

Sorting It All Out: Children and Adults in the Initiation Process

“Each year I think I know more about the Rite of Initiation than I did the year before. Then someone comes to our Inquiry group with a background different from anyone else I’ve met, and I realize there’s so much more to learn!”

Does this sound familiar? Well, take heart, and read on. Knowing what to do in all the various circumstances of “who’s who in the initiation process” is not so difficult. There is basic information you need right from the start so you can minister better with the individual: Is the person validly baptized? (If so, remember: take care to honor that baptism no matter where it was.) What do you do with children? Has the person been catechized? (Someone who has received First Communion and Confirmation is considered to be at least minimally catechized.) Is the person validly married? Has the person been married before, anywhere? Has the person’s spouse been married before, anywhere? If the person is Orthodox, remember that the Orthodox are fully initiated at Baptism.

The goal of all our initiation work is not just baptism, but conversion, that “transformation of mind and heart which places Jesus Christ at the center of one’s life.” The stories that follow present nine different people who seek membership in the church. These scenarios are offered to help you recognize “who’s who in the initiation process,” and support the catechumen and candidate on their journey to conversion.

1. An unbaptized adult or older adolescent

Stanley, an unbaptized adult, inquires about becoming a Catholic. He has had no catechetical formation, but believes God may be calling him to the Church. After an appropriate period of inquiry, Stanley is admitted to the catechumenate.

Rite used: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (RCIA #41-68). His name is entered in the Register of Catechumens which is kept in the parish.

Title: Catechumen

Definition: an unbaptized person, seeking full initiation in the Catholic Church.

Age: Older teen - adult

Process: After an appropriate pastoral formation in the parish catechumenate, including dismissals, prayers, anointings, and catechesis (RCIA #75), and lasting at least one full liturgical year (NS6), Stanley would be admitted to the sacraments of initiation, i.e., Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, normally celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

Minister: The parish priest is the presiding minister.

Faculty to Confirm: No delegation is required from the Chancellor’s Office.

Record Keeping: The administration of the sacraments is entered in these parish registers: Catechumens (at the time of Acceptance), Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion, and a notation of Marriage.

References: RCIA Part 1; National Statutes 1-24

2. Unbaptized children, ages 8 and 11, seeking baptism

Kim and Thomas, ages 8 and 11, are unbaptized children who come for Baptism. They are brought to the rectory by their parents, who realize now their responsibility in bringing their children for sacraments. After an appropriate period of inquiry, which often included the parents, Kim and Thomas are admitted to the catechumenate adapted for children.

Rite used: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (RCIA 41-74). This rite may be celebrated with the adults who are being received into the Order of Catechumens, or separately with just a group of children (260-276). Their names are entered in the parish Register of Catechumens. During the period of the catechumenate they may celebrate any of the Rites Belonging to the Catechumenate (RCIA 81-105). At the proper time, Kim and Thomas participate in the diocesan Rite of Election.

Title: Catechumen

Definition: Unbaptized, uncatechized children of catechetical age.

Age: Catechetical age (over seven years of age) When children of catechetical age or the age of discretion are baptized, Confirmation and First Eucharist must also be celebrated at the same time. (RCIA 215, Canon 866).

Process: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, adapted for children (called RCIA, not CICCA). Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist will be celebrated together at the Easter Vigil after an appropriate length of time. These children experience a period of formation in word, worship and mission at a level appropriately adapted to the age and faith development of the child. They may be dismissed from the Eucharist for their own Breaking Open of the Word. Catechetical formation follows right away or at some time during the week. This formation is usually at least one full year, most often longer depending on the development of the child, and the situation of his or her peers (RCIA 256). As long as the liturgical rites of the catechumenate are prepared for and celebrated, catechesis can take place with their peer groups.

Time of Celebration: Normally the Easter Vigil

Minister: The parish priest is presider.

Faculty to Confirm: No delegation is needed.

Record Keeping: Thomas and Kim's names are entered in these parish registers: Catechumenate, Baptism, Confirmation and Communion

References: RCIA, Part II: 1, 4; NS 18, 19; Canon 852.1, 866.

3. Adult or older adolescent validly baptized non-Catholic, but who is uncatechized.

Lauren is 31 and a validly baptized Presbyterian. As a child, her attendance at Sunday school classes was very irregular, and she does not attend church except on rare occasions. She now expresses a desire to become a Roman Catholic. After an appropriate time of inquiry, Lauren becomes a candidate for reception into full communion.

Rite used: Rite of Welcoming the Candidates [RCIA #411-433]. If this rite takes place together with the acceptance of unbaptized people into the Order of Catechumens, the combined rite is used [#505-529].

Title: Candidate for Full Communion

Definition: a validly baptized non-Catholic who wishes to be fully initiated into the Roman Catholic Church.

Age: Older teen - adult

Process: After an appropriate pastoral formation adapted to her needs, modeled on the catechumenate (and perhaps even as part of the parish catechumenate), Confirmation and Eucharist are celebrated together whenever Lauren is ready. At this time, Lauren is received into full communion of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus completes her initiation.

Time of Celebration: While it may be done at the Easter Vigil, it is preferable that the celebration of Reception into Full Communion take place on an appropriate Sunday, when she is ready.

Minister: The parish priest is the presiding minister.

Faculty to Confirm: No delegation is required.

Record Keeping: The administration of these sacraments is entered in the following official parish registers: Baptism (with a notation of Reception, non-Catholic baptism and the minister), Confirmation, First Communion and a notation of Marriage.

References: RCIA Part II: 4,5; NS 30-37

4. An adult or older adolescent, baptized Catholic but uncatechized.

José, aged 18, is a baptized Catholic, but has never received Confirmation or First Communion. He vaguely remembers attending a few CCD classes, but has no catechetical formation. Jack feels the lack of spiritual focus in his life, and wants to reclaim his roots as a practicing Roman Catholic. After an appropriate time of inquiry, Jack becomes a candidate.

Rite used: Rite of Welcoming the Candidates [#411-433]. If this rite takes place together with the acceptance of unbaptized people into the Order of Catechumens, the combined rite is used [#505-529].

Title: Candidate

Definition: a person baptized Catholic, usually as an infant, with little or no catechetical formation. This person has not celebrated either First Communion or Confirmation

Age: older teen - adult

Process: After an appropriate pastoral formation adapted to his needs and modeled on the catechumenate (perhaps as part of the parish catechumenate), Confirmation and Eucharist can be celebrated together at Pentecost. If José's preparation takes place as part of the parish catechumenate, he may receive these sacraments at the Easter Vigil. Depending on circumstances, a third option is to celebrate Confirmation and First Communion whenever José is prepared to receive the sacraments.

Minister: The parish priest is the presiding minister.

Faculty to Confirm: Bishop DiLorenzo grants priests the faculty to confirm adult Catholics.

Record Keeping: José's name is entered in the parish registers of Confirmation and First Communion, with notification to the church of baptism.

References: RCIA Part II: 4; NS 25-29, 31

5. An adult or older adolescent, baptized non-Catholic, catechized in their faith.

Francene is a baptized and catechized Episcopalian. She attends the Episcopal church with some regularity, and knows her faith. Moved by the example of her Catholic neighbors, she desires to become a Catholic. After an appropriate time of inquiry, Francene becomes a candidate for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Rite used: Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (#473-498). This includes Confirmation and First Communion.

Title: Candidate for Full Communion

Definition: a validly baptized non-Catholic seeking reception and full communion with the Roman Catholic Church

Process: Pastoral formation includes both doctrinal and spiritual preparation adapted to the individual's needs for reception into full communion and a deeper adherence to the Church. The length of preparation is determined by the amount of formation needed and is not necessarily a part of the catechumenate process. "No greater burden than necessary is required" (RCIA #473).

Time of Celebration: Any Sunday Eucharist throughout the year, though the Easter season is probably most appropriate time.

Minister: The parish priest is the presiding minister.

Faculty to Confirm: No delegation is required.

Record Keeping: Francene's name is entered in the parish registers of Baptism (with notation of non-Catholic baptism and minister), Confirmation and First Communion, and notation of Marriage.

References: RCIA Part II: 5; NS 30-33; 35-37

6. A baptized, catechized Catholic, older adolescent or adult, seeking Confirmation.

Tran, 17 years old, is a baptized, catechized Catholic, who has made his First Communion. He has not been confirmed. He is seeking Confirmation now. After an interview with a parish priest, or with the parish coordinator, he becomes a candidate for Confirmation.

Rite used: Rite of Confirmation

Title: Candidate for Confirmation

Definition: Any Catholic who has celebrated Baptism and First Eucharist is considered to be at least minimally catechized. They come forward seeking Confirmation.

Age: older teen - adult

Process: This is not necessarily a part of the catechumenate process (RCIA). Usually a short, focused preparation, preceded by some foundational catechesis is all that is necessary.

Time of Celebration: Pentecost

Minister: Any parish priest can be the presiding minister at Pentecost.

Faculty to Confirm: Bishop DiLorenzo grants the faculty to confirm adult Catholics. It is recommended that it be done at a time other than at the Easter Vigil, preferably Pentecost.

Record Keeping: The names of those confirmed are entered in the Confirmation Register of the parish, and the church of Baptism is to be notified. *References:* Rite of Confirmation.

7. A validly baptized non-Catholic but uncatechized child of 10 years of age

Geralyn was validly baptized in the Methodist church but is uncatechized. She is now 10 years old and she, together with her mother, wishes to become Catholic. After an appropriate period of inquiry on the part of *Geralyn*, her parents, and the parish team, *Geralyn* begins the process of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Rite used: Rite of Welcoming Baptized but Previously Uncatechized Adults Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist (RCIA #411-433) may be used if appropriate.

Title: Candidate for Full Communion

Definition: Validly baptized, uncatechized non-Catholic child who wishes to become Roman Catholic.

Age: Catechetical age (7 and up)

Process: This child should experience a period of formation in word, worship and mission as described in the RCIA (Part II) at a level adapted to the age and faith development of the child. She may be dismissed from the Eucharist for Breaking Open of the Word (possibly with other young people in the same situation). Catechetical formation follows this, or is done at some time during the week. This formation is usually at least one full year, or longer, depending on the development of the child, and the situation of his or her peers. It is most appropriate for her catechetical formation to take place with a peer group.

Time of Celebration: *Geralyn* celebrates Reception into Full Communion with the Catholic Church (which includes sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist, cf. NS 35) at an appropriate time during the liturgical year, possibly at the Easter Vigil.

Minister: The parish priest is the presider.

Faculty to Confirm: No delegation is required.

Record Keeping: *Geralyn*'s name is entered in the parish registers of Baptism (with a notation of Reception into Full Communion, non-Catholic baptism and the minister), Confirmation and First Communion.

References: RCIA, Part II: 1,4,5, (c.f. RCIA 400 and 478); NS 30-37.

8. Validly baptized and catechized non-Catholic child of 12 years of age

Charles, aged 12, was baptized in the Lutheran tradition. He is catechized and attends the local Lutheran church. Together with his parents, *Charles* has asked to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. After an appropriate time of inquiry, on the part of *Charles* himself, his parents, and the church, catechesis for his reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church begins.

Rite used: Rite of Reception into Full Communion of the Catholic Church

Title: Candidate for Full Communion

Definition: a child of catechetical age, validly baptized in another tradition, and catechized in that tradition.

Age: 7 and above

Process: Adapted to the individual needs and the prior formation experience of the child. Since *Charles* and his family are catechized already, he can simply be received into the church and placed in the religious formation program of the parish.

Time of Celebration: Any Sunday Eucharist. Confirmation and First Eucharistic are celebrated at the same Mass, after the simple profession of faith. Later on, at the time his peers are confirmed, he can take part in all the preparatory work, and at the ceremony, be presented to the bishop for a blessing.

Minister: The parish priest is the presider.

Faculty to Confirm: No delegation is required.

Record Keeping: *Charles*' name is entered into the parish registers of Baptism (with notation of Reception into Full Communion, non-Catholic baptism and minister), Confirmation and First Communion

References: RCIA Part II: 1,5; NS 18, 19, 30, 32-37

9. Validly baptized and catechized Orthodox person, of catechetical age and up

Sophia, aged 25, was fully initiated as a member of the Greek Orthodox Church. She is catechized and attends the local Orthodox Church. She now wishes to become a member of the Catholic Church. After an appropriate time of inquiry on the part of Eugenia and the church, catechesis for her reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church begins.

Rite used: Rite of Reception into Full Communion of the Catholic Church, RCIA Part II: #491, 492.

Title: Candidate.

Definition: a person of catechetical age, validly baptized in the Orthodox Church, and catechized in that tradition.

Age: 7 and above

Process: Since *Sophia* is Eastern Orthodox, she will be received into the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church.

After a suitable liturgical and doctrinal preparation, *Sophia* is only obligated to make a simple profession of faith in order to be received into the Catholic Church (RCIA #491, 492) as she was fully initiated at the time of Baptism (baptism, chrismation/confirmation, and Eucharist).

Time of Celebration: Any Sunday Eucharist throughout the year.

Minister: The parish priest is the presiding minister.

Faculty to Confirm: *Sophia* is not to be confirmed again since she was fully initiated at Baptism.

Record Keeping: *Sophia*'s name is entered into the parish registers of Baptism (with notation of Reception into Full Communion with notation of non-Catholic baptism and minister), Confirmation and First Communion. It is also to be noted that she is received into whichever Eastern Catholic Church corresponds to the one of her Orthodox Baptism.

Notes:

1) When a member of an Orthodox church becomes a Catholic, that person is received into the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church. For example, if a Romanian Orthodox person wants to become Catholic, he/she enters the Romanian Catholic Church; a Ukrainian Orthodox person enters the Ukrainian Catholic Church. For more complete information, please contact the Chancery.

2) An individual might request a change in Rite, that is, to be received into the Roman Catholic Church rather than the corresponding Eastern church. This request also goes to the Chancery.

3) The Orthodox view of divorce and annulment differs substantially from that of the Roman Catholic Church. It is important to keep this in mind when doing the preliminary interview. For more complete information, please contact the Chancery.

References: Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) Canon 897; RCIA #474

Conclusion

Not every conceivable situation can be thought of beforehand, and so these “inquirers” are but a few of the folks who might come knocking at your door. Their stories are to give you a method with which to think about initiation. Further help with thinking about “who’s who” is available from the Office of Worship, from the members of the Diocesan Joint Committee for the RCIA, at regional RCIA Study Days, and in these books:

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. National Conference of Catholic Bishops

The RCIA Transforming the Church. Thomas H. Morris (Paulist, 1997, revised)

One At The Table. The Reception of Baptized Christians. Ronald Oakham, et al. (Liturgy Training Publications, 1995).

A Child’s Journey. The Christian Initiation of Children. Rita Burns Senseman. (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1998)

Year-Round Catechumenate. Mary Birmingham (Liturgy Training Publications, 2002)

The official parish registers mentioned (Record Keeping) can be purchased from religious goods stores. The Book of the Elect is a liturgical book, reserved to the bishop at the Rite of Election.