



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

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**RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS**



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### **Policy on Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**

*Effective 2005*

- I. In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:
  - A. The revised *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (hereafter RCIA) was mandated for use in the U.S. beginning Sept. 1, 1988. Rather than compressing the stages of conversion into a single ritual associated with the moment of baptism, it provides for the ritual celebration of stages at the proper times and for the gradual integration of the person into the Christian community, which is the parish.
    1. The implementation of the RCIA requires the participation of the entire parish community under the leadership of the pastor and his appointed RCIA Director and Team.
    2. The RCIA is the only manner of initiation for unbaptized adults as shown in Part I of the rite.
    3. Part II of the rite includes the baptism of uncatechized children.
  - B. The pastor is the person responsible for the faith formation of the catechumens and candidates for full Communion.
    1. The process for this formation follows the Rite of Christian Initiation and is supported by periods of instruction and liturgical rites.
    2. The topics to be included in the catechetical sessions should include instructions on the creed, the Commandments, the seven sacraments, the moral teachings, and devotion to Mary and the saints.
    3. The instruction should be done by the pastor or by another competent adult catechist with his approval.

4. Consult the *Religious Education Guidelines for Parishes and Schools* for a detailed description of catechetical content.

## II. RCIA Part I: Unbaptized Adults

- A. The Code of Canon Law requires that, before an adult is baptized, he or she is to be admitted to the catechumenate and, to the extent possible, be led through the various steps of the RCIA (c. 851, 1°).
  1. The candidate must be sufficiently instructed in the truths of the faith and Christian life.
  2. Moreover, he or she must show forth evidence of living as a Christian while still a catechumen and must show sorrow for sins.
    - a. The period of the catechumenate ideally extends through a complete liturgical year, beginning before Lent and concluding with the Easter season of the following year (*National Statutes*<sup>1</sup>, p. 6).
    - b. However, at the discretion of the Bishop, on the basis of the spiritual preparation of the candidate, the period of the catechumenate may, in particular cases, be shortened.
      - i. In altogether extraordinary cases, the catechumenate may be completed all at once (RCIA 77).
      - ii. 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, complete rite (e.g. sickness, old age, change of residence, military deployment, long absence for travel) (RCIA 331-339).
      - iii. The Bishop will consider exceptional cases when they are brought to him (e.g. military deployment).

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter NS

B. Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults

1. Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

- a. This is time of no fixed duration or structure for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values.
- b. It should include initial interviewing of the inquirers to determine their intention.
- c. First Step: *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*

This is the liturgical rite 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.

2. Period of the Catechumenate

- a. This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumen's faith and conversion to God; celebration of the Word and Prayers of Exorcism and Blessing are meant to assist the process.
- b. 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 catechumen's readiness for the sacraments of initiation, and the catechumens, now the elect, express their intention to receive these sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

3. Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- a. This is the time immediately preceding the initiation of the elect, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil
- b. 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.

c. 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.

4. Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

- a. 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 (RCIA, Part I).

III. Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

- A. In order to signify clearly the interrelation or coalescence of those three sacraments that are required for full Christian initiation (c. 842, § 2), adult candidates, including children of catechetical age (seven (7) years or older), are to receive baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist in a single Eucharistic celebration, whether at the Easter Vigil or, if necessary, at some other time (NS 14).
- B. The rite of anointing with the oil of catechumens is to be omitted in the baptism of adults at the Easter Vigil (NS 16; RCIA 98).
- C. Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and, therefore, provision should be made for its more frequent use in the baptism of adults (NS 17).
- D. Because deacons do not possess the faculty to administer the sacrament of confirmation and because catechized adults should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist in a single ceremony, deacons should not baptize adults except in cases of extreme emergency (c. 97, § 2; 852; 865, § 2; 866).

IV. Marriage Cases of RCIA Candidates

- A. Upon accepting an inquirer into the parish RCIA process, the candidate's marital status is to be investigated by the priest or deacon.
1. If a candidate is in an irregular marriage or desires to enter a marriage that would be irregular due to either the candidate's previous marriage or the intended spouse's previous marriage, the candidate is eligible to be admitted into the RCIA process, but only into the pre-catechumenate and catechumenate periods.

- a. The catechumen cannot enter the rite of election while in an irregular marriage.
- B. The candidate's marriage or intended marriage should be canonically clarified upon admittance to the RCIA process and the necessary annulment/dissolution processed so that as much time as possible can be given for the canonical process.
1. Candidates should be made well aware that they are unable to enter the rite of election or the sacraments of initiation until their marriage cases are resolved.
  2. They also should be made aware of a possible negative judgment by the tribunal.
- C. The resolution of marriage cases for RCIA candidates or their spouses or intended spouses takes time, and the petition is heard in turn according to date of acceptance.
1. A case cannot be pushed ahead of others because the person is an RCIA candidate.
- D. A divorced person who is not presently married, and has no immediate marriage plans, should not be kept from sacramental initiation upon completion of their catechesis.
- V. RCIA Part II: Exceptional Circumstances
- A. Rite of Christian Initiation for Children of a Catechetical Age (Chapter 1)
1. This form of the rite of Christian Initiation is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age (have completed seven (7) years of age).
  2. They seek Christian Initiation either at the direction of their parents or guardians or, with parental permission, on their own initiative.
  3. Such children are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith and of recognizing an obligation in conscience but they cannot yet be treated as adults because, at this stage of their lives, they are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings (RCIA 252).

4. The Christian Initiation of these children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need.
  - a. The process of initiation thus must be adapted both to their spiritual progress, that is, to the children's growth in faith, and to the catechetical instruction they receive.
  - b. Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation can be extended over several years, if need be, before they receive the sacraments (RCIA 253).
5. Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian Initiation, to be adults (c. 852, § 1), their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual.
  - a. They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil together with the older catechumens (NS 18).
6. A child is considered to have achieved a sufficient use of reason upon completion of seven (7) years of age (c. 97, § 2).
7. The children's progress in the formation they receive depends on the help and example of their companions and on the influence of their parents. Both these factors should therefore be taken into account.
  - a. Since the children to be initiated often belong to a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for confirmation and Eucharist, their initiation progresses gradually and within the supportive setting of this group of companions.
  - b. It is hoped that the children will also receive help and a good example in living the Christian life from their parents, whose permission is required for the children to be initiated. The period of initiation will also provide a good opportunity for the family to have contact with the priest and catechist (RCIA 254).
8. Consult the *Religious Education Guidelines for Parishes and Schools* for a detailed description of catechetical content.

- B. Preparation for Baptized, Uncatechized Adults (Chapter 4)
1. This rite concerns adults who were baptized as infants either as Roman Catholics or as members of another Christian community but did not receive further catechetical formation or, consequently, the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist.
    - a. Even though these adults have not yet heard the message of Christ, their status differs from that of catechumens, since by baptism, they have already become members of the Church and children of God.
      - i. Hence, their conversion is built on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop (RCIA 400).
  2. For the most part the plan of catechesis corresponds to the one laid down for catechumens.
    - a. In the process of catechesis, it should be taken into account that these adults have a special status because they are already baptized (RCIA 402).
  3. Although it is not generally recommended, if the sacramental initiation of such candidates is completed with confirmation and Eucharist on the same occasion as the celebration of the full Christian initiation of candidates for baptism, the condition and status of those already baptized should be carefully respected and distinguished (NS 26).
  4. The celebration of the sacrament of penance with candidates for confirmation and Eucharist is to be carried out at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of confirmation and the Eucharist.
    - a. As part of the formation of such candidates, they should be encouraged in the frequent celebration of this sacrament (NS 27).
  5. Regarding the faculty to administer the sacrament of confirmation, see *Confirmation* (Sec. O-III).
  6. Only the ordinary minister of Confirmation, that is the Bishop, has the faculty to confirm:
    - a. In the case of a baptized Catholic who, though raised in the faith, was never confirmed (NS 28).
    - b. In the case of baptized, uncatechized Catholics.

7. In order to maintain the interrelationship and sequence of confirmation and Eucharist as defined in Canon 842, § 2, priests who lack the faculty to confirm should seek it from the diocesan Bishop, who may, in accord with Canon 884, § 1, grant the faculty if he judges it necessary (NS 29).
8. If delegation to confirm baptized Catholics at the Easter Vigil is deemed appropriate, the pastor should state in writing his reasons and forward them to the diocesan Bishop.

C. Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion of the Catholic Church (Chapter 5)

1. This is a liturgical rite by which a person baptized in a separated ecclesial community is received, according to the Latin rite, into the full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA 473).
2. In the case of Eastern Orthodox Christians who enter into the fullness of Catholic Communion, no liturgical rite is required, but simply a profession of Catholic faith, even if such persons are permitted, in virtue of recourse to the Apostolic See, to transfer to the Latin Rite (RCIA 474).
3. Anything that would equate candidates for reception with those who are catechumens is to be absolutely avoided (RCIA 477).
4. In all cases, discernment should be made regarding the length of catechetical formation required for each individual candidate for reception into the full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA 478; NS 30).
5. One who was born and baptized outside the visible Communion of the Catholic Church is not required to make an abjuration of heresy, but simply a profession of faith (RCIA 479).
6. The sacrament of baptism cannot be repeated and therefore, it is not permitted to confer it conditionally, unless there is a reasonable doubt about the fact (no record or witness) or validity (use of water and Trinitarian formula) of the baptism already conferred. (RCIA 480; NS 37).

7. Those who have been baptized but have received relatively little Christian upbringing may participate in the elements of catechumenal formation so far as necessary and appropriate, but should not take part in rites intended for the unbaptized catechumens.
  - a. They may, however, participate in celebrations of the Word together with catechumens.
  - b. They may be included with uncatechized adult Catholics in such rites as may be appropriate among those included or mentioned in [section V.B: Preparation for Baptized, Uncatechized Adults](#) (Page L-8) above.
  - c. The rites of presentation of the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the book of the Gospels are not proper except for those who have received no Christian instruction and formation.
  - d. Those baptized persons who have lived as Christians and need only instruction in the Catholic tradition and a degree of probation within the Catholic community should not be asked to undergo a full program parallel to the catechumenate (NS 31).
  
8. It is preferable that reception into full Communion not take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism, possible misunderstanding of or even negative reflection upon the sacrament of baptism celebrated in another Church or ecclesial community, or any perceived triumphalism in the liturgical welcome into the Catholic Eucharistic community (NS 33).
  - a. In fact, their reception can occur at any time during the year, though a Sunday or the Easter season are preferred liturgical times.
  
9. Nevertheless if there are both catechumens to be baptized and baptized Christians to be received into full Communion at the Easter Vigil, for pastoral reasons and in view of the vigil's being the principal annual celebration of the Church, the combined rite is to be followed: "Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church."
  - a. Clear distinction should be maintained during the celebration between candidates for sacramental initiation and candidates for reception into full Communion; ecumenical sensitivities should be carefully respected (NS 34).

10. The celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation with candidates for reception into full Communion is to be carried out at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of the rite of reception.
  - a. As part of the formation of such candidates, they should be encouraged in the frequent celebration of this sacrament (NS 35).

## VI. RCIA: Related Issues

### A. Validity of Baptism in Separated Christian Communities

#### 1. Eastern Orthodox Christians and Those Equated with Eastern Christians

Baptism in other Christian churches is presumed valid by Roman Catholics, and any practice which might be interpreted as "rebaptism" must be avoided.

#### 2. Non-Eastern Christians (Protestants):

- a. In determining the validity of the baptism conferred in other Christian communions, account must be taken of matter, form and sufficient intention (*Ecumenical General Directory*<sup>2</sup>, p. 4).

- b. Matter and Form

- i. Baptism by immersion, pouring or sprinkling together with the Trinitarian formula is of itself valid.

- With regard to all Christians, consideration should be given to the danger of invalidity when baptism is administered by sprinkling, especially of several people at once. Therefore, if the rituals and liturgical books or established customs of a church of community prescribe one of these ways of baptizing, evidence is required that the minister of baptism was faithful to the norms of that church. This can be in the form of a baptismal certificate with the name of the minister showing that the minister used the approved ritual for baptism.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter EGD

c. Faith and Intention

Sufficient intention is to be presumed in the ministers who conferred the baptism unless there is a serious reason to question the desire “to do what Christians do” (EGD 4).

d. The Application of the Matter

Where doubt arises about the application of the matter, both reverence for the sacrament and respect for the ecclesial nature of the other communities demand that a serious investigation of the community’s practice and/or circumstances of the particular baptism be made before any judgment is passed on the validity of a baptism by reason of its manner of administration.

e. When, because of serious doubt, conditional baptism is conferred, the meaning of and the reason for the conditional baptism should be explained as well as the fact that it is not a re-baptism.

i. Further, the baptism should be administered privately with a minimum of notice in the simple form. (EGD 4; RCIA 7)

f. See *Appendix A: Information Concerning Validity of Baptism of Non-Catholic Churches and Communities* (Page L-14) for information concerning validity of baptism of non-Catholic churches.

B. Validity of Confirmation in Separated Christian Communities

1. Eastern Christians (Orthodox) and Those Equated with Eastern Christians:

Confirmation is valid; hence, the candidate is not re-confirmed.

2. Non-Eastern Christians (Protestants):

Some ecclesial communities have a confirmation rite (e.g. Episcopalians and Lutherans). These are not valid in the Catholic Church; candidates from these churches are to be confirmed.

C. Recordings of Sacraments

1. Elect who have received full initiation (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist): Their names are recorded in the baptismal register with all pertinent information.
  - a. Notations are also made in the confirmation and Eucharist registers.
2. The Baptized Christian Who Enters into Full Communion (Profession of Faith, Confirmation, Eucharist):
  - a. Their names are recorded in the profession of faith register or, in its absence, the baptismal register under the date of profession of faith.
  - b. The baptismal information (date and place) should be recorded with all other notations.
  - c. Notations are also made in the confirmation and Eucharist registers.
3. Periodically the situation will arise where parents who have had a child baptized in a non-Catholic church want their child to become Catholic. One reason this could occur is when the parent is brought into the Church through initiation.
  - a. If the child is under the catechetical age (seven (7) years) the parent(s) make a profession of faith for the child.
    - i. Once made, the parish records in the Baptismal Record of the parish the information on the child's baptism and profession of faith.
    - ii. Once recorded, a profession of faith certificate is issued to the parents and the Catholic parish becomes the place of sacramental record for the child.

VII. Consult the tribunal for updates or additions/deletions to this section.

## **Appendix A: Information Concerning Validity of Baptism of Non-Catholic Churches and Communities**

NOTE: Many Protestant communities have a dedication ceremony or other ceremony that is not a baptism. If the church has a dedication ceremony, their baptism is generally not conferred until the age of reason or until the approximate age of thirteen (13) years.

### Adventists

Water baptism is by immersion with the Trinitarian formula. Baptism is given at the age of reason. A dedication ceremony is given to infants. The two ceremonies are separate.

Valid Baptism if the Trinitarian formula is used with immersion. The dedication ceremony given to infants is an invalid Baptism.

### African Methodist Episcopal

Baptism with water by sprinkling, pouring, or dunking. Trinitarian form is used. There is an open door ceremony that is not baptism.

Valid Baptism except when sprinkling is used.

### Amish and Mennonites

No infant baptism. The rite of baptism is valid.

### Anglican

Valid baptism.

### Apostolic Church

An affirmative decision has been granted in one case involving “baptism” in the Apostolic church. The minister baptized according to the form found in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2 and not in the Gospel of St. Matthew. The form used was “We baptize you into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive a gift of the Holy Ghost.” No Trinitarian formula was used.

Valid if pouring or immersion are used with the Trinitarian formula.

### The Assembly of God

The dedication ceremony is possible. Infants are not customarily baptized. Baptism through water takes place when a person is mature enough to understand its implications. The method of baptism is not outlined but appears valid.

### Baptist

No infant baptism. There is a ceremony of dedication. Valid baptism takes place at the approximate age of 13.

### Evangelical United Brethren

Members are not received into this church unless they have been baptized. Assurance of baptism is required before membership is extended. There is a dedication ceremony. Baptism by water seems valid and is generally done by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling. The Trinitarian formula is used.

It is a valid baptism except when sprinkling is used.

### Church of the Brethren

Baptism is made by triple immersion. The formula of Matthew is used.

Valid baptism.

### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)

Invalid: According to the decision of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in a private response to a diocesan inquiry: “the Catholic Church does not recognize the baptism of Mormons” (1989).

### Church of God

There is a public baby dedication with no sacramental significance. Baptism is conferred later by immersion and with a Trinitarian formula. Baptism is conferred when the individual asks for it.

Valid baptism.

### Christian and Missionary Alliance

No belief in infant baptism, but only to those who give evidence of repentance and new birth. Baptism is conferred before the age of twelve (12). It is conferred by immersion. It is given upon personal confession of Christ as Savior of this person. The formula is not given.

If the Trinitarian formula is not used, the Baptism is invalid.

### Christian Reformed Church in North America

Valid baptism.

Christian Scientist

The mother church of all Christian Science churches states: "Baptism is an individual spiritual experience. It is not a religious rite or ceremony performed by an ordained minister or priest."

No true baptism.

Church of Divine Science

Invalid baptism.

Congregational Church

Valid baptism.

Episcopalian

Valid baptism.

Evangelical Churches

Valid baptism.

Jehovah's Witness

Water is used but no Trinitarian formula. Invalid baptism.

Lutheran Church

Valid baptism.

Methodist Church

Valid baptism.

Liberal Catholic Church

Valid baptism.

Masons

No baptism.

Church of the Nazarene

Infants are baptized or dedicated according to the wish of the parents. The form is Trinitarian. The matter is not mentioned. The dedication ceremony is not baptism. Adult baptism is valid.

Old Catholics

Valid baptism.

Pentecostal Churches

Baptism is considered necessary for salvation and is done by immersion. Because a Unitarian formula is used, baptism is invalid.

Polish National Church

Valid baptism.

Presbyterian Church

Valid baptism.

Quakers (Society of Friends)

Enrollment on Sunday school rolls does not mean baptism. The Friends church does not observe baptism as an outward rite, but rather an inward work of God. There are no baptism records. Baptism is spiritual and “in no way strengthened by the application of water.”

Invalid baptism.

Reformed Church in America

Valid baptism.

Salvation Army

No baptism.

St. Augustine Orthodox Catholic Church

This congregation in Round Rock is part of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Catholic Church and the validity of their ordination is in doubt. While their Baptism is valid, anyone who was Chrismated in the church needs to be confirmed when they become a Catholic. They are more closely associated with the Anglican Church.

United Church of Christ (Congregationalist, Evangelist and Reformed Church)

Valid baptism.

Unitarian Universalist Association (Church)

Universalists and Unitarians voted to merge in 1960. There is a denial of the Trinity and divinity of Jesus. No valid baptism in either church.