adaptation necessary.

3. ACT OF RECEPTION (RCIA, no. 492 / 586)

No adaptation necessary.

D. CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION (RCIA, no. 231 / 587)

See *The Order of Confirmation*, no. 20 ff., for the current translation of the text.

The place for the celebration of Confirmation is either at the baptismal font or in the sanctuary.

If the area where Confirmation is to take place is too small to maintain safe social distancing between candidates, candidates may remain in their pew or stand in an aisle or other location until they are called up one-by-one to be confirmed.

1. INVITATION (RCIA, no. 223 /589)

See *The Order of Confirmation*, no. 24, for the current translation of the text.

2. LAYING ON OF HANDS (RCIA, no. 234 / 493 / 590)

See *The Order of Confirmation*, no. 25, for the current translation of the text.

Hands are outstretched over the entire group, without touching them. Concelebrating priests can extend hands from their place.

3. ANOINTING WITH CHRISM (RCIA, no. 235 / 494 / 591)

See *The Order of Confirmation*, no. 26 – 29 for the current translation of the text.

- a. A small table should be set up near the place where the anointing will take place. A sufficient amount of the Chrism should be placed on that table before the liturgy begins, in an open bowl, along with the other materials needed to administer the anointing safely.
- b. There are two options for the anointing with Chrism:
 - 1) The Chrism may be administered with the thumb of the priest/bishop directly applying it to the forehead of the candidate. In this case, the priest/bishop is to clean and disinfect his thumb after anointing each person. We recommend the use of disposable disinfecting wipes, using one wipe to clean the thumb after each anointing. All of these used wipes are to be burned or buried at a later time. Another good option would be to dip the thumb in a bowl of alcohol to disinfect it after each anointing.
 - 2) The Chrism may be administered by the use of an instrument, such as a cotton swab or cotton ball. This does not impede the validity of the sacrament. In this case, each person is anointed with a new, clean instrument, and all of these instruments are burned or buried at a later time.
- c. Care must be taken not to place contaminated oil back into the parish oil supply.
- d. The dialogue “Peace be with you” is utilized, but handshaking is to be omitted. An otherwise appropriate gesture could be a simple bow.

- e. Neophytes are led to their place among the faithful immediately after Confirmation. (RCIA, no. 236)

E. LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Prior to “Behold the Lamb of God,” the celebrant may address the neophytes directly about the preeminence of Eucharist which they will receive for the first time (RCIA, 243).

As a temporary measure, the Precious Blood is not to be distributed, not even to the neophytes.

To reduce the likelihood of spreading disease, people are strongly encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand rather than on the tongue. Nevertheless, it is ultimately the choice of the communicant whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. No one is to be denied the Eucharist over this matter.

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