

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacraments of Initiation
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

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<p style="text-align:center">GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (WITH ADAPTATIONS FOR CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE); WITH GLOSSARY</p>

I. Doctrinal Overview

N.B. Because the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is oriented primarily to the initiation of those who are unbaptized, this doctrinal overview focuses upon the catechumenate.

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

1. Summary

- a. The Church's initiation procedure was loosely organized, much like the rites of early Jewish sects.
- b. It included a period of preparation for instruction and repentance, then reception into the community through a bath of water and sometimes a laying on of hands.

2. Second Century through Fifth Century

- a. Candidates for Baptism have a long period of preparation including instruction, prayer, and doing good works.
- b. When ready for Baptism, candidates were vouched for by their sponsor, and bathed, fasted, and prayed before receiving the sacrament.
- c. For the ceremony the candidates were exorcised and anointed. After disrobing, they went into the water to profess their faith and be baptized.
- d. Clothed in white garments, they received a final anointing by the bishop to confirm their new life in Christ.
- e. When bishops found it impossible to attend all baptisms, the Western Church separated this final anointing from the baptism itself to be administered later in the ceremony of Confirmation by the bishop.

3. Sixth Century to Twentieth Century

- a. In the Middle Ages, Christianity became the common belief, and infant Baptisms, the general rule.
- b. The long preparation for Baptism was no longer needed.
- c. In some areas, the child was confirmed at the time of Baptism, but as time went on, this ceremony was postponed until a later age.

- d. The Council of Trent in 1565 stated the “age of reason” as right for Confirmation
- e. Confirmation was no longer seen as simply a sealing of Baptism but rather as a sacrament of growth, confirming the Christian person’s faith.
- f. The Bishop’s Kiss of Peace became a blow on the cheek to signify that one must be ready to suffer for Christ.

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4. Vatican II to the present

- a. The first document of Vatican II, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963), mandated restoration of the ancient order of initiation of adults known as the catechumenate:
 - The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be brought into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 64)
- b. In 1972, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), as mandated by Vatican II, was published. A provisional English version of the text was made available in 1974.
- c. For the next ten years, parishes in the United States (and the Diocese of Fort Worth) began implementing the catechumenal process of initiation.
- d. In 1983, several minor changes were made in the RCIA to bring it into conformity with the new Code of Canon Law.
- e. National statutes for the catechumenate for the United States were approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1986 and confirmed by the Holy See in 1987. The final English version of the ritual text was published and its implementation mandated in 1988.
- f. The Christian initiation of adults includes not only a period of well-suited instruction and a time sanctified by liturgical rites to be celebrated at successive intervals, but also a gradual integration into the full, conscious and active life of the Catholic community.
- g. While current practice, both worldwide and locally, remains varied, the trend is moving away from a school year model of implementation to an approach that is more flexible. Such flexibility is better suited to the individual needs of those seeking full communion with the Church and to the process of conversion which is continually turning one’s life toward the Gospel.

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION, CORRELATION WITH THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE RITE FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PREPARATION FOR FULL INITIATION INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

1. Participation in the Paschal Mystery through membership in the Church is a gift God gives through preparation for and celebration of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

- Baptism brings forgiveness of all sin and the beginning of new life in Christ.
- Confirmation strengthens and seals the baptismal mission of the faithful.
- Eucharist, sacrifice and meal, nourishes the faithful with Christ's Body and Blood.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1229: *From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.*

RCIA, Christian Initiation, General Introduction 1: *In the sacraments of Christian initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire people of God in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.*

CCC 1263: *By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.*

RCIA, General Introduction 2a: *Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God's people. This first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence we are called and are indeed the children of God.*

CCC 1296: *Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal. Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total*

belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.

RCIA, General Introduction 2b: *By signing us with the gift of the Spirit, confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord and fills us with the Holy Spirit, so that we may bear witness to him before all the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness as soon as possible.*

RCIA 215: *In accord with the ancient practice followed in the Roman Liturgy adults are not to be baptized without receiving confirmation immediately afterward, unless some serious reason stands in the way. The conjunction of the two sacraments signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized.*

CCC 1322: *The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.*

RCIA, General Introduction 2c: *Finally, coming to the table of the eucharist, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that we may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering ourselves with Christ we share in the universal sacrifice, that is, the entire community of the redeemed offered to God by their High Priest, and we pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family.*

Implications:

Christ's Paschal Mystery, his death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, is the foundation of the Church and the Church's sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist initiate one into this Mystery. RCIA teams help those to be initiated to recognize how the Holy Spirit reveals the dying and rising pattern of the Paschal Mystery in their lives. Though human expertise, planning, and work are needed for the preparation of these sacraments, the sacraments themselves are a gift from God and not from human initiative. Therefore the process of initiation is not governed by human conventions such as an academic year or membership in a particular year's class.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1212: *The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – lay the foundation of every Christian life.*

2. Together forming the core of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), these three sacraments are the foundation of Christian life, both for individuals seeking conversion to Christ in the Church, and for the Church herself.

RCIA, General Instruction, 2d: Thus the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.

Implications:

- All activities related to catechumenate should be inspired by the ritual text.
- While retaining their distinct characteristics and proper ends, the sacraments of initiation form a unity and are combined in one liturgical celebration.
- Those responsible for preparation of catechumens and candidates for full communion and for the corresponding liturgical celebrations should themselves be thoroughly familiar with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and adequately prepared for whatever ministries they undertake.
- In order to acknowledge and honor the valid baptism of those seeking full communion with the Church, care must be taken to maintain all legitimate distinctions between catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (baptized Christian but uncatechized in the Catholic faith).

3. The goal of Christian initiation is conversion to Christ in a life of discipleship.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1692: The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God," [[Jn 1:12](#) ; [1Jn 3:1](#) .] "partakers of the divine nature" [[2Pet 1:4](#).] Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ." [[Phil 1:27](#) .] They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer.

RCIA 1: The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after having the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully.

Implications:

- Catechumens and candidates need to be taught explicitly that the goal of the process is not membership in a merely human institution, but a new way of living in Christ, expressed through active participation in the mission of the Church, in which the Spirit of God resides.

- The challenges and blessings of discipleship as a way of life should be made clear throughout the entire process.

4. Conversion to Christ is a journey, marked by a series of initiatory stages and affirmed by ritual celebrations, as quoted below (Part 1, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*; no paragraph number given, see p. 14)

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.

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.

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.

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.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

This is the time immediately preceding the elects' initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist.

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.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1229: *From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be*

covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

RCIA 2: *This rite includes not simply the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, but also all the rites belonging to the catechumenate.*

RCIA 5: *The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.*

Implications:

- Dialogue with the biblical stories of journey and the lived tradition of the Church is a primary source for the process of initiation.
- Each one of the periods and rituals is integral to the process of initiation of catechumens and deserves careful attention.
- Since the RCIA is the norm for all initiation, the journey of baptized candidates—even those whose preparation requires less time—also follows the pattern of initiatory stages and ritual celebrations.
- In the initiation process, the role of the bishop as pastor of the local Church is always honored.

5. Preparation for the new life of discipleship, because it involves the whole person, has the character of an apprenticeship in Christian life. It requires a balance of doctrinal, liturgical and spiritual formation, in the context of a community of faith, flowing from the proclamation of the Word of God.

- Nurturing an initial call to faith and repentance
- Discerning God’s presence through reflection on daily life in light of Scripture and prayer
- Fostering inclusion in the community of faith
- Developing the habit and practice of prayer and regular reading of Scripture.
- Encouraging a life of active witness through justice and charity

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1248: *The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with an ecclesial community. The catechumenate is to be “a formation in the whole Christian life . . . during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher. The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by*

successive sacred rites.” [AG 14; cf. RCIA 19; 98.]

RCIA 75: *The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. In this way the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity.*

CCC 1431: *Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one’s life, with hope in God’s mercy and trust in the help of his grace. This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart). [Cf. Council Of Trent (1551) DS 1676-1678; 1705; Cf. Roman Catechism, II, V, 4.] “*

RCIA 37: *From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love. . . .*

CCC 2688: *The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on The Word of God in personal prayer, practicing it in liturgical prayer, and internalizing it at all times in order to bear fruit in a new life. Catechesis is also a time for the discernment and education of popular piety.[Cf. CT 54.] The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning.*

RCIA 75, 2: *As they become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to set their hopes on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self renunciation. . . .*

CCC 6: *While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness. [CT 18.]*

RCIA 9,1: *. . . the faithful should . . . show themselves ready to give the candidates evidence of the spirit of the Christian community and to welcome them into their homes, into personal conversion, and into community gatherings.*

CCC 2662: The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer.

CCC 2720: The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year.

CCC 2725: Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. . . .

RCIA 142: Because they are asking for the three sacraments of initiation, the elect must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church, and they are expected particularly to progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.

CCC 1072: “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”: [SC 9.] it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity.

RCIA 75, 4: Since the Church’s life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.

Implications:

- In the process of preparing people for the sacraments of initiation, Scripture is primary.
- Care must be taken to devise a program of preparation and celebration which addresses the personal experience of participants.
- Sufficient formation will require significant time.
- The example of team members, sponsors, and parishioners will be crucial in incorporating new people into the life of the Church.
- Clear and frequent communication regarding opportunities for participation in parish events will be important for those seeking initiation.
- Information concerning resources for assisting those with special needs (e.g., marriage cases, moral dilemmas, counseling) should be available from the very beginning of the Inquiry process.

6. After experiencing the Paschal Mystery through the sacramental celebration of initiation, both the newly initiated and the rest of the faithful are enriched through post initiation catechesis, also known as mystagogy.

- Clarifying understanding of faith
- Deepening a sense of belonging
- Strengthening commitment to discipleship

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 1212: *The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – lay the foundations of every Christian life.*

RCIA 9, 5: *During the period immediately after baptism, the faithful should take part in the Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season (see no. 25), to welcome the neophytes with open arms in charity, and to help them feel more at home in the community of the baptized.*

CCC 1234: *By following the gestures and words of this celebration with attentive participation, the faithful are initiated into the riches this sacrament signifies and actually brings about in each newly baptized person.*

RCIA 244: *. . . mystagogy. . . is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel . . .*

RCIA 245: *The neophytes are, as the term “mystagogy” suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through the experience of the sacraments they have received.*

CCC 6: *. . . catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission . . . [including] integration into the ecclesial community.*

RCIA 9, 5: *During the period immediately after baptism, the faithful should . . . help them feel more at home in the community of the baptized.*

CCC 6: *catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission . . . [including] apostolic and missionary witness.[[CT 18.](#)]*

CCC 1698: *The first and last point of reference of this catechesis will always be Jesus Christ himself, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life.” [[Jn 14:6.](#)] It is by looking to him in faith that Christ’s faithful can hope that he himself fulfills his promises in them, and that, by loving him with the same love with which he has loved them, they may perform works in keeping with their dignity . . .*

RCIA 7, 4: *The final period extends through the whole Easter Season and is devoted to the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. It is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.*

RCIA 245: . . . *Out of this experience [i.e., everything surrounding mystagogy], which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.*

Implications:

- Intentional, extended, post-initiation catechesis is a necessary element of the Rite.
- A prime catechetical goal of this period is helping the neophytes and the entire community to explore and understand the meaning of the sacraments celebrated at the Vigil, through reflection upon the seasonal lectionary readings.
- Catechesis on the sacraments and liturgy during the period of mystagogy makes the connection between liturgy and daily life and leads to deeper maturity in faith.
- The whole catechumenal process makes clear the developmental character of Christian life which is ongoing after the Easter Vigil. Life in Christ has the nature of a journey and therefore needs continued spiritual guidance.

7. The RCIA takes place in a parish which takes seriously its mission to evangelize. The parish proclaims the Good News of God’s love through word and deed in a way which invites and nourishes a response of faith.

- Celebration of RCIA and the parish mission to evangelize are always intertwined.
- Responsibility for the Christian initiation of adults lies with the entire parish community, as active participants in its ritual elements and in the many ministries it requires.
- The continual preparation for and celebration of the RCIA is central to the ongoing conversion and discipleship of the local community.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*

CCC 2179: . . . *The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ’s saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love . . .*

CCC 1428: *Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, “clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” [LG 8 # 3.] This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a “contrite heart,” drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first. [Ps 51:17 ; cf. Jn 6:44 ; Jn 12:32 ; 1Jn 4:10 .]”*

RCIA 9: *In light of what is said in Christian Initiation, General Instruction (no. 7), the people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and*

show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. Therefore the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ. In the various circumstances of daily life, even as in the apostolate, all the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities. Hence, the entire community must help the candidates and the catechumens throughout the process of initiation: during the period of precatechumenate, the period of the catechumenate, the period of purification and enlightenment, and the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy.

Implications:

- Successful implementation of RCIA requires active support and vision from clergy, lay leadership, and the community.
- Continuing personal conversion, the constant work of every Catholic, needs to be nourished in all aspects of parish life.
- Active, on-going outreach of invitation, hospitality, and prayer is crucial to the evangelizing mission of the parish.
- Communities need to be catechized continually regarding their role in the initiation of new members through invitation, hospitality, and prayer.
- The communitarian nature of the initiation process presupposes wide parish participation by clergy and laity as team members, catechists, and sponsors.

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II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, age and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes life long learning and participation in the sacramental life

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION IN THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

1. The Church's apostolic mission to make all people sharers in the communion of the Trinity is the guiding principle of the RCIA.
2. The RCIA process presumes a communal dimension for both preparation and celebration.
3. The on-going education of the parish community about the meaning of the various elements of the RCIA is an integral part of implementing the rite. (See, e.g., RCIA, General Instruction, 7; RCIA 4, 9, 80, 506.)
4. Implementation of the RCIA embodies the virtue of hospitality for individuals and families seeking initiation. (RCIA 9 [1, 5], 45, 49.)
5. The very act of seeking information about the Church and/or pursuing a deeper relationship with Christ in the Church is a manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit.
6. All those seeking communion with the Church are accompanied by a sponsor.
7. Once inquirers have become catechumens they are a part of "the household of Christ" (RCIA 47).
8. The Catechumenate is an apprenticeship in the whole of Christian life.

9. The Church honors the baptism of other Christian faiths as long as it is done with water and the Trinitarian formula.
10. The conversion which RCIA fosters and celebrates is an on-going way of life.

III. Policies

N.B. Because the RCIA focuses primarily on the initiation of those who are unbaptized, these policies are directed chiefly to catechumens. When the group seeking initiation has only candidates (i.e., baptized but uncatechized in the Catholic faith), implementation of the process may be more simple and perhaps shorter.

A. THE PERSON TO BE INITIATED

1. A clear distinction between catechumens and candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church must be kept at all times. (See Glossary for proper terminology.)
2. Due consideration to individual circumstances, background, and spiritual and personal development must be given to all people approaching the Church for initiation
 - a. Catechumens: the norm for the length of preparation, including both the catechumenate *per se* and the period of Purification and Enlightenment is at least one year, from Easter of one year to Easter of the next (see National Statutes, 6).
 - b. Uncatechized Adult Catholics and Baptized Christians Seeking Full Catholic Communion: greater flexibility must be exercised for these persons, so that the duration of preparation may vary depending on the level of experience in a Christian community and appropriate catechesis. This preparation includes catechesis for and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, as well as catechesis for confirmation and eucharist (see *RCIA* 408, 482; National Statutes, 27).
3. A means for identifying and addressing possible obstacles to full initiation (e.g., invalid marriage, other circumstances and/or public stances contrary to church teaching) must be in place from the beginning of the Inquiry period of the initiation process

Individuals seeking initiation, who are in need of declaration of invalidity in order to celebrate the sacraments, must have a protocol number from the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal prior to participation in the Call to the Easter Sacraments (Rite of Election for catechumens; Call to Continuing Conversion for candidates).

4. The normative time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation for catechumens is the Easter Vigil (see *RCIA* 207). For serious pastoral reasons, however, initiation may be completed at other times during the liturgical year.
5. Anyone aged 7 or older is considered to have reached “catechetical age” (*RCIA* 252) and is to be initiated through the full implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, appropriately adapted for age and circumstances (see *RCIA*, Part II, 1: Christian Initiation of Children Who have Reached Catechetical Age, 252- 259).
 - a. Unbaptized children who have attained the age of reason (i.e., 7 years old) are initiated by the same rite as adults, in accord with the National Statutes for the

Catechumenate, 18-21, with the proper adjustments given in the ritual, *RCIA* 252ff.

- b. Children who have been baptized as Catholic but are uncatechized are to complete their initiation through the RCIA as candidates.
 - c. Children who have been baptized and catechized in another Christian tradition are to complete their initiation through the RCIA as candidates. Whatever adaptations are made in particular circumstances, care should be taken to ensure that children are integrated into the life of the church and the community of their peers.
6. Children of catechetical age who have been baptized in another faith tradition but raised as Catholics are to be considered, for the purposes of initiation, already Catholic. For this reason, sacramental preparation for these children is governed by the Guidelines for Penance, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.

B. THE PARISH

1. The on-going education of the parish community to the meaning of the various elements of the RCIA is an integral part of implementing the rite.
2. Broad participation by the faithful in the ministries of the catechumenate process is to be encouraged. Special importance is attached to their participation in the work of evangelization through invitation and hospitality.
3. Parishes should make every effort to integrate the neophytes into the life and mission of the parish during the time of mystagogy, intensively during the fifty days of Easter (Easter to Pentecost) and continuing less formally until the next Easter (see National Statutes, 22-24).
4. Parishes should provide support, including financial support, for ongoing training of RCIA leaders and acquisition of adequate training and implementation materials.
5. Pastors, liturgists, and RCIA team members should be familiar with the entire text of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, including its various introductions and the National Statutes.
6. To the extent possible, the pastor should be actively involved in the initiation process.
7. Parishes assist those seeking initiation to find, as sponsors or godparents, people who are fully initiated members of the Church (baptized, confirmed, received eucharist) living a Catholic way of life. Normally, godparents and sponsors are at least 16 years old.

Godparents are persons who “accompany the candidates on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. . .

chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest” (*RCIA* 11).

Sponsors accompany “any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen.” They are persons “who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates’ moral character, faith, and intention” (*RCIA* 10). They may or may not be selected as godparents. Sponsors are also selected for baptized persons seeking full communion.

Peer companions, though not sponsors or godparents, are Catholic children of catechetical age who, through their help and example, support children in the initiation process.

Godparents and sponsors are to be trained carefully and supported wholeheartedly in the exercise of their sacred responsibilities. They act as primary witnesses to the one seeking initiation, walking with them on the journey of conversion and providing support through prayer, companionship, and witness.

In special circumstances, and only when there is a Catholic sponsor or godparent, members of other Christian denominations may serve as witnesses (See *RCIA*, Christian Initiation, General Introduction, ¶10.4; also see Code of Canon Law, 874, § 1-2)

8. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults must be implemented fully (*RCIA* 75) through:
 - a. Systematic catechesis offered with methodology appropriate to the circumstances, age, and needs of participants;
 - b. Apprenticeship in the life of prayer and Christian community, and participation in the apostolic mission of the Church;
 - c. Celebration of the principal preparatory rites (i.e., Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens; Rite of Sending the Catechumens for Election; First, Second, and Third Scrutinies; or the corresponding Rites for Baptized but Uncatechized Adults or Combined Rites [see *RCIA* Part II, 4,5 and Appendix I]), as well as the rites of the Easter Vigil.
9. The duration of the initiation process must be long enough to allow for the beginning of true interior conversion and thorough familiarity with a Catholic pattern of life.
10. After inquirers have had sufficient time “to conceive an initial faith” and “to show the first signs of conversion,” the unbaptized are admitted into the Catechumenate and the baptized are welcomed as Candidates for Full Communion. Two or three dates “are to be fixed as the usual times for carrying out” the Rite of Acceptance, (*RCIA* 18) the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates (*RCIA* 416-433), or the Combined Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming (*RCIA* 507-529).

11. Each parish in the diocese should work toward making appropriate care and catechetical ministry available to inquirers as soon as they approach the Church. For this reason a year-round catechumenate is ordinarily preferred to a catechumenate based on the school year.
12. The normal time for celebrating the sacraments of initiation for catechumens (the Elect) is at the Easter Vigil. When serious pastoral needs dictate, initiation may be celebrated at another appropriate time.
13. The period of mystagogy, or post-baptismal catechesis, is observed formally for the entire Easter Season (Easter through Pentecost) through careful celebration of the Masses for Neophytes and some intentional guidance in reflecting on the experience of the Easter Sacraments in the lives of the newly initiated.
14. The parish also gathers the newly initiated at least monthly during the year following their initiation for continuing formation in the Christian life and deeper integration into the life of the community (see National Statutes, # 24)
15. People of catechetical age (7 or older) who are brought into the Church through Baptism or profession of faith are always confirmed and receive Holy Communion at the same liturgical celebration.
16. The implementation of the RCIA should always be done in a way that embodies the virtue of hospitality for the individuals and families seeking initiation.
17. Adequate instruction for RCIA is “gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year” (*RCIA* 75,1) and oriented to conversion to Christ (see *RCIA* 78).
18. The sending forth of catechumens (Dismissal) for reflection upon God’s Word in the Lectionary is an integral part of the catechumenate and normally takes place during the Sunday Mass. For pastoral reasons (for example, only one Sunday Mass in a parish, insufficient numbers of catechumens), reflection on the Word may take place at another appropriate time during the week. However, this sending forth should not be omitted from Sunday Mass without significant reason because it ritually reinforces for the worshipping community the importance of the Scriptures in the process of conversion.
19. Although baptized candidates have a right to be present for the entire length of the Mass, they may be dismissed with the catechumens for reflection upon the Word. This would be especially helpful when parishes have small numbers of catechumens and candidates or whenever candidates can profit from participating in the Dismissal.

IV. Norms for Readiness

Catechumens and candidates are discerned to be ready for the Sacraments of Initiation when they have demonstrated, through word and deed, the following:

1. Understanding and appreciation (appropriate to age and circumstances) of the Word of God as revealed through Scripture, the tradition of the Church, and the living practice of the faith;
2. Willingness to let that Word inform attitudes, choices, and behavior in public and private relationships;
3. Desire for a personal relationship with Christ, manifested by a developing habit of private prayer, reflection on the scriptures, and consideration of the connection between the truths of faith and daily life;
4. Commitment to “full, conscious, and active” participation in the rites associated with Christian initiation and the life of the Catholic Church, especially in the parish;
5. Appropriate familiarity with and engagement in the pattern of Catholic life in its communal prayer and worship;
6. Active practice of the virtues, especially charity to others;
7. No canonical impediments to receiving the sacraments and living a fully Catholic life.

Minors must also have the approval of at least one custodial parent, expressed in writing.
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V. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

VI. The Beginning of the Initiation Process

There are no rites marking the Period of Evangelization and Pre-catechumenate (or Inquiry). Any reception, welcome, or prayers for inquirers must be entirely informal.

A. THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE/WELCOME.

1. The rites which formally begin the initiation process are found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA):

- For the unbaptized: 41-74
- For baptized candidates: 411-433
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 505-529
- For children: 260-276

Commentary:

- The rites of exorcism and renunciation of false worship (RCIA, 70-72) are done in our diocese only in exceptional circumstances and require the explicit permission of the bishop.
- The giving of a new name is not required. (RCIA, 73).
- The presentation of a cross and/or a Bible is optional (RCIA, 64; 525).
- When the group includes both baptized and unbaptized persons, care is to be exercised to respect and mark the distinction between them.
- For pastoral reasons, the General Intercessions and the Creed may be omitted following the celebration of any of these rites during Sunday Mass (RCIA, 68, 117, 156, 170, 177).
- The sending forth (Dismissal) of catechumens and candidates for further reflection on the Word of God begins with the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome and continues throughout the rest of the initiation process.
- The purpose and meaning of this dismissal is to be made clear both to the assembly and to those dismissed.

B. RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERIOD OF CATECHUMENATE AND CATECHETICAL FORMATION

1. The rites which mark this period of the initiation process are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 75-117
- For baptized candidates: 434-445
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 530-546
- For children, no special rites are given; see commentary below

Commentary:

- At Sunday Mass during this period, catechumens are ordinarily dismissed with a catechist after the homily for further reflection on the Sunday readings.
- Candidates may also be appropriately dismissed with catechumens.

- All of the rites of this period, even those which are often overlooked, are powerful enrichments to the experience of the catechumens.
- For baptized candidates, similar prayers and services can also be used; however, care is to be taken to honor their baptism and maintain the distinction between the baptized and the catechumens (see Resource Packet for examples). For this reason, the anointings are done only with catechumens.
- A duly qualified catechist responsible for catechumenal ministry in the parish may preside at the various rites of this period with the exception of the anointings and the sending.
- For the anointings and sending, a priest or deacon presides.
- In the Rite of Sending, signing of a Book of the Elect by the Catechumens takes place in the parish.
- The role of godparents and/or parish sponsors in the celebration of these and subsequent rites becomes more active during this period.
- These rites are ordinarily very fruitful for children who are properly prepared. If, however, in the judgment of the catechists, they place undue pressure on the children, these rites are not required.
- When children are included in the celebration of these rites, care is taken to adapt the rites suitably.
- The minor exorcisms and anointings may be more appropriately celebrated for children in separate Penitential Rites (Scrutinies) during Lent.

C. ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION

1. The rites which mark the election of catechumens and the call to continuing conversion of baptized candidates are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 118-137
- For baptized candidates: 446-458
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 547-561
- For children: 277-290

Commentary:

- In this diocese, the ordinary way catechumens are elected and candidates are called to continuing conversion is at the Call to the Easter Sacraments (the combined Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church).
- The Bishop celebrates this rite at several regional sites around the beginning of Lent.
- The Call to the Easter Sacraments is ordinarily celebrated in the context of the Liturgy of the Hours.

D. RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT AND PREPARATION FOR THE EASTER SACRAMENTS

1. The rites which belong to the period of Purification and Enlightenment and preparation for the Easter sacraments are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 138-205
- For baptized candidates: 459-472
- For unbaptized and baptized together, no special rituals are provided
- For children: 291-303

Commentary:

- Preparation for the Scrutinies of those to be initiated, as well as of the assembly, should focus on their purpose: “to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good.”
- The effective celebration of the Scrutinies presumes the use of the Sunday readings from Cycle A of the Lectionary. During Cycles B and C, the Cycle A readings may always be used on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent.
- If the Scrutinies are celebrated at only one Mass, some reference to them at the other Masses enriches the community’s participation in the progress of the elect toward Easter.
- If Scrutinies are celebrated with candidates and catechumens together, the language of the rite must be adapted to honor and acknowledge the distinction between the elect and baptized candidates (see Resource Packet for examples).
- Because of their special needs, the celebration of the Scrutinies with children may be done separately.

E. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

1. The rites which mark the initiation of the elect and candidates into full communion with the Catholic church are found in the RCIA:

- For the unbaptized: 206-243
- For baptized candidates (at times other than the Easter Vigil): 473-504
- For unbaptized and baptized together: 562-594
- For children: 304-329
- The complexity and richness of this rite requires a thorough understanding and long-range preparation by all the ministers involved.
- The Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday provide an ideal context for the immediate preparation needed for the Easter Vigil.
- Immediate preparation of candidates for the sacraments is most effective when it gives them only essential information needed for intentional participation (e.g., responses, postures, gestures, appropriate dress, etc.) and leaves their guidance during the rites to sponsors and other ministers.
- For this reason, sponsors and other ministers need to be carefully prepared.

- Because they are primary symbols, the Elect and Candidates need to be easily visible and audible to the community.
- Of all sacramental celebrations, the initiatory rites should be most lavish in the use of water, oil, light, bread, wine.
- Because all the newly baptized are confirmed at the same celebration, the anointing after baptism is omitted.
- When a ceremonial baptismal garment is used, it is to be put on after Baptism, not before.
- A baptismal garment can be ordinary “dress up” clothing, or a ceremonial white robe or cape, etc. To avoid confusing sacramental symbols, a stole is not to be used.

F. RITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

1. The rites which belong to the period of Mystagogy are found in the RCIA:

- For the newly baptized: 244-251
- For newly baptized children: 330

Commentary:

- The main liturgical setting for mystagogy is the Masses for Neophytes, i.e., the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season.
- The readings and prayers of these Masses are mystagogical in content and intent; i.e., directed to reflection upon the experience of the Easter Sacraments.
- With their families and sponsors, neophytes are given places of honor at the Sunday Eucharist during this time.
- The homily and the general intercessions for these Masses should reflect the mystagogical emphasis of the Sunday readings for the assembly and the presence and needs of the neophytes.
- During this period the bishop invites the neophytes and other new members of the Church to celebrate Mass with him.

A Glossary of Terms Related to Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age

Acceptance, Rite of: The rite by which unbaptized inquirers become catechumens. (For baptized candidates, see Welcome, Rite of.)

Anointing: The ritual application of sacred oil. Within the Rite of Christian Initiation, there are two types of anointing: the anointing with the Oil of Catechumens during the periods of Catechumenate and Purification and Enlightenment by a priest or deacon; and the anointing with Holy Chrism at Confirmation by a priest or bishop.

Blessing: Ritual prayers signifying God's love and the care of the Church for catechumens. These blessings, which instill courage, peace, and joy for the journey of conversion, may be given by a priest, deacon, or duly appointed lay catechist during the period of the catechumenate. Usually blessings are given at the conclusion of a Celebration of the Word or a catechetical session.

Book of the Elect: The book in which the elect sign their names at the Rite of Sending and which the Bishop then signs at the Call to the Easter Sacraments. These elect are fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.

Call to the Easter Sacraments: In the Diocese of Fort Worth, the name given to the combined rites of Election of Catechumens and the Call to Continuing Conversion of baptized candidates. Generally this occurs at regional sites at the beginning of Lent.

Call to Continuing Conversion: The rite celebrated at the beginning of Lent in which the desire of baptized candidates for full communion is formally recognized and affirmed by the Bishop; generally part of the Call to the Easter Sacraments.

Candidate: A baptized adult (for purposes of Christian initiation, anyone 7 years old or older) preparing for full communion with the Catholic Church; used in a broader sense, the term sometimes refers to anyone preparing to receive a sacrament.

Catechesis: The comprehensive and systematic apprenticeship in the faith which prepares catechumens and others for full communion with the Catholic Church. It consists of doctrinal instruction, liturgical education, moral formation, direction in the life of prayer, integration into community life, and training for mission in the world.

Catechetical age: The age at which children have the use of reason; generally, 7 years and older.

Catechumen: An adult (for purposes of Christian initiation, anyone 7 years old or older) who is unbaptized and has been accepted in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

Catechumenate: Generally, the process by which the Catholic Church initiates unbaptized adults and unbaptized children of catechetical age into full membership; specifically, the period of time that begins with the Rite of Welcoming and concludes with the Rite of Election. The length of this period is governed by the needs of the catechumen. (See RCIA, 36 – 40.)

Celebrations of the Word of God: Short scripture services conducted during the catechumenate period for the following purposes: to implant in the hearts of catechumens (and, where pastorally appropriate, candidates) the catechetical instruction they are receiving; to give them experience in different ways of prayer; to explain the liturgical seasons, signs and celebrations of the Church; and to prepare them more fully for participation at Sunday Mass.

Chrism: A sacred oil mixed with fragrance and consecrated by the bishop; used in the RCIA for anointing in the ritual of Confirmation. The same Chrism is used to anoint priests and bishops at ordination, infants at baptism, churches and altars during their dedication.

Conversion: A life-long journey of transformation, turning away from sin and embracing the Gospel. More than a one-time experience, conversion conforms the heart, mind, and actions of the believer to Christ.

Discernment: The process by which the one seeking baptism or full communion, and the community, guided by the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Church, explore and determine one's readiness to move to the next stage of initiation.

Dismissal: The sending forth of catechumens (and where appropriate, candidates) for guided reflection upon God's Word in the Lectionary. Normally this takes place during the Sunday Masses from the beginning of the Catechumenate period to the Easter Vigil.

Elect: Catechumens who have been chosen in the Rite of Election (normally at the beginning of Lent during the Call to the Easter Sacraments) to complete their initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Election, Rite of: The rite celebrated at the beginning of Lent in which catechumens are chosen by the Church for baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. This rite, generally part of the Call to the Easter Sacraments, marks the end of the Period of Catechumenate and the beginning of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment. Also known as Enrollment, Enlightenment, Period of: See Purification and Enlightenment, Period of.

Enrollment: See Election, Rite of

Exorcisms: Prayers for catechumens/elect seeking the power and protection of God in the struggle against evil and falsehood. The "minor exorcisms" found in the Period of Catechumenate may be presided over by a priest, deacon, or duly appointed catechist. The exorcisms which are part of the Scrutinies must be presided over by a priest or deacon.

Godparent: A fully initiated member of the Church (baptized, confirmed, received eucharist), living a Catholic way of life, who accompanies the candidate "on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. . . " (RCIA 11). The godparent is chosen by the candidate (or in the case of children of catechetical age, their parents or guardians) on the basis of good example, spiritual maturity, and friendship. Normally, a godparent must be at least 16 years old.

Initiation: The entire process through which a person enters full communion with the Church.

Inquirer: Any adult, baptized or unbaptized, seeking to discover more about the faith and life of the Catholic Church prior to making a decision to join.

Inquiry: see Precatechumenate, period of.

Lectionary: Book of biblical readings used at Mass.

Mystagogy: The period after Easter when the neophytes and the entire community reflect upon the meaning and experience of the Easter sacraments.

National Statutes: Regulations governing the implementation of the RCIA in the United States; approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. They can be found in Appendix III of the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults.

Neophyte: A newly initiated Christian. This term is used during the period of post-baptismal catechesis (also known as mystagogy).

Peer companions: Catholic children of catechetical age who, through their help and example, support other children in the initiation process.

Precatechumenate, period of: The time before formal acceptance into the order of Catechumens when inquirers hear the Gospel, share stories of faith, and foster initial conversion.

Presentations: Rites celebrated during the Period of Purification and Enlightenment in which the church formally hands over to the elect the tradition of faith (in the Creed) and prayer (in the Lord's Prayer).

Purification and Enlightenment, Period of: Final preparation of the Elect, to help them and also the entire community prepare spiritually for the Easter sacraments. Ordinarily this period coincides with Lent when the Scrutinies and Presentations are celebrated.

Ritual text: In general, the book, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (abbreviated RCIA); in particular, those sections of the RCIA which pertain to the different stages and celebrations of the initiation process.

Scrutinies: Rites celebrated with the elect (usually on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent) in which the Church prays for the spirit of repentance, for strength in the struggle against evil and for freedom in the pursuit of holiness. The presider for the scrutinies must be a priest or deacon.

Sending, Rite of: An optional rite at the end of the Period of Catechumenate during which catechumens are sent forth by the parish community to the Call to the Easter Sacraments. The ritual text also provides adaptations for sending of candidates as well.

Sponsor, parish: A member of the parish community who, through example and presence, accompanies persons seeking full initiation on the journey of conversion and helps the parish to know and welcome them more fully.

Sponsor, sacramental: A fully initiated Catholic who accepts responsibility for supporting the person seeking full communion, through prayer, example, and witness. The sacramental sponsor may or may not be a member of the parish. Normally, a sacramental sponsor must be at least 16 years old.

Triduum: The single celebration of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil.

Uncatechized: Having little or no formation, systematic or informal, in the practice and teachings of the Catholic faith; lacking familiarity with the spiritual, doctrinal, moral and sacramental basics of Catholic life.

Welcome, Rite of: The rite by which baptized candidates are formally included in the life of the community in preparation for full communion through confirmation and eucharist.