

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

“The catechumenate for adults, divided into several stages, is to be restored and put into use at the discretion of the local Ordinary. By this means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of well-suited instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.” *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* #64.

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. ...The three sacraments of Christian initiation [baptism, confirmation and Eucharist] closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his [Christ's] full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world”. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, General Introduction # 1-2.

The mission of the church is a mission of hospitality, evangelization, and justice. Through the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age (normally around the age of 7), the Diocese of Las Cruces strives to form and celebrate a people who will embrace and carry on this mission of Jesus. Cf. *Heritage and Hope, Our Story as a Diocesan Family*, Diocese of Las Cruces, 1999.

Part I - Administrative Information

1. Norms

The Diocese of Las Cruces, in keeping with the process of renewal of the Second Vatican Council accepts the process outlined in the ritual book for the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1988) as the norm for the reception of unbaptized adults into the Catholic church. The Rite identifies children of catechetical age in the category of adults. Thus, the process also applies to unbaptized children of catechetical age.

In accord with the directives of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age are to receive baptism, confirmation and Eucharist in a single Eucharistic celebration. The usual time for this celebration is at the Easter Vigil (Rite #8. 17, 23, 207). Confirmation of adults and older children is to be conferred by the priest baptizing within the same celebration as outlined in the Rite. In these instances, the pastor of the parish is the ordinary minister of the sacraments of initiation (NCCB Statutes, 14).

2. Parish Catechumenate Director and Team

Each parish is to appoint a parish director and team for the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults who will provide for the journey of faith that takes place within the context of the parish community. The spiritual journey depends on God's grace, each person's free cooperation, the action of the church and local circumstances. A director and team help the local pastor in the interviewing process, faith formation, faith development and the ongoing celebration of the rites. The pastor is to take care that the director and team receive training and on-going education in the areas of Christian formation and the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.

So that pastors may carry out their responsibilities in appointing and maintaining a director and team within the parish, they too, are to receive training and on-going education for the effective celebration of the various rites within the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Either through their seminary training or during a period of orientation for ministry in the diocese, priests are to participate in a program of instruction on the order and rites of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, with the additional rites approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America.

3. Interviewing Process

Each parish develops or provides for a process of interviewing persons seeking to enter the Catholic church or who wish to complete the sacraments of initiation. The interviewer, in consultation with the pastor, determines the readiness of each inquirer for a particular period of preparation and celebration of the rites. Some persons, because of their exposure to the Christian life and the Catholic faith, may need only a short time of preparation. Others may need a longer time, even several years, before they are presented for the Rite of Election and subsequent reception of the sacraments (See Addendum A for a suggested interview format).

The interviewing process must carefully explore the marriage status of each inquirer expressing a desire to enter the church so that any impediments or circumstances that indicate an irregular marriage (prevent a lawful marriage in the Catholic Church) are made known. A catechumen or candidate in an irregular marriage is to have his/her marriage in right order with the church before being sent to the Rite of Election and receiving the sacraments of initiation. If a catechumen has filed a petition for a decree of invalidity (annulment), the tribunal is to be notified that the petitioner is a catechumen. A suggested form is included in these guidelines (Addendum A).

Part II - Process

Stages and Periods of Preparation and Celebration

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults specifies that unbaptized adults who express a desire to join the Catholic Church, and unbaptized children of catechetical age are invited into a journey of faith consisting of three rites and four time periods. The rites and periods imply appropriate time for instruction, faith formation and preparation for the rites. The following is a list of these rites and periods of time.

PERIODS	RITES
1. Evangelization/pre-catechumenate	Followed by A. Becoming a Catechumen
2. Catechumenate	Completed by B. Enrollment/Election
3. Purification/Enlightenment	Followed by C. Sacraments of Initiation
4. Mystagogia	Followed by D. Ongoing reception of the sacraments

1. Period of Pre-Catechumenate

This is a time of evangelization on the part of the Church and of inquiry on the part of the candidate. During this time, the catechumenal team presents the basic teachings of the church in light of the gospel message. This period is to last for an indeterminate length of time depending upon the needs of each individual inquirer.

2. Period of Catechumenate: (#75-117)

The Catechumenate is an extended period for faith formation and development in the Christian life. This period begins with the Rite of Acceptance (#48-74) into the catechumenate and may last from one to several years. Catechumens are joined to the Church and are part of the household of Christ. They are nourished with the word of God and are strengthened in their journey by other liturgical celebrations provided for in the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults. The term "catechumen" is strictly reserved for the unbaptized who are admitted into the order of the catechumens. They may celebrate marriage in the church and in case of death, the catechumen may receive Christian burial (Canons 1109-1110, RCIA 47).

Unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason are to follow the process for adults in preparation and celebration of the sacraments of initiation. Depending on the age and readiness of the child, the catechumenal process may last from one to three years before the child is sent to the Rite of Election and receive the Easter Sacraments. Some of their instruction may be in conjunction with baptized children of their same age (NCCB) Statutes 19). Their status as catechumens, however, is not to be compromised or confused. (Canon 852; *General Introduction to Christian Initiation* #34-35; In the *RCIA* # 35, 253, and 259 and in the *Rite of Baptism For Children*, # 27-31.) (Cf. *The Rite for Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age: Applications and Adaptations*. Office of Liturgical Education, Diocese of Las Cruces, 2002.)

Instruction during the period of the Catechumenate not only continues to present Catholic teaching but also seeks to enlighten faith, direct the heart toward God, foster participation in the liturgy, inspire apostolic activity, and nurture a life completely in accord with the Spirit of Christ. The Lectionary is to be the primary catechism. Catechumens learn to connect their life stories to the stories of salvation history as found in the Lectionary (# 75). They participate in the Liturgy of the Word with the Catholic community.

In accordance with the "Rite of Dismissal" in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the Catechumens are dismissed each Sunday after the homily in the Liturgy of the Word.

The Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens as well as the Minor Exorcisms and Blessings may be celebrated one or more times during the period of the Catechumenate giving the person strength and encouragement to overcome obstacles and recognize their God-given gifts (RCIA 118, 90-94;95-97; 98-103).

2. Rite of Election

Unbaptized persons who have gone through preparation appropriate to their age and development as catechumens are brought to the Cathedral or other designated church on or near the First Sunday of Lent. At the Rite of Election, they are welcomed and received by the Bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces. This rite designates the persons as those elected to receive the sacraments of initiation at the coming Easter Vigil. These elect are to participate in the scrutinies and other rites designated throughout the Lenten season.

Persons still in irregular or invalid marriages are not to be enrolled for election until their marriage is in right order with the marriage laws of the church.

3. Celebration of the Sacraments

The Easter Vigil is the usual time for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation: baptism confirmation and Eucharist. At times, a pastoral judgment may be made to administer these sacraments at some other time of the year. However, careful consideration must be given to the benefits of leading the person through the stages and periods of development that are built into the cycle of the liturgical year. A pastor is to request the permission of the bishop if the sacraments of initiation are to be celebrated at times other than the Easter Vigil.

4. Sponsors and Godparents

Each catechumen is to have a sponsor who helps the catechumen understand the teachings of the church and be an example for living the Christian life in accord with the scriptures and the laws and practices of the Catholic church. The sponsor may also become the Godparent at the time of receiving the sacraments. If the catechumen so chooses, another person may be chosen as Godparent. All the qualifications and regulations of a Godparent that apply to infant baptism also apply to the Godparent of an adult. Namely, the Godparent is to be a fully initiated Catholic who is free to receive the sacraments of the Catholic Church. For adult baptism, only one Godparent or sponsor is required, two may be chosen, one male and one female (Canon 873).

While there is no church law that prevents a fiancé or spouse from being the sponsor/Godparent, the person is encouraged to have someone else serve in this capacity so that the relationship with the larger Christian community is broadened and strengthened.

5. Those Seeking Completion of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptized but Uncatechized Catholic Adults

Much of the catechumenal process also applies to baptized Catholic adults who are basically uncatechized and who seek confirmation and communion in their adult years. However, in the process of catechesis their status as baptized must be taken into account. The Rite provides optional liturgical rites in order to strengthen them in their Christian life (Rite #411-472). The Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be celebrated at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of confirmation and Eucharist. The normal time for completing the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil during which they renew their baptismal commitment, receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, and take part in the Eucharist. Any irregular marriage is to be resolved before the celebration of the completion of the sacraments of initiation.

Older Children

It is recommended that baptized but uncatechized children between the ages of 10 and 15 be given instruction appropriate to their age that prepares them to receive the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. In keeping with the confirmation policy of the diocese, they are to participate in the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation provided within each parish for their peers.

6. Persons Seeking Full-Communion in the Catholic Church

When persons validly baptized in another faith denomination seek to become members of the Catholic Church they are welcomed as candidates for full communion (Cf. CSL 69). During an initial interview, an assessment is made of their knowledge of the Catholic doctrine and faith formation. A process of preparation and continued formation is begun. At times, it may be appropriate for candidates to join the catechumens in some of their formational process. However, care must be taken to distinguish and respect the baptized status of the candidate.

Addendum B contains a directory listing those baptisms that are usually considered valid or not valid by the Catholic Church. If there is a question about whether a candidate's baptism is considered valid, a consultation with the diocesan director of RCIA at The Pastoral Center is to be sought. If a record of baptism cannot be obtained, a witness form may be submitted. (Cf. Pastoral Manual, Marriage section, pages L1 – L10). If the person is married, the status of their marriage history, as well as that of their spouse's, is examined for regularity within the marriage laws of the Catholic Church. If the present marriage is irregular, the process to regularize the marriage must be begun and completed before the person can make a profession of faith and be welcomed to the Eucharistic table. Care is to be taken to respect the validity of the existing marriage versus one that has need for convalidation.

Note to Parish/RCIA staff: If the person is in an irregular marriage and is seeking sacraments in the Catholic Church, it is important that someone from the RCIA Team monitors the progress of the annulment case with the petitioner. Care must be taken that any necessary canonical process is completed and judgments made prior to sending the person to the Rite of Election. The petitioner must be told that a negative decision from the Tribunal is always a possibility.

While cohabitation is not an impediment to marriage, it is an obstacle to receiving the sacraments of initiation. Living together without the benefit of marriage contradicts fundamental Church teachings. Thus, this situation is to be resolved through either separation or marriage prior to the celebration of the Rite of Election (Cf. Diocesan Pastoral Manual: Pastoral Section L-11).

Part III - Record Keeping

1. Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate: Each unbaptized person received into the Catechumenate at a Rite of Acceptance is entered into a record book for **Entrance into the Catechumenate**. This record is important because Catechumens acquire certain rights such as the right to Christian burial in case of death before receiving the sacraments.
2. Book of the Elect: At the time of the **Rite of Election** on the first Sunday of Lent, those Catechumens ready for the Easter Sacraments are invited to the Rite of Election. Their names are entered into the Book of the Elect. The Book of the Elect is an official record book to be kept in safekeeping in each parish. Please note that irregular marriages must be resolved before a catechumen is sent to the Rite of Election.
3. Baptismal Record: At the time of baptism, documentation is to be recorded in the parish baptismal records with the appropriate notation of confirmation and first communion. The director may ask for a birth certificate as an aid in obtaining and recording accurate information for the baptismal document.

Where serious doubt remains concerning baptism or its validity, a conditional baptism may be celebrated but this is to be done in a private ceremony and not at a public liturgical assembly of the community. It is to be so recorded in the parish records.

4. Full Communion: Baptism in Another Faith: When a candidate is received into full communion in the Catholic Church, the date of their profession of faith and confirmation are to be recorded in the parish records with the date and place of their baptism noted.
5. Completion of Sacraments of Initiation: Persons baptized in the Catholic Church who are completing the sacraments of initiation as adults must secure a record of baptism prior to receiving confirmation. If the baptism was in a Catholic church other than the church of confirmation, the appropriate record of confirmation is to be sent to the church of baptism.

A bibliography of resources is available through the Diocesan Office of Liturgical Education.

Addendum A
Suggested Initial Interview Form Including Marital Status
Initial Interview for RCIA/OCIA Inquirers

BASIC INFORMATION

Name (First) (Middle) (Last) Maiden name (if applicable)

Home Phone: _____ Work phone: _____ e-mail: _____

BAPTIZED: Y _____ N _____ DENOMINATION: _____

Please check which of the following you are seeking:

_____ To be received into the Church (already baptized but in another faith denomination)

_____ To receive the sacrament of Confirmation

_____ To receive First Communion and First Reconciliation

BAPTISMAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE INQUIRER

Have you been affiliated with a faith community? Yes _____ No _____

What faith? _____ Did you practice the faith? _____

Religious Upbringing as a child:

If baptized, have you celebrated First Communion in the Catholic church? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, give the name and location of the Church _____

Have you been confirmed? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, give name and location of the Church and date _____

Father's Name: _____

Mother's Name: _____

(Mother's maiden name)

Godparent(s) for baptism: _____

Sponsor(s) for Confirmation: _____

Describe your Church education and or background in religion: _____

_____ I have questions to ask the Catholic Church.

_____ I am just looking to see what the Catholic Church has to offer.

_____ I want to become a Catholic.

_____ I am thinking about becoming a Catholic.

_____ I want to update my understanding of my Catholic faith.

_____ I have been asked to be a sponsor/godparent.

Other: _____

What other information about yourself do you feel would be helpful to us? _____

MARITAL STATUS

What is your current marital status?

married single divorced widowed separated engaged other

1. If married, is this your first marriage? Yes No

If married, is this your spouse's first marriage? Yes No

***If no, please list, or attach a list of all previous marriages and explanations of how they ended.

When were you married? (Current marriage) _____

Place of current ceremony: _____

Before whom: priest deacon minister Justice of the Peace

Your religion at the time of the ceremony: _____

Religion of spouse at time of ceremony: _____

If either you or your spouse has been previously married, please complete #2.

2. There is a **previous marriage** on my part which has not yet been examined by the Church.

2.1 There is a **previous marriage** on the part of my spouse which has not yet been examined by the Church.

2.2 Is your previous spouse: still living a Catholic
 previously married before marrying you.

2.3 I have received a decree of nullity by the Catholic Church.
 Date of Decree _____

2.4. My spouse has received a decree of nullity from a previous marriage.
 Date of Decree _____

2.5 There is a **previous marriage** on my part, but at this time I am single.

3. There is no pending marriage in my regard.

If there is a **previous marriage**, and you are currently in another marriage, the **previous marriage** (on your part or your spouse) must first be resolved before you can be received into the church to receive Confirmation or first communion.

To take care of this situation, we need to begin paperwork as soon as possible.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE INTERVIEWER:

Recommendations for beginning the faith journey (type of process and placement within the process): _____

Type of Canonical Process required (if any): _____

Forms given to inquirer on this date: _____

Date for follow-up discussion: _____

Addendum B
Validity of Baptism of Non-Catholic Churches and Communities

According to the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church there are four requirements for the valid administration of the sacrament of baptism: the matter, the form, the intention of the minister and the right disposition of the recipient.

Note: Many Protestant religions have a dedication ceremony or other ceremony which is not baptism. If the church has a dedication ceremony, baptism is generally not conferred until the age of reason or until the approximate age of 13.

Non-Catholic Churches Which Have Valid Baptism

All Eastern non-Catholics, Adventist: Baptism is by immersion with the Trinitarian formula. Baptism is given at the age of reason. **African Methodist Episcopal:** Baptism with water but understands the implications. **Baptists:** Valid baptism at about 13 years of age. No infant baptism. Ceremony of dedication. **Evangelical United Brethren:** Baptism by water seems valid and is generally done by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling. The Trinitarian form is used. Dedication ceremony. **Church of the Brethren:** Baptism is made by triple immersion using the formula in Matthew is not mentioned. The dedication ceremony is not baptism. **Church of God:** Valid baptism. Baptism is conferred by immersion and with a Trinitarian formula when the individual asks for it. There is a public baby dedication with no sacramental significance. **Congregational Church:** Valid baptism. **Disciples of Christ, Disciples and Christians:** Valid baptism. Trinitarian formula used in baptism by immersion at an older age. Dedication service, no infant baptism. **Episcopalians:** Valid baptism. Apparently valid baptism. Old Catholics. **Presbyterian Church; Polish National Church; Reformed Churches:** Apparently valid baptism. **United Church of Christ: (Congregationalists, Evangelists, and Reformed Church).**

Baptism is ordinarily proved by means of a baptismal certificate or a letter from the minister of the church where baptism was celebrated. When it is impossible to obtain documentary evidence, the testimony of one reliable witness suffices. If the person was at least seven years old and had the use of reason when baptized, the oath of the baptized person suffices as proof as long as there is no conflict of interest.

Some Churches with Invalid Baptism or no Baptism

Apostolic Church: Baptism seems to be conferred using the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: "We baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive a gift of the Holy Spirit". No Trinitarian form. However, an affirmative decision has been granted to specific cases in the apostolic church. **Baha'i:** No baptism. **Bohemian Free Thinkers, Christadelphians, Christian community (Rudolf Steiner):** No baptism. **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons):** Baptism invalid. Though water is used and the formula seems the same, there is in fact a fundamental doctrinal disagreement. "There is not a true invocation of the Trinity because the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, according to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not the three persons of the Trinity, but three gods who form one divinity." Thus the form, intent of the minister and the disposition of the recipient are considered invalid (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2001). **Christian Scientists:** No true baptism. For this group, baptism is an individual spiritual experience and not a rite or ceremony performed by an ordained minister or priest. There is no baptismal ritual in the Christian Science Movement. **Church of Divine Science, Jehovah Witnesses:** Invalid baptism. Water is used but no Trinitarian formula. **Masons:** No baptism. **Mormons:** Invalid baptism (see Church of Latter-day Saints above). The **New Church of Mr. Emmanuel Sedenborg** (called the Church of the New Jerusalem in the U.S.), **Pentecostal Churches:** Unitarian formula is used rather than Trinitarian. Baptism is considered necessary for salvation and is done by immersion. **People's Church of Chicago:** **Quakers:** No valid baptism. They observe baptism as an inward work of God rather than an outward rite. Enrollment in Sunday school does not mean baptism. **Salvation Army:** No baptism. **Unitarian Universalist Association:** No valid baptism. They deny the Trinity and Divinity of Jesus.

Islamic: No Christian baptism.

Jewish: No Christian baptism.

Muslim: No Christian baptism.

*STATEMENT OF RCIA CANDIDATE
PETITIONING THE TRIBUNAL FOR A DECREE OF NULLITY

On _____, 20__ I was interviewed by _____,
(Date) (Name of interviewer)

At _____ Church in _____, New Mexico.
(Name of Church) (City)

During the interview, I was informed that it is necessary to obtain a decree of nullity of (my) and (my spouse's) (my fiancé's) previous marriage(s). I understand that the process for a decree of nullity can take 12 months or longer. I also understand that the acceptance of a petition does not guarantee that the decree of nullity will be granted. (A divorced person who has not remarried and is not engaged to be married need not receive a decree of nullity prior to sacramental initiation. However, a decree of nullity would be required if the person wished to remarry after becoming Catholic.)

(For a non-baptized candidate): For these reasons I understand that while I may be admitted to the Period of Evangelization and the Pre-catechumenate and the Period of Catechumenate, I will not be able to participate in the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names or in any of the liturgical rites of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment or receive the sacraments of Christian Initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) until the marital situation is resolved.

(For a candidate validly baptized in another faith): For these reasons, I understand that while I may continue my study and formation toward full Christian Initiation in the Catholic church (profession of faith, confirmation and Eucharist) I may not participate in the celebration of the Call of Continuing Conversion or complete the sacraments of Christian Initiation until the marital situation is resolved.

Because I want to discern a call to membership in the Catholic church and receive the support and prayer of the parish community, I wish to continue my participation in the rite of Christian Initiation of adults (RCIA) process to the extent allowed while awaiting a decision regarding the annulment petition.

Signature of Candidate

Date Signed

Signature of Interviewer

Date Signed

*Original kept by candidate; copy kept in Parish RCIA file.