

**PERIODS AND STEPS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION**  
**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA**  
**OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP**

**GUIDANCE FOR PARISH BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is a sacramental preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. In some instances, the bulletin invitation to participate in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is identified as an opportunity for adult faith formation or enrichment for Catholics or a welcoming to returning Catholics. These are important ministries in every parish, but should not be confused with the nature and purpose of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Bulletin announcements can also serve as a catechetical tool to instruct the faithful about Christian Initiation of adults. In other words, parish bulletin editors are encouraged to have a distinct announcement for those who want to know more about the Faith and the celebration of the Sacraments and an announcement for Catholics interested in faith formation.

**PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE**

*This is a time of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.*

*Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the Period of Evangelization or Precatechumenate is of great importance and as a rule should not be omitted. It is a time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all. Thus those who are not yet Christians, their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to him. For he who is the way, the truth, and the life fulfills all their spiritual expectations, indeed infinitely surpasses them (no. 36, from the ritual book, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).*

**All throughout the year**, people should be in place, perhaps members of the Christian Initiation formation team, to receive people considering Baptism and membership in the Church. The ritual book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 41-47, describes this on-

going period. Someone can be an “inquirer” or a “sympathizer” for as long as necessary until they are ready to be accepted into the Order of Catechumens.

- An [Inquirer’s Interview/Information Form](#) can be found on-line in English and Spanish for one of the initial meetings with someone seeking Baptism.
- All marriage irregularities must be resolved before someone can be accepted into the Order of Catechumens. Any marriage questions are to be directed to the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese at 215-587-3750. Inquirers should be informed that the resolution of marriage irregularities requires time and should be addressed without delay.

### **FIRST STEP: ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS**

*This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God’s call to follow the way of Christ.*

*Before the rite is celebrated, therefore, sufficient and necessary time, as required in each case, should be set aside to evaluate and, if necessary, to purify the candidates’ motives and dispositions. [...] Because of the effect of baptism once validly received, it is the duty of parish priests (pastors) to see to it that no baptized person seeks for any reason whatever to be baptized a second time (RCIA, no. 43).*

Only Catechumens are dismissed from the celebration of the Eucharist with the use of forms given in the ritual book (RCIA, nos. 67 A or B).

### **PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE**

*This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens’ faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.*

*The period of catechumenate, beginning at acceptance into the order of catechumens and including both the catechumenate proper and the period of purification and enlightenment after election or enrollment of names, should extend for at least one year of formation, instruction, and probation. Ordinarily this period should go from at least the Easter season*

*of one year until the next; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year (National Statutes for the Catechumenate, no. 6).*

*Resources for catechesis:* The *Lectionary for Mass* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are foundation sources for the catechetical formation of catechumens. See the website of the Office for Divine Worship for a listing of additional resources for Christian Formation.

Special attention should be given to the use of the minor exorcisms, blessings and anointing of catechumens during the Period of the Catechumenate.

### **AN OUTLINE OF THE SUNDAY AND WEEKLY CATECHETICAL SESSIONS**

The catechetical session is an indispensable component of the formation of catechumens and those already baptized but uncatechized to know the teachings of the Church as well as have a profound appreciation of the mystery of salvation revealed in God's Word and celebrated in the Sacraments. For a more complete presentation of the catechetical session, see the ritual book [RCIA, nos. 75-80].

What follows are sample patterns for the Sunday Session for the Catechumens and Elect after their dismissal from Mass and for the Weekly Catechetical Session:

#### **SAMPLE SUNDAY SESSION FOR CATECUMENS AND ELECT**

- **Dismissal of the Catechumens (only) from Mass using formulas in the ritual book [RCIA, nos. 67, A and B]**
- **Brief recap of the biblical texts and homily**
- **Illustrate points associated with Church teaching, tradition and practice**
- **Response by the catechumens and elect**
- **Closing Prayer**

#### **SAMPLE WEEKLY CATECHETICAL SESSION APART FROM SUNDAY**

- **Celebration of the Word of God (See RCIA, nos. 81-89)**  
The celebration of the Word of God should conclude alternately with the Minor Exorcisms, Blessings of the Catechumens, and the Anointing of the Catechumens (See, RCIA, nos. 90-103). The parish priest or deacon should conduct the celebration of the Word of God with the concluding rites.
- **Catechesis**

A systematic sequential presentation of the truths of Catholic doctrine as laid out in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: The Profession of Faith, The Celebration of the Christian Mystery, Life in Christ, and Christian Prayer.

- **Reflection and Response to the Catechesis**
- **Night Prayer (Compline)**

Two excellent resources for year-round catechesis are the following:

[http://church.st-thomasmore.org/uscca\\_catechumenate.htm](http://church.st-thomasmore.org/uscca_catechumenate.htm)

<http://tinyurl.com/liturgyw-kidsRCIA>

### **rites belonging to the period of the catechumenate**

All throughout the course of the Period of the Catechumenate there should be scheduled **celebrations of the Word of God**. In addition to these celebrations, the **Minor Exorcisms** [RCIA, nos. 90-94], **Blessings of the Catechumens** [RCIA, nos. 95-97] and or **Anointing of the Catechumens** [RCIA, nos. 98-103] should also be scheduled frequently during the Period of the Catechumenate. The use of these rites belongs only to those who will be baptized. A **Model for the Celebration of the Word of God** [RCIA, nos. 85-89], found in the ritual book, provides the manner for the combination of these rites with the celebration of the Word.

**Sending of the Catechumens for Election (Optional)** [RCIA nos. 106-117] or **Parish Celebration for Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop (Optional)** [RCIA, nos. 530-546]

At the conclusion of the Period of the Catechumenate, the **Rite of Sending** is celebrated in the parish only for those going to the Cathedral Basilica for the Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates. The Rite of Sending recognizes the role of the parish community to judge the state of formation of the catechumens and candidates and approves them for election for the Easter Sacraments and the completion of sacramental initiation. The Rite of Sending, whether as part of a celebration of the Word of God or at Mass, should be scheduled in the parish before the Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates. *In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, this is the occasion for signing the Book of the Elect.*

## **SECOND STEP: ELECTION OR ENROLLMENT OF NAMES**

*This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.*

In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Rite of Election is combined with the Call to Continuing Conversion on the First Sunday of Lent.

Details regarding the *Celebration of the Rite of Election and of the Call to Continuing Conversion* can be found on the website of the Office for Divine Worship.

**If catechumens were unable, for one reason or another, to participate in the Rite of Election** on the First Sunday of Lent, the pastor should elect them, keeping in mind numbers 127-128 of the ritual book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

**The Call to Continuing Conversion is meant for adults (and not children)** who are baptized and will be received into full communion or be confirmed and/or receive Holy Communion for the first time but also have distanced themselves from the Faith. In other words, a baptized formerly church going Protestant or a practicing Catholic who will receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and/or the Eucharist during Easter Time does not typically participate in the Call to Continuing Conversion.

## **PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT**

*For both the elect and the local community, therefore, the Lenten season is a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery. This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior (no's 138-139, from the ritual book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*).*

## **RITE BELONGING TO THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT**

- The **Scrutinies** for the elect during Lent are not optional and should be carried out with a proper explanation to the elect and to the faithful. The description

of the scrutinies, as found in nos. 141-143 of the ritual book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, can be helpful explanations for the elect and the faithful. Typically, the scrutinies are celebrated with the proper ritual Mass in the *Roman Missal, For the Celebration of the Scrutinies*, on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. The Year A readings are always used for the scrutinies. If the scrutinies cannot be celebrated on the proper Sunday, then a weekday celebration is possible with the same ritual Mass and the proper Year A readings.

- The **presentations** are very much tied into the scrutinies and follow their schedule. The presentations of the Creed and the Our Father aid in the enlightenment of the elect. The presentation of the Creed follows the First Scrutiny. The elect are to commit the Creed to memory and they will recite it publicly on Holy Saturday morning prior to their evening Baptism. The presentation of the Our Father with the proclamation of the Gospel follows the third scrutiny. The elect recite the Our Father publicly for the first time when they are assembled among the baptized at the Eucharist of the Easter Vigil. These weekday presentations should include the participation of some of the faithful. The handing out of parchments with these living expressions of the Faith is discouraged.
- A **retreat** should be arranged during Lent for the Elect. Also, the candidates for Full Communion and Catholic Adult candidates for Confirmation and Communion may also be part of this retreat. The retreat should include a presentation on Lent and its relationship to the celebration of the Easter Sacraments and the Christian Life, focused prayer and guided reflection sessions. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation could be made available to the already baptized candidates. An Archdiocesan Retreat for Adults in Sacramental Formation typically takes place at the Malvern Retreat House. Information is posted on the Christian Initiation website.
- The **preparation rites on Holy Saturday** should be observed, in some part, according to numbers 185 to 204 in the ritual book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of*

*Adults.* Most of all, the elect should be encouraged to participate in the paschal fast all through Holy Saturday.

### **THIRD STEP: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**

*Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God. They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the kingdom of God (no. 206, from the ritual book, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).*

### **ONLY THOSE TO BE BAPTIZED**

### **RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS AT THE EASTER VIGIL**

In accord with the US National Statutes for the Catechumenate (11 November 86) no. 33, Archbishop Pérez asks that you note:

Only the adult elect, that is, the unbaptized catechumens elected at the Rite of Election, are to be fully initiated with Baptism, Confirmation and reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord at the Easter Vigil, according to the rites outlined in the *Roman Missal*. Children may also be baptized at the Easter Vigil.

Baptized non-Catholic Christians are to be received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church on Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday or any Sunday of Easter Time. In fact, this reception can take place almost any time during the Church Year according to the rite outlined in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (cf. RCIA, nos. 473-504).

For many parishes, this represents an innovation that will require catechesis on the dignity of Baptism and the avoidance of any confusion between candidates for Baptism and baptized Christians.

### **TIME OF THE EASTER VIGIL**

The Easter Vigil should not begin before nightfall. This is to be observed universally without exception throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The typically scheduled Anticipated Mass may not be occasion for the Easter Vigil

## **SIMPLIFICATION OF THE PERIODS AND STEPS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

*Exceptional circumstances may arise in which the local Bishop, in individual cases, can allow the use of a form of Christian Initiation that is simpler than the usual, more complete Rite (no. 331, from the ritual book, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). This is sometimes the circumstance when an Elect cannot be present for the Easter Vigil. Permission for the use of this simpler form should be directed to Archbishop Perez through the Office for Divine Worship.*

Numbers 331-367 in the ritual book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, describe arrangements for an adapted form for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

- **Full Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and the first reception of Communion—** apart from the Solemn Paschal Vigil, outside the immediate danger of death, requires the permission of the Archbishop (see RCIA, no. 331). Archbishop Pérez delegates the Office for Divine Worship to give this permission. Please contact the Office for Divine Worship for such circumstances.

## **PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY**

*This is the time, usually the Easter season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration.*

This period should not be overlooked. Plans should be made to assemble the neophytes, their godparents and others associated with their Christian Initiation for the celebration of Mass, with a particular celebration near Pentecost (cf. RCIA, no. 249). Neophytes should be given the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in the weeks following their Christian Initiation.



## **RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* allows for people baptized in another Church or ecclesial community, although never treated as catechumens, to benefit from the doctrinal and spiritual formation for the unbaptized. Additionally, the use of the Combined Rites for catechumens and candidates gives the candidates an important sense of the Sacred Liturgy and participation with the Church leading to Confirmation and Communion. However, many candidates do not require a full program parallel to the catechumenate. Therefore, the directives provided in the *US National Statutes for the Catechumenate* for reception into full communion (see nos. 30-37) should be increasingly observed.

*Preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for baptized non-Catholics are an essential element of their Reception (See RCIA, no. 482).*

### **Reception of Candidates and Valid Baptism and Conditional Baptism**

All non-Catholic Christians seeking full communion must be validly baptized. The following norm is to be observed in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia with regard to the reception of candidates into full communion with the Catholic Church:

*Baptism is the doorway to all of the Sacraments. Therefore, the sacred minister needs moral certitude that a person was baptized with the Trinitarian formula and the triple water pouring/immersion before other Sacraments are celebrated. This moral certitude requires more than the evidence of a baptismal certificate and must be the case in each individual circumstance. Such moral certitude can often be readily obtained through inquiry with the candidate. When moral certitude is lacking, a conditional Baptism is necessary (see Canon 869 and National Statutes for the Catechumenate 37).*

Additional information on valid baptism and conditional baptism can be found on the website for the Office for Divine Worship.

**SAMPLE CERTIFICATE OF RECEPTION INTO  
THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Parish of  
*Arch/Diocese*  
*City and State*

This is to certify that

*Name*  
*Address*

Was received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church,  
with a Profession of Faith, the Act of Reception,  
as well as the celebration of Confirmation  
[and reception of Holy Communion]

On

By

At

Sponsor

This Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church  
has been duly recorded in the  
*Register for Reception into Full Communion*  
with the date and place of Baptism noted.

Pastor

Date

*Parish Seal*

## **OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS**

**Before the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates, the baptisms should be determined as valid.** For assistance in this regard, see Pastoral Guidance Regarding the Conditional Baptism of Those Seeking Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church <http://archphila.org/evangelization/worship/pdf/ConditionalBaptism.pdf>

**Orthodox Christians** are Received into Full Communion of the Catholic Church with a Profession of Faith. For assistance in this regard, see *Admission of an Orthodox Christian into the Catholic Church in Other than their Parallel Ritual Church* <http://archphila.org/evangelization/worship/pdf/AdmissionofOrthodoxChristian.pdf>

**Invalid Marriages:** Every effort should be made for all canonical impediments to the celebration of the Sacraments be resolved before someone is accepted into the Order of Catechumens or welcomed as a Candidate. Validation is to take place before the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. For assistance in this regard, please contact the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

**All baptized non-Catholic children over the age of seven** whose parents/guardians wish for them to come into full communion with the Catholic Church do so with the rites for the *Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church* (see RCIA, nos. 473-504). So, children, baptized as non-Catholics, receive Confirmation and Communion in the same celebration when they are received into the Catholic Church. The *Profession of Faith* within the rite and the *Act of Reception* are essential elements of this rite.

**CELEBRATION OF MASS WITH THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION FOR  
BAPTIZED CATHOLIC ADULTS  
(16 years of age and older)**

The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation for baptized Roman Catholics is the Bishop. Typically, this occurs during the pastoral visit of the Bishop to the parish. *Every effort should be made to prepare Catholic Adults for Confirmation to participate in the parish celebration with the Bishop.*

Additionally, the Archbishop celebrates the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday during the 6:30 PM Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, Philadelphia.

The candidates for this sacramental celebration are baptized Roman Catholics who have been properly catechized for Confirmation (and if needed, for the reception of First Communion). Information about this celebration for pastors and those who assist with the formation and reception of the Sacraments of Initiation can be found on the website of the Office for Divine Worship.

*If for some serious reason, a school age baptized Roman Catholic is unable to be confirmed by the Bishop during his pastoral visit to the parish, then this candidate, with the permission of the pastor, may be presented for the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday. The pastor's permission is to be included with the registration forms to be sent to the Office for Divine Worship.*

A pastor who foresees the genuine pastoral need to confirm an adult baptized Roman Catholic can do so only with the specific delegation of the Bishop (see Canon 882 and *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, nos. 28-29). Archbishop Pérez gives this faculty to all priests of the Archdiocese to confirm Roman Catholic Adults on any occasion from Palm Sunday through Pentecost Sunday. This delegation is required for the validity of the Sacrament in the case of a Roman Catholic candidate. If you have any questions about this faculty, please contact the Office for Divine Worship. There is no need for an additional letter requesting this faculty during the period specified by the Archbishop.

**TO OBTAIN A COPY OF  
THE ORDER OF CONFIRMATION**

As of Pentecost 2015, only the revised *Order of Confirmation* may be used by priests when delegated by the Archbishop to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. This new ritual book is only published in a bi-lingual (Spanish-English) format by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. To purchase a copy of *The Order for Confirmation*, see: <http://store.usccb.org/>.

**RECORD KEEPING**

The following registers are to be maintained diligently with regard to required information and record keeping:

- *Register of Catechumens*, after the Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (see RCIA, no. 46);
- *Book of Elect*, prior to the Rite of Election (see RCIA, no. 132);
- *Register for Baptism*, after the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (see Christian Initiation, General Introduction, no. 29);
- *Register for Full Communion of the Catholic Church* (see RCIA, no. 486).