

II. CELEBRATION OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

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A. INTRODUCTION

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are intimately related. A combined celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion, in that order, is the norm for Christian initiation. These guidelines are rooted in official liturgical texts which implement the conciliar documents and the revised Code of Canon Law. They are meant to serve as a resource for parish guidelines. Each faith community is expected to adapt these guidelines to reflect the specific needs, conditions and self-perception of the local parish community.

1. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is the only ritual to be used (*RCIA*, Decree 4) in the following circumstances:
 - a. The Baptism of adults (*RCIA* Part I);
 - b. The Baptism of children who have reached catechetical age (about the age of seven (*RCIA* Part II, Chapter 1);
 - c. The Baptism of adults or children of catechetical age in exceptional circumstances (*RCIA* Part III, Chapter 2);
 - d. The Baptism of adults or children of catechetical age in danger of death (*RCIA* Part II, Chapter 3);
 - e. The preparation of baptized but uncatechized (adult) Catholics for Confirmation and/or Eucharist (*RCIA* Part II, Chapter 4);
 - f. The reception into full communion of non-Catholic adults and children of catechetical age (*RCIA* Part II, Chapter 5);
 - g. The preparation of such candidates for reception when they are not catechized (*RCIA* Part II, Chapter 4).

In these circumstances no other pastoral procedures are to be used. Norms for ritual adaptation and exceptional circumstances are found within the rite itself.

2. Particular law for the dioceses of the United States is expressed in the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* which can be found in the back of the *RCIA* ritual book. These Statutes are to be observed in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.
3. Pastoral ministers are challenged to be attentive to the special needs of persons with disabilities and those from minority cultures so that their welcome and formation will be complete and adapted to their circumstances.
4. The family is the primary context for human and Christian formation. Hence, its unique and essential role in the initiation process is to be respected. Parents and other family members are to be offered support and encouragement as they share the message, spirit, values and traditions of the Catholic Church.
5. The unified vision of the initiation process expressed in this document is *the* vision of the Church. Though sacraments have often been treated as separate events, communities are now challenged to embrace the whole scope of initiation in its many forms.

From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages...essential elements will always 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 (CCC 1229).

6. Since the ministry of the catechumenate is concerned with welcoming people to the sacraments of initiation, it is to be kept distinct from other parochial ministries such as reconciling the alienated or inactive Catholics and general adult enrichment. In other words, the RCIA process is not the appropriate place for those mentioned in the previous sentence.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The following summary statement has been prepared as a reference guide. It addresses various pastoral situations and indicates the pastoral care required for each. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is a restoration of the catechumenate process for the full sacramental initiation of unbaptized adults into the Catholic Church. The experience of many pastoral ministers has been that a number of people who come to their communities are already baptized in another Christian community; others are baptized but uncatechized Roman Catholics. Adaptations for each of the situations is provided in the rite. Roman Catholics who have been inactive or alienated from the community and wish to return are not part of the initiation process.

I. ALL UNBAPTIZED ADULTS

- Total Catechumenate process
- Participation in the Rite of Election
- Full initiation by pastor or parochial vicar at the Easter Vigil
(National Statutes for the Catechumenate, #10).
- Priests who do not exercise a pastoral office but participate in a catechumenate program require a mandate from the diocesan bishop, if they are to baptize adults (NSC #12).

II. ADULTS BAPTIZED IN ANOTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION

- Sacramental Catechesis
- Call to Continuing Conversion
- Celebration of Reconciliation prior to Rite of Reception
(RCIA #479, 482).
- Reception into Full Communion by the pastor or parochial vicar,
usually during the Easter Season (NSC #32, #33).

III. BAPTIZED ROMAN CATHOLIC ADULTS WHO ARE UNCATECHIZED

- Principles of RCIA apply (RCIA #400-410).
- Ideally formation process would be separate from that for catechumens.
- Call to Continuing Conversion
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (RCIA #408).
- Reception into Full Communion during the Easter Season when they renew their Baptismal promises and celebrate the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist (NSC #32, 33).
- In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, priests who have the faculty to baptize may confirm
 - a) baptized Roman Catholics whom they readmit to the Church after apostasy from the faith;
 - b) baptized Roman Catholics who through no fault of their own have been instructed in a non-Catholic religion or adhered to a non-Catholic religion (Canon 883 §2 & NSC #28).

- c) baptized adult Catholics who without fault have never put their faith into practice, provided that they have been part of a catechumenal process consisting of catechesis suited to their needs, are involved in a community of the faithful and have participated in the liturgical rites of the Church (RCIA #400-433).

IV . BAPTIZED, PRACTICING ROMAN CATHOLICS SEEKING CONFIRMATION ONLY

- Sacramental catechesis
- Some aspects of the catechumenate process may be appropriate
- Participation in Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion is NOT APPROPRIATE
- Confirmation celebrated by the bishop
 - a) with parish Confirmation class
 - b) at special celebration of Catholic adults
- If these adults have journeyed through the catechumenate process, the pastor or parochial vicar may confirm them with baptized persons being received into the church.

V. BAPTIZED INACTIVE AND ALIENATED CATHOLICS

- A separate pastoral process needs to be established for the inactive and alienated Roman Catholics
- The inactive and alienated have specific concerns and questions that have nothing to do with initiation
- A process modeled somewhat on the RCIA is ideal.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated prior to the Holy Thursday Liturgy with those returning to the Church at this time (PS #37).

VI. FULLY INITIATED CATHOLIC SEEKING UPDATING AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

- The Catechumenate process is INAPPROPRIATE
- Parish programs for adult formation are needed
- Contact the Office of Faith Formation for more information.

VII. CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE (Age 7 to 14)

- A model for initiation for unbaptized children who have reached catechetical age is provided in the RCIA ritual (RCIA #252f).
- The structure of the process is similar to adult initiation (NSC #18).
- Celebration of the sacraments of initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, takes place at the Easter Vigil. No special faculties are necessary (NSC #18). Unbaptized children of catechetical age MUST receive all three sacraments of initiations at the same time.
- Upon reception of the initiation sacraments, these children are then to be enrolled in a catechetical program with their peers.
- Contact the Office of Faith Formation for more information.

B. THE CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF UNBAPTIZED ADULTS

1. Introduction

- a. Christian initiation of adults begins with the preaching of the mystery of Christ. It is the preaching of his Word and the community's response to it that moves the unbaptized to open their hearts and freely seek the living God by entering the path of faith and conversion.
- b. Those who have been called by God are admitted to the Church through a series of liturgical rites. Pastors, pastoral ministers and catechumenate teams are to invite the entire local Church:
 - i. To give testimony on behalf of new members
 - ii. To prepare themselves to welcome and nourish new members
 - iii. To commit themselves to their growth in worship, knowledge and service.
- c. The initiation of catechumens takes place step-by-step in the midst of the liturgical assembly. Together with the catechumens, the entire faith community reflects on the meaning of the paschal mystery, renews its own conversion and, by its example, encourages and leads the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously. (RCIA #4)

2. Stages of Initiation

- a. Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate
 - i. This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and hearing the first preaching of the Gospel.
 - ii. This is a time of evangelization on the part of the Church and of inquiry on the part of those who are not yet Christians. The whole period is to be set aside for evangelization.
 - iii. This should not be a time for intense catechesis; rather its informal setting fosters in the inquirers the realization of how God is at work in their lives.
- b. First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens
 - i. At the point of initial conversion, inquirers are accepted as catechumens by the Church through the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of the Catechumens (RCIA #41).
 1. There must be evidence of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ (RCIA #42).
 2. Before the rite is celebrated, sufficient and necessary time should be set aside to evaluate and, if necessary, to purify the inquirers' motives and dispositions (RCIA #43).
 3. "The rite consists in the reception of the candidates, the celebration of the Word of God, and dismissal of the candidates; celebration of the Eucharist may follow" (RCIA #44).

- ii. Once accepted through the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of the Catechumens, catechumens have a right to certain ecclesial privileges.
 - 1. They have a place in the liturgical assembly for the celebration of the Word and may receive blessings and other sacramentals proper to Christians (RCIA #47; NSC #8).
 - 2. When catechumens marry, the appropriate chapter of the Rite of Marriage is used (RM, #55-66).
 - 3. A catechumen who dies is entitled to Christian burial, including the Funeral Mass, omitting any language that refers directly to the sacraments, which the catechumen has not received. When the sensibilities of the immediate family suggest, the Funeral Mass may be omitted (NSC #9).
- c. Period of the Catechumenate
 - i. A fitting formation by priests, deacons, catechists and other lay people is to be given in stages and presented integrally, accommodated to the liturgical year and enriched by celebrations of the Word. A suitable knowledge of dogma and precepts, drawn from the Sunday scriptures, leads catechumens to an intimate understanding of the mystery of salvation in which they wish to share (RCIA #75.1).
 - ii. The example of sponsors and the whole Christian community teaches catechumens to learn to pray more easily, to witness to the faith, to be constant in the expectation of Christ in all things, to follow supernatural inspiration and to exercise charity to the point of self-giving. This transition, which brings with it a progressive change of outlook and morals, is to become evident together with its social consequences, as it is develop during this period. (RCIA #75.2)
 - iii. Celebrations of the Word of God are arranged for the benefit of the catechumens, and at Mass they may also take part with the faithful in the Liturgy of the Word. Ordinarily, when the catechumens are present in the assembly of the faithful they should be kindly dismissed before the liturgy of the Eucharist begins (RCIA #75.3, #67).
 - iv. Opportunities to work with others, to speak the Gospel and to build up the Church and the testimony of the faithful, ground the catechumens' apostolic understanding of Church (RCIA #75.4).
 - v. The duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances. The time spent should be long enough—several years if necessary—for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong (RCIA #76). It does not necessarily mean that the catechumen will be initiated at the following Easter Vigil once they enter into the process.
 - vi. Among the rites belonging to the period of the catechumenate are:
 - 1. celebrations of the Word of God (RCIA #81-89)
 - 2. minor exorcisms (RCIA #90-94)
 - 3. blessings of the catechumens (RCIA # 95-97)
 - 4. anointing of the catechumens (RCIA #98-103)

- d. Second Step: Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names
 - i. The celebration of the Rite of Election usually coincides with the opening of Lent and marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation (RCIA #118). There must be evidence that the faith of the catechumen has grown and that he/she is ready to receive the sacraments at the upcoming Easter Vigil.
 - ii. Based on the testimony of the godparents and catechists, the Church makes its “election”. This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts. (RCIA #119)
 - iii. The step is also called the enrollment of names because as a pledge of fidelity the catechumens inscribe their names in the book that lists those who have been chosen for initiation.
 - iv. Admission to election belongs to the bishop and he is the presiding celebrant at the rite.
 - v. A dissolution or annulment of a previous marriage or marriages is necessary for a catechumen who has been in an irregular union. Until this has been obtained, he/she is NOT a candidate for the Rite of Election.
- e. Period of Purification and Enlightenment
 - i. This period customarily coincides with Lent, a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery for both the elect and the faithful (RCIA #138). This is not the time for any more intense catechesis on doctrines and beliefs of the Church.
 - ii. Rites belonging to the period of Purification and Enlightenment:
 - 1. The Scrutinies, celebrated on Sundays, are meant 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 (RCIA #141).
 - 2. The presentations take place after the celebration of the scrutinies. Thus, with the catechumenal formation of the elect completed, the Church lovingly entrusts to them the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, the ancient text that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church’s faith and prayer (RCIA #147).
- f. Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
 - i. This step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
 - ii. The usual time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil.

g. Period of Mystagogy

- i. This period extends through the Easter season with the community and the neophytes moving forward together, meditating on the Gospel, sharing the Eucharist, and performing works of charity. Together they grow in their understanding and appreciation of the paschal mystery (RCIA #244-251).
- ii. This period for the neophytes should extend until the anniversary of Christian initiation, with at least monthly assemblies for their deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community (NSC #24).
- iii. In the broadest sense, “mystagogia” lasts throughout the human journey, as together Christians ponder the mysteries of faith, deepen their conversion, recommit themselves through the Eucharist and seek to experience the fullness of God’s kingdom.

3. Ministries and Offices

a. The Catechumen

A “catechumen” by definition is an unbaptized adult.

b. The Role of the Sponsor

- i. Sponsors are men or women who are close to the inquirer or who have been delegated by the pastor and community to companion catechumens. They may come from the local or another parish, but must be active members of the Church.
- ii. Sponsors accompany the inquirers when they seek admission as catechumens and continue to assist them throughout the period of formation.
- iii. Proposed Sponsors must have the potential for and the intention of carrying out the duties that are appropriate to this office. For this reason sponsors must be persons who:
 1. are practicing Catholics who have already received the three initiation sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
 2. lead a life of faith in harmony with the function they are undertaking
 3. are at least sixteen years of age
 4. are not parents of the catechumen
 5. are not bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared (Canon 874).
 6. Note: a baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to Baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor (Canon 874).
- iv. Spouses are not ordinarily recommended as sponsors since there is a value in having someone outside the close relationship of marriage with whom to share their spiritual journey. Spouses should, however, be invited to participate in the RCIA process so that couples can grow together through the experience.

- v. Sponsors exercise a public office from the day of the catechumen's reception into the catechumenate until the Rite of Election.
 - vi. Sponsors show the place of the Gospel in their lives and in society to catechumens by assisting them with doubts and anxieties and giving public testimony on their behalf.
 - vii. One who has served as sponsor may also serve as godparent, providing that he/she fulfills the requirements of godparent.
 - viii. Unless a relative of the candidate, it is inappropriate to have a priest or member of the parish staff or catechumenate team serve as a sponsor. The latter represent specific ministries that differ from that of sponsor.
- c. The Role of Godparent (this may or may not be the same person chosen as a sponsor)
- i. Prior to the Rite of Election, a catechumen may choose a suitable godparent (godmother, godfather, or both) to be approved by the pastor on behalf of the Christian community.
 - ii. Godparents assist the elect during the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and also help to deepen their Christian life during the Period of Mystagogy.
 - iii. Mere formality is to be avoided in the selection of godparents.
 - iv. Proposed godparents must have the potential for and the intention of carrying out the duties that are appropriate to this office. For this reason godparents must be persons who:
 - 1. are practicing Catholics who have already received the three initiation sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
 - 2. lead a life of faith in harmony with the function they are undertaking
 - 3. are at least sixteen years of age
 - 4. are not parents of the Elect
 - 5. are not spouses of the Elect
 - 6. are not bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared (Canon 874).
 - 7. Note: a baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to Baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor (Canon 874).
- d. The Role of the Christian Faithful
- i. During the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, the faithful express the spirit of community by inviting the inquirers into their families, engaging them in private conversation, and accompanying them to community gatherings.
 - ii. The faithful are present at the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens to support new members by their presence and by sharing in the prayers and responses.

- iii. Prior to the Rite of Election, the faithful give honest testimony about the catechumens. Such testimony presumes at least a casual acquaintance with the journey of each of the catechumens. If possible, members of the local faith community join the catechumens for the actual rite at the cathedral.
 - iv. During Lent, the faithful are present for and attentive to the scrutinies and presentations and provide the elect with an example by their own renewal in the spirit of penance, faith and charity.
 - v. The entire faith community takes part in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation either by their actual presence at the Easter Vigil or their own recommitment at the Easter celebration.
 - vi. The faithful welcome the neophytes in their community and assist them in finding a comfortable place in its midst.
 - vii. The faithful join the neophytes in their period of Mystagogy, which in its broadest sense lasts throughout the whole human journey (RCIA #9).
- e. The Role of Catechist
- i. Catechists are to be familiar with the nature and purpose of Christian initiation as it is presented in the official rite. They must be prepared by competent instructors to meet the catechetical demands of adults and adolescents.
 - ii. Catechists are also to receive proper training as leaders of liturgical prayer so that they may prepare and officiate at Celebrations of the Word apart from Mass (RCIA #1681-89).
 - iii. Catechists with appropriate training may officiate at the celebration of the Minor Exorcisms and the Blessing of Catechumens using the rites provided (RCIA #16, #91, #96).
- f. The Role of the Bishop
- i. The diocesan bishop, assisted by offices he has established, regulates and promotes the ministry of initiation in the local church.
 - ii. In particular, the bishop personally celebrates the Rite of Election and consecrates the chrism that is used in the sacrament of Confirmation of the newly baptized (RCIA #12, Canon 880).
- g. The Role of the Priest (Bishop or Presbyter)
- i. Priests have the responsibility for the pastoral care of catechumens, especially those who seem hesitant or discouraged (RCIA #13).
 - ii. Priests are to preside at the Rite of Acceptance, the Anointing of Catechumens, the optional Rite of Sending Catechumens for Election by the bishop, and the Scrutinies.
 - iii. Priests are to be involved in the ministry of catechesis, especially through their role as preacher of the homily at Mass when catechumens, the elect and neophytes are present.

- iv. Priests are to Confirm and admit to Holy Communion those whom they baptize if they have reached catechetical age (Canon 883, 885, NSC #13, 35).
 - v. Priests who do not exercise a pastoral office (that of pastor or parochial vicar) require a mandate from the bishop, if they are to initiate adults (NSC #12).
- h. Role of Deacon
- i. Deacons may be involved with catechesis through preaching or teaching and with the apostolic elements of the formation of catechumens (RCIA #15, 375).
 - ii. Deacons may, where appropriate, assist the local pastor in baptizing the elect and receiving into full communion the candidates, although they may not administer the sacrament of confirmation.

C. RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO FULL COMMUNION

1. Adults Baptized in Another Christian Tradition

- a. Candidates
“The Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church” (hereafter abbreviated *“Rite of Reception”*) is celebrated with persons baptized in another ecclesial community, who seek full membership with the Roman Catholic Church. The reality of an existing relationship with Christ and the Church is to be recognized and fully respected as these individuals take another step in their journey of faith.
- b. Terminology
The *Rite of Reception* appropriately refers to Christians seeking full communion with the Catholic Church as “candidates” (RCIA #447).
 1. The term “catechumen” is not to be used because it implies an initial conversion to the Christian faith.
 2. Likewise, the term “convert” is not applicable because it implies proceeding from unbelief to belief.
- c. Catechesis
Pastoral leaders are to determine the degree of Christian formation needed for these candidates on an individual basis. Marks of readiness are proposed in the various stages of the RCIA:
 1. Signs of effective evangelization (RCIA #42).
 2. Hallmarks of prebaptismal formation (RCIA #75, 76).
 3. Readiness for election to the sacraments (RCIA #120, 131b, 132).
 4. Implication of the renunciation of sin and profession of faith (RCIA #211).
 5. Preparation of Candidates for Reception (RCIA #477).

In some situations, catechesis for catechumens and candidates can be done together. However, their ritual invitation into the Catholic Church would not be the same. Explicit adaptations for their formation are given in RCIA #473-486.

Candidates who have already heard the gospel and have responded to it by a living faith will need instruction only in areas unique to the Roman Catholic tradition. Candidates who are basically uncatechized or have limited catechesis will need more intense formation (NSC #31).

d. Framework of Formation

Many elements of the framework are similar to the catechumenate.

1. Sponsors accompany candidates on their faith journey.
2. Candidates are presented to the community and need to have its assurance of prayers and support.
3. Candidates for reception into full communion do not take part in the scrutinies as do the elect. Rather, a scrutiny-like penitential rite may be celebrated for such candidates on the Second Sunday of Lent (RCIA #459-472).
4. Reception is prepared for by a prayerful reflection period.
5. The Sacrament of Penance must be celebrated prior to reception.
6. The sacraments of Confirmation and /or Eucharist are celebrated communally at the time of reception into full communion.
7. The ongoing support of the whole Christian community is needed to help its new members enter more fully into a life of ministry and service.

e. Time of Celebration of Reception

The distinct nature of the two celebrations may suggest different times within the liturgical year for their celebration.

1. Celebration of the combined rite (*Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into Full Communion of the Catholic Church*). This can allow for the expression and celebration of the paschal nature of initiation. However, great care must be taken to avoid confusion between candidates for reception into full communion and catechumens to be initiated:
 - a. special clothing (white garments) and other symbols prescribed for the Rite of Baptism are not appropriate for the Rite of Reception.
 - b. Specific guidelines for the Rite of Reception at the Easter Vigil are given in RCIA #562-594.
 - c. By law, priests who receive such candidates into the full communion of the Catholic Church have the faculty to administer the sacrament of Confirmation if the candidates have not already been validly confirmed. They are obliged to confirm during the same celebration (883 §2, 885 §2, NSC #35).
2. Another time outside the Easter Vigil. The Rite of Reception should ordinarily take place at the Sunday Eucharist of the parish community (NSC #32).

f. Conditional Baptism

The sacrament of Baptism may not be repeated. If there is a doubt about whether or not someone has been baptized, or about its validity, conditional Baptism is to be administered only if the doubt persists after serious investigation (Canon 869).

1. The validity of Baptism in other Christian communities is presumed if it was conferred by the immersion in, or pouring of, natural water using the Trinitarian formula according to the Church's intention for this sacrament and the candidate's intention to be baptized (Canon 869 §2; 1993 Vatican Ecumenical Directory 95a). The Apostolic See has ruled that baptisms administered within the Mormon Church, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses are invalid because these bodies do not share the Church's teaching on the Trinity. Baptisms administered within other ecclesial communities (e.g. some Fundamentalist Pentecostal, "Holiness" Churches may be of doubtful validity arising from form.
 2. An authentic certificate of Baptism sufficiently establishes the fact of Baptism. When such a certificate is lacking, it is ordinarily sufficient to obtain the declaration of a single witness who is above suspicion, or the oath of the baptized person, if the Baptism was received at an adult age (Canon 876).
- g. Ecumenical Implications
1. Anything which has the appearance of triumphalism is to be avoided as a means of showing respect for the Christian communities within which the candidates began their Christian initiation.
 2. Care is to be taken to demonstrate the intimate relationship between the Rite of Reception into the Roman Catholic Church and the celebration of the Eucharist.
 3. The Rite of Reception is usually celebrated within a eucharistic liturgy. If for serious reasons, this is not possible, the Eucharist should be celebrated as soon as possible so that the newly received candidate can participate in its celebration and receive Communion for the first time.
- h. Profession of Faith
1. Only a profession of faith is required of one born and baptized outside full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.
 2. A renunciation of heresy is not to be done.
- i. Sacrament of Penance
1. In preparation for the Rite of Reception, and at a time prior to and distinct from it, the candidate, according to his or her own conscience, is to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance (RCIA #482, NSC #36).
 2. This celebration is not to obscure the truth that Baptism is the initial rite of repentance and conversion, nor fail to acknowledge Eucharist as the very act by which the risen Lord communicates God's mercy and forgiveness.
 3. Candidates are given this opportunity in view of Catholic teaching that:
 - a. the Sacrament of Penance offers forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism (Canon 959);

- b. the faithful are not to receive the Body and Blood of Christ if they are conscious of grave sin unless there is a serious reason and there is no opportunity to confess (Canon 916);
 - c. the candidates have a right to the grace and assurance of forgiveness offered in this sacrament and the help that it provides to continuing conversion.
 - 4. It is fitting that candidates celebrate the sacrament:
 - a. in a communal setting specifically designed for them
 - b. in a communal setting with other members of the Catholic community, especially during Lent
 - c. or in a private setting.
- j. The Role of Sponsor
 - 1. The sponsor is a person who has had a role in bringing the candidate to full communion and has been involved in the formation process.
 - 2. The sponsor accompanies the candidate to the Rite of Reception and remains an integral source of support in the faith of the newly received person (RCIA #483).
 - 3. The sponsor functions similar to that of the “godparent.” For qualifications, please see page 17.

2. Reception of Orthodox Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church

- a. Persons who are fully initiated into Eastern Churches not in full communion with the Catholic Church, **Orthodox Christians** who have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) enter into the fullness of Catholic communion by a simple public Profession of Faith (RCIA #474).
 - i. Such persons are not to be equated with the catechumens, since they are baptized; nor are they to be equated with other candidates for full communion since they are coming from Churches whose sacraments the Catholic Church recognizes to be valid.
 - ii. They are not to be part of the liturgical Rite of Reception.
 - iii. With regard to formation, the pastoral norms provided for a Catholic completing initiation are to be observed.
- b. Such persons are automatically incorporated into the corresponding Ritual Church within the Catholic Church, unless permission to transfer to the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church has been received from the Apostolic See prior to the Profession of Faith (RCIA #474).
- c. A record of this Profession of Faith is to be made in the Baptismal Register of the Parish wherein it takes place. Furthermore, the Chancery of the Ritual Church into which the individual is incorporated within the Catholic Church should be informed in writing so that appropriate notation may be made.

3. Transfer to the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church from another Ritual Church within the Catholic Church

- a. To transfer to the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church if the Ritual Church and the Latin Rite are in the same geographical territory, the permission of the two Ritual bishops, given in writing, must be obtained in writing (CCEO #32 §2).
- b. All requests for transfer of membership between autonomous or autocephalous churches are to be sent in writing to the Tribunal, with the complete address of the person, a current baptismal certificate, and the reason for transferring membership between the two churches.
- c. In the case of an Eastern Orthodox who is married to a Latin Rite Catholic, the following provisions also apply:
 - i. A wife is at liberty to transfer to the Ritual Church of the husband at the celebration of or during the marriage; when the marriage has ended, she can freely return to the original Church (CCEO #33).
- d. If the parents, or the Catholic spouse in the case of a mixed marriage, transfer to another Ritual Church, the children under fourteen years of age are by the law itself automatically enrolled in the same Ritual Church as the parent; if in a marriage of Catholics only one parent transfers to another Ritual Church, the children transfer only if both parents consent. Upon completion of the fourteenth year of age, the children can return to the original Ritual Church (CCEO #34).
- e. An unbaptized child who is fourteen years of age or older may, at the time of his or her baptism, choose the Ritual Catholic Church he or she prefers. (Canon 111 §2).

4. Baptized, Uncatechized Roman Catholic Adults

- a. Uncatechized adult Catholics although baptized, have never received catechetical instruction or been admitted to the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. They are not catechumens, some elements of the usual catechumenal formation are appropriate to their preparation for the sacraments, in accord with the norms of the ritual, "*Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist*" (NSC #25).
- b. Since these individuals seek a fuller expression of their relationship to the whole community, it is appropriate that they receive assurance of the community's support through public ritual and personal sensitivity.
- c. Adequate formation, adapted to individual needs and abilities, is to be provided for these individuals to enable them to take an active part in the Church's life. The final part of this preparation is to coincide with the season of Lent, whenever possible, so their penitential activity can prepare them for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance (RCIA #408).

- d. The ordinary minister of Confirmation in such cases is the bishop. However, priests of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston may be granted faculties to confirm those baptized adult Catholics, who without any fault of their own have never put the faith into practice provided that they have been part of a process consisting of catechesis suited to their needs, are involved with a community of the faithful and have participated in the liturgical rites of the Church (RCIA #400-433). Priests must receive explicit approval from the Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston.

Priests of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston also may be given the faculty to confirm in the case of a baptized Catholic who has without fault been instructed in a non-Catholic religion or adhered to a non-Catholic religion (NSC #28). Likewise, they must also receive explicit approval from the diocesan Bishop.

In either of the above cases, delegation cannot be presumed and common error, by reason of the promulgation of these guidelines is excluded.

D. MARRIAGE AND ADULT INITIATION

Because of the value the Church places on Marriage, it is important that early in the discussion with inquirers pastoral leaders seek to understand significant elements of the inquirer's life, especially information about marriage. Therefore, an interview with the pastor, deacon, or pastoral associate should be scheduled early in the initiation process in order to determine the answers to the following questions:

1. Is the inquirer currently married? If so, is the current marriage valid?

- a. Is the first/only marriage of each partner?
- b. Has any prior marriage has been dissolved by death or has been judged null by a Catholic marriage tribunal?
- c. In the case of marriage to a Catholic or an Orthodox, were canonical norms followed in contracting the marriage?
- d. Marriage Validly Contracted Outside the Catholic Church:
Since the presupposition in the Catholic Church is that all marriages are valid unless proven otherwise, the marriage of a non-Catholic person that is valid prior to a candidate's sacramental initiation or reception into full communion remains valid. It is not necessary or possible to celebrate any further marriage rite.
 - The sacramental bond that exists between two baptized non-Catholics remains intact when one or both of them are received into full communion.
 - The natural bond of marriage that exists between two unbaptized persons continues (in its non-sacramental state) when one of them is baptized.
 - The natural bond of marriage that exists between a baptized Christian and a non-baptized person becomes sacramental at the moment of the latter's Baptism (so long as marital consent remains at that time).
 - If two unbaptized persons are married and then both receive Baptism their natural bond of marriage becomes sacramental at the moment of baptism (so long as marital consent remains at that time).

2. The current marriage has been deemed invalid

There are various reasons why a current marriage may be invalid. The most common is when the inquirer married a Catholic without the Catholic spouse following the Church's requirements regarding marriage. This might require a Validation. The second most common is when the inquirer or their spouse has a prior marriage. This might require a Declaration of Matrimonial Nullity. There

may be other reasons for an invalid marriage which might suggest consultation with Pastor or whoever is designated to assist or with the diocesan tribunal.

a. Immediate options

- Except in danger of death, candidates living in invalid marriages cannot be sacramentally initiated or received into full communion. When initiated in danger of death, candidates must understand that if they recover they will be bound by the same regulations that apply to other Catholics invalidly married -- meaning they would not be eligible to receive certain sacraments.(CCL 865 §2, 1352 RCIA #371).
- Inquirers who are invalidly married may be admitted as catechumens if they have come to the initial faith and conversion required by the Rite of Admission. The pastor is to explain that the validation of marriage is a requirement and an important aspect of deepening Christian conversion. Where a prior bond of marriage exists, it must also be made clear that there is no assurance that the tribunal process will result in a declaration of nullity.
- Once it is clear that an irregular marriage can be legitimately validated, this should be done without undue delay, and certainly before the celebration of the rites of initiation except in cases related to the Pauline Privilege.
- Catechumens who remain invalidly married are not to be presented for the Rite of Election, since this rite promises sacramental initiation. The only exception is the case of one who has received an undisputed declaration of nullity from a Catholic marriage tribunal allowing for the validation of the marriage before the Paschal Triduum.

b. Declaration of Matrimonial Nullity (Annulment)

A decree of matrimonial nullity, commonly called an annulment, is a decision concerning a specific relationship, stating that this union was not a marriage according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. It does not deny that an emotional and deeply personal relationship existed, nor does it imply ill will on the part of either person, or place blame for the failure of the relationship. Furthermore, children born of that relationship are not considered illegitimate. A declaration of nullity is needed before entering into marriage if there was a previous marriage that has not been declared null by a Catholic Tribunal or been dissolved by death of the other partner.

c. Validation

If a couple is already married outside the Church, by civil authorities or in a non-Catholic Church without special dispensation through the Catholic Church,

then the couple may wish to validate - the marriage by taking the marriage vows in the presence of a priest or deacon and two witnesses.

- If the catechumen's present spouse is a member of another Christian church, and it is the first marriage for both, it is unnecessary to validate the marriage because renewal of consent is a requirement of the ecclesial law only (CCL 1156 §2). Validation is not required by natural law because the consent given in the beginning of the marriage, and not later revoked, is still effective (CCL 1107).
- When the spouse of the one being initiated is Catholic or Orthodox, and it is the first marriage for both, but with a lack of canonical form, it is necessary to have the marriage validated by means of a public renewal of consent according to the canonical form (CCL 1158 §1). It is preferable that the validation take place without solemnity before the Church's official witness and two other witnesses.

3. Is the inquirer not currently married? If the inquirer has been previously married, does he or she intend or desire to be able to marry in the future? If he or she has not been previously married, there are no issues that would prevent them from being initiated or received into the Church.

- a. Information about the marriage is to be reviewed so that the inquirer knows where she or he stands with regard to any future marriage. This is very important as there have been persons who have entered the church and then decide to get married. Not being free to re-marry can create conflict for some if the former marriage is valid and he or she is required to remain unmarried and chaste.
- b. Often it is of great value to initiate a petition for a Declaration of Matrimonial Nullity as a way of aiding the inquirer.

4. Is the inquirer is engaged to be married?

Pastoral ministers are to welcome those who inquire about entrance into the Catholic Church in conjunction with their engagement to many a Catholic person. It must be remembered, however, that getting married is never a sufficient reason in itself for someone to become Catholic. The various circumstances and logic for entering the Church are to be examined so that the commitment to the Church is a free and open one with the inquirer following the movement of the Spirit in their lives and never just an issue of convenience or to pacify an intended spouse or other family members.

In the period of inquiry, pastoral leaders are to determine that the desire to enter the Church springs from true religious motives rather than external formality. Ministers

should help inquirers to recognize these motives where they are present and assure that no rite is celebrated without the disposition appropriate to it.

The need for catechesis and formation is to be determined for these inquirers in the same way as for others, and the initiation process is not to be abbreviated simply to complete it by the time of the wedding.

In view of the serious nature of both premarital preparation and the process of Christian initiation, care must be taken that neither is compromised. (It may sometimes be best to take up the formal initiation process only after the wedding. In such cases, pastoral contact appropriate to the inquiry period should be maintained and, if applicable, contact should be established with the parish in which the married couple will reside.)

E. CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN

1) CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

A. Introduction

The catechumenate for children who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age is the normal process by which children become fully initiated members of the Catholic Church. According to the Code of Canon Law, the "catechetical age" is seven (7) years of age (CCL, 11 & 97). The catechumenate is a process wherein children are led to full initiation through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It is intended for those children not baptized as infants. "They seek initiation at either the direction of their parents or guardians or, with parental permission, on their own initiative" (RCIA, 252).

It is presumed that those who minister with the catechumenate for children (RCIA, 252-330) are intimately acquainted with the entire rite for adults (RCIA, 1-252). This means that those who minister with adults and those who minister with children do so because they are imbued with the spirit and gifts of those who know and live the conversion process.

The catechumenal principles which govern the adult rite then are also the norms for adapting the initiation process with children (and not vice versa). Some major norms are:

- 1) The primary goal of the catechumenate culminates in full integration into the gathered eucharistic assembly.
- 2) It is a process, not a program. Children will journey according to their own growth in faith. Thus the catechumenate is not relegated to a school year nor does it end within a determined time. For some children the catechumenate may extend beyond the minimum of one year (RCIA, 253).
- 3) The mysteries of the faith are unfolded throughout at least one liturgical year through the scriptures (liturgical catechesis). This refers to the Period of the Catechumenate (NSC, 6). It is done by means of liturgical catechesis, which develops these mysteries from the experience of the liturgical celebration, the cycle of Sunday Scriptures, and prayers in particular. The formational aspects of the catechumenal process (which are pre-baptismal in nature) are different from those of religious education (which is post-baptismal).

- 4) The entire process involves a variety of ministries: sponsors, godparents, catechists, deacons, priests, and bishop. The catechumenate with children will also involve the conversion journey of their entire family. Since the family plays a major role in the catechumenal process, catechists should be sensitive to their needs for conversion and reconciliation. Companions, which consist of the children's peers who are already baptized, should also be chosen to accompany these children on their journey of faith (RCIA, 254.1).
- 5) Ritual celebrations mark the conversion journey. Liturgical preparation for each of these celebrations is critical in the conversion process.
- 6) It is presumed that unbaptized children who have reached catechetical age are to be fully initiated through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist in that order in one celebration.

Unbaptized, uncatechized children: The rite is primarily directed to those children who are unbaptized and uncatechized and who are over seven years of age seeking full initiation into the Catholic Church. It is not appropriate to put these children in the religious education program with their peers who are baptized and catechized. The children may be children of Catholic parents, the children of adults in the Christian Initiation process, or children seeking initiation on their own. For children who are seeking initiation on their own, the wishes of the parents must be respected. No child may be received into the Church without explicit permission and hopefully the support of the parents or guardians. There must be reasonable assurance that the child will continue within the Catholic tradition after the initiation process has been completed.

B. The Rites and Periods to be Celebrated for Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age

- 1) **The Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate.** The task of the community during this period is to evangelize: to proclaim the story of God's salvation through the gospel of Jesus. "The whole period of this precatechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek Baptism may mature" (RCIA #37). Pastoral experience has shown that the most effective precatechumenate processes are intergenerational and family centered. The help and support of the community of faith, the parents, and sponsors/godparents are fundamental to the initiation of children into the mystery of Jesus and the Church community.
- 2) **The Period of the Catechumenate.** Having completed the precatechumenate period, all persons concurring, unbaptized children celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. During this period, families come together with the worshiping assembly on Sundays. Catechumens participate in the Liturgy of the Word, then are dismissed after the homily to break open the word in groups. During this period, families and child catechumens continue learning about the teachings and practices of the Church. Paragraphs 75-117 of

the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults should be applied. The goal is conversion of mind and heart. The initiation process can be extended over several years as needed, and is marked by deeper involvement in the Christian community. Moving through the process is based on the child and family's readiness and level of conversion.

- 3) **The Period of Purification and Enlightenment.** Children participate with adults at the Rite of Election. The period of Purification and Enlightenment is an intense preparation that takes place primarily through the breaking open of the gospels for the Lenten season, especially Cycle A, all of which deal with conversion. However, preparation does not mean teaching about the sacraments. The time for "catechism" in the tradition way has ended. This period is a time of retreat marked by prayer and reflection and the celebration of at least one Scrutiny. This period is completed with the reception of all three Sacraments of Initiation during the Easter Vigil.
- 4) **Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy.** The period of mystagogy is a time of serious reflection on sacramental experiences, especially those of initiation. The initial period of mystagogy is celebrated during the fifty days of the Easter season; the extended period of mystagogy is to last one year. During this period the faith of the newly baptized children must be nourished and supported. For children of catechetical age, religious education/formation continues throughout their formal educational years and then throughout life.

C. Role of the Parents in the Catechumenal Process

When children are brought to the parish for sacramental initiation, it is imperative that the parents be involved in the process as much as possible. Since the faith life of the child is determined primarily by the parents, it is important that they be involved in the ongoing process of coming to sacramental initiation. This involvement has both ritual/prayer dimensions and education/formation aspects. In most cases the amount of enthusiasm that the children have for the process will be reflective of the parents' own growth in faith.

It is necessary to encourage parents to participate in catechetical instructions by participating in intergenerational catechesis with their children. There are often times when separate catechesis of children and adults is necessary, but not always. Parents who are also involved in the RCIA process should meet together with the children as often as possible.

When working with the children, one must keep ongoing contact with the parents. How this will be done and how much can be done will be different for each parish. The following is a model which has most of the necessary components. When it is not possible to do them all, it is still important to do what can be reasonably done. There ought to be at least one session for the parents in each stage of the process and there should be some times when the parents and children are together.

In those instances of a teen who is interested in Christian initiation, and there is no

parental interest, it is required that there be a parish sponsor for him/her so that there will be an adult to journey with him/her for support during the process. It is still necessary to contact the parents along the journey so that they can be aware of what is happening to their children when they are with us. Since teens are minors, it is imperative that their parents/guardians be aware of, and in agreement with, the processes in which their children are involved. To assure that the parents are in agreement, it would be best to have a written letter from them stating that they are in agreement with their child becoming Catholic. This would also apply for younger children whose parents are not Catholic and are coming on their own.

D. The Role of Catechesis in the Initiation Process

Catechumenal catechesis, a gradual unfolding of what the faith community holds and believes, involves an integration of liturgy, scripture and doctrine. The foundational source for catechesis is Sunday Mass, its Lectionary texts and prayers. There are many supplementary materials available for this catechesis, but it must always be emphasized that conversion is central and that doctrine is in service of this conversion. This faith should be expressed through participation in Sunday celebrations and joyful anticipation of sacramental celebration. It is vital to the faith life of the children that he/she be supported by the family, companions and the entire Christian community.

The initiation of children through the catechumenal process is one small part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is recommended that whenever possible, children are to be together with adult catechumens, especially during the liturgical rites.

E. Catechumenal Principles for the Christian Initiation of Children

- 1) A strong sense of welcome must be communicated to the children by the parish.
- 2) Along with welcoming, the parish community is involved in rites since it is called on to affirm the child's progress and readiness. Parish members often serve as sponsors. A parish peer group and companions are also important as they are supportive of the child.
- 3) Rites and celebration are primary formative experiences. They are most important to the process and should be celebrated in their fullness.
- 4) The integrity of sequence must be respected. Rites and celebrations are to be experienced in the proper order. They should not be omitted, compressed, or combined. The sacraments of initiation are to be celebrated in sequence in a single celebration: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist. Confirmation is **not** to be omitted because of the age of the child (RCIA, 305; NSC, 14; CCL 842 §2 & 883)
- 5) Family involvement and support is integral and imperative. Children receive much help and example from their parents.

- 6) The age, experience, and style of faith of the children must be respected in the process of formation.
- 7) As with adults, the initiation of children could be extended over several years if need be. The readiness of the child and family are prime considerations. There is no set age for initiation and celebration of the sacraments.
- 8) The Christian initiation process requires a conversion which is both personal and somewhat developed (appropriate to their age). Conversion is a process. Therefore, preparation is not "instant" but rather is extended over a period of time.
- 9) Not all children will proceed within the same time frame. The life of faith is a journey and each child will travel at a different pace. This individuality needs to be respected.
- 10) Children are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith. The process of initiation must be adapted both to their spiritual growth (growth in faith) and to the instructions they receive.
- 11) The Word of God found in the Lectionary is the primary source and liturgical catechesis is the method. Therefore, the liturgical calendar, not the school calendar, is followed.
- 12) The initiation of children is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. Initiation is the responsibility of all the baptized, the people of God represented by the Church; not just the school or parish religious education program but of the whole faith community.

F. Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age Preparing for Christian Initiation

- 1) **Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate** culminates in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. Readiness for this celebration should be determined jointly by the child, the parents, the sponsors and the pastoral staff.

Process

- a) Dialoging with parents concerning their child's interest in Catholic Christianity should take place. Unless the parent or guardian of a minor age child gives consent to sacramental initiation, it must not take place. If this is the case, care must be taken to pastorally respond to the child until she/he is old enough to make an independent decision. If neither parent is Catholic nor in the catechumenal process, written permission is to be obtained.

- b) Getting to know one another.
- c) Becoming friends.
- d) Telling stories of Jesus and the community.
- e) Raising questions.
- f) The age of the child must be respected during the entire process. A supportive peer group is of great importance during the process.

When the child, in dialogue with his/her family, expresses a desire for initiation into the Catholic community, the church, at the end of the precatechumenate, accepts the catechumen "as a person who intends to become its member" (RCIA, 41) with the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

2) Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

The usual procedure for the Rite of Acceptance is as follows:

- a) It is normally celebrated at Sunday Eucharist and with other adult catechumens who are also ready to be accepted. If this occurs, readings of the day are to be used.
- b) The parents or guardians of the children should be present. If that is not possible, a sponsor chosen by the parish takes the parents'/guardians' place (RCIA, 260).
- c) The presider is a priest or deacon.
- d) The atmosphere is to be one of warmth and welcome.
- e) If the Rite of Acceptance occurs at a time other than Sunday Eucharist, such as on a weekday in the context of a community of companions or peers, the rite is not ordinarily combined with Eucharist.
- f) The rite may take place two or three times within a year. This is in keeping with the principle that all children/families may not be ready at the same time.
- g) If the rite is celebrated within a eucharistic liturgy, children may be dismissed after the Rite of Acceptance to continue to share the Word of God.

3) Period of the Catechumenate

This period begins with the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of the Catechumens. During this time gospel values and Christian traditions are shared through the use of liturgical catechesis.

Ordinarily this period lasts at least one year (NSC, 6). A child's readiness to be accepted into the order should be determined not by the child alone, but by the parents or guardians, sponsors and the pastoral staff. It cannot be assumed that all children will have the same degree of readiness within the same time frame.

Process

- a) Children who are catechumens should be dismissed after the homily during the Sunday liturgy (RCIA, 75.3). If there is a special Liturgy of the Word for children in the parish, the catechumens should be involved in it. When the other children (baptized) return for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, liturgical catechesis continues for the catechumens.
- b) Parents or guardians, sponsors, and companions must be closely involved in the entire process.
- c) It is a time of sharing our Catholic traditions through the catechetical process.
- d) Catechesis at this time should be based on the readings of the Lectionary and the liturgical season.

4) Rite of Election

The period of the catechumens culminates with the Rite of Election which is celebrated by the bishop at a diocesan celebration near the beginning of Lent. Children participate in the Rite of Sending of the Catechumens for Election (RCIA #106-117).

- a) This celebration marks the beginning of the final period of preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.
- b) Godparents are expected to present at the Rite of Election. Parents and guardians must also be there.
- c) In the Rite of Election, based on the testimony of parents, godparents and catechists and reflecting the children's desire, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation (RCIA, 278).

5) Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This Period of Purification and Enlightenment begins with The Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names. The period usually coincides with the season of Lent. This period ends with the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in this sequential order.

Process

- a) During this period the intense preparation integrates what it means to be baptized, confirmed and to have fully participated in the Eucharistic celebration.
- b) A day of prayer in preparation for sacramental initiation is to be observed.
- c) During this time the penitential rites (Scrutinies) are to be celebrated. The unbaptized are not to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- d) The godparent for initiation plays an integral part in the penitential rites and in the full process of initiation.
- e) The pastoral staff is not to assume that all children will be ready for sacramental initiation at the same time. Therefore the readiness of the child is to be respected.

6) The Rites Belonging to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

PENITENTIAL RITES (Scrutinies)

- a) Penitential rites are held within the celebration of the Word of God as a kind of scrutiny (RCIA #291-303). These rites, similar to the scrutinies in the adult rite are significant for children.
- b) Before celebrating the scrutinies, children should be approaching maturity of faith and understanding requisite for Baptism, according to their age and ability.
- c) The scrutinies normally occur during Sunday Eucharist (see above) on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. If done at some other time, it must be celebrated with a Liturgy of the Word presided over by a priest or deacon.
- d) An opportunity for ritual catechesis (*see Appendix A*) should be given some time after the liturgy.

Presentations

- a) The presentations of the Creed to the Elect takes place following the first scrutiny (Third Week of Lent.)
- b) The presentation of the Lord's Prayer to the Elect takes place following the third scrutiny (Fifth Week of Lent).
- c) These optional presentations normally take place at a weekday gathering in the context of Eucharist. If done at another time, a catechist may preside.
- d) After the celebration of these rituals, there should be an opportunity for ritual catechesis.

7) **Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation**

- a) The celebration of the sacraments of initiation should preferably take place at the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday, the day the Church devotes to the remembrance of Christ's resurrection, preferably during the Easter season.
- b) In keeping with the integrity of the sacraments of initiation, children over seven years of age are to celebrate Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist within the same liturgy.
- c) The presider is to be the pastor or a parish priest. No special permission is necessary to confirm as it is granted in the 1983 Code of Canon Law.
- d) Godparents for the initiation ceremony:
 - Must be at least 16 years old;
 - Must be practicing Catholics who has already received the three initiation sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist;
 - Parents may act as proxies but may not be the godparents;
 - Children to be baptized should have only one male or one female godparent or one of each gender.

Note: A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic church community may not be admitted as a godparent except as a witness to Baptism together with a Catholic godparent.

8) **Period of Mystagogy/Post-Baptismal Catechesis**

This period begins with the full sacramental initiation of the children into the Church and marks the beginning of a lifelong process of growth and a deepening of the faith of the children. This should be a time of helping the children to have a more profound understanding of the Paschal

Mystery and the ways in which it affects our lives. After the initiation ritual, there should be an opportunity for mystagogical reflection. This type of reflection centers on the ritual itself; exploring words and symbols. It is meant to lead the neophytes to more fully grasp the way God is transforming their lives.

Through meditation on the Word of God, sharing the Eucharist and serving the Church and the world in ministries in which they, as children, can participate, they grow in the faith of the Church. Also during this time, they prepare for entering into the regular religious education program. The children become integrated into the mainstream of parish life. This integration is to encourage them to continue their Christian formation throughout high school and into the whole of their adult lives. The journey of faith is lifelong.

Process

- a) The main focus of this period is continued reflection on the experience of the sacraments of initiation.
- b) It is also a time to deepen their understanding of the Scriptures.
- c) Just as Pentecost was the key event in the public proclaiming of the gospel values by the apostles, so it should be the key to the public commitment of those newly initiated to continue their formal catechetical instruction (RCIA, 244-247)

2. CHILDREN BAPTIZED AT INFANCY

a. RITE OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN (RBC)

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word." (CCC #1213)

The Church understands the practice of infant Baptism in light of the common faith of the Christian community. It is the whole community that is responsible for the faith development of its children.

Infant Baptism is celebrated with clear expectations of the community, parents and family of the children.

The information preparation for sacramental celebration begins long before the actual celebration. The parishes are to contribute to parent formation through the conscious celebration of the Eucharist and of the other sacraments, homilies, Christian service activities, classes, informal discussion and devotions. Parents prepare children by living exemplary lives based on gospel values.

"Before the celebration of the sacrament, it is of great importance that parents, moved by their own faith or with the help of friends or other members of the community should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding." They should be provided with books, instructions, and catechisms written for families. (RBC #5.1)

The sacrament of Baptism is celebrated with the family, friends and parish community. By its very nature, infant Baptism requires a "post-baptismal catechumenate." Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth (CCC #1231). Because of the post-baptismal training required, it is required that there be a well-founded hope that the child will be raised as an active participant of the Catholic religion. (Can. 868 §1:2°)

A. Participants in the Ritual

The Infant:

- a. An infant is defined as a minor who has not completed the seventh year of age.
- b. Parents are obliged to see that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks (Can. 867 §1)
- c. Children presented to the Church for Baptism are to have at least one Catholic parent for the licit celebration of the sacrament (Canon 868 §2).

- d. In the case of children who are in the process of being adopted, the Baptism may be celebrated with the consent of the natural parents; otherwise, the Baptism is to be postponed until after the adoption has been finalized except when the child in danger of death. Foster parents do not have the authority to present a child for Baptism.
- e. When a child is in danger of death, Baptism is to be celebrated without delay, even if an ordinary minister is not available (Canon 867 §3, 861); The consent of the parents is not necessary; The priest omits the post baptismal anointing and instead confirms the child (Canon 889 §2, RBC #11).

The Parents:

- a. Parents are to be appropriately prepared for the celebration (Canon 867 §1).
- b. Parents are to make a profession of faith at the time of their child's Baptism (Canon 868 §1, RBC #5,#18). When parents are not yet prepared to profess their faith or undertake the duty of raising their child as a Catholic, one of the following is to be observed:
 - i. Pastoral leaders are to welcome and seek dialogue with the persons about their own journey of faith.
 - ii. Basic evangelization is to be provided for those who request Baptism simply out of social convention.
 - iii. Any pledge that gives hope for the Catholic upbringing of the child is to be considered as sufficient to proceed with Baptism.
 - iv. If conditions are insufficient to provide this honest hope, Baptism of the child is to be delayed and parents are to be informed of the reasons. This delay must never be presented as a refusal to baptize, but as an opportunity for further pastoral care (Canon 868 §1, RBC #8).

Godparent (Sponsor):

The role of the godparents (sponsors) is, together with the parents, to present the child to the Church for Baptism. It is also their responsibility to assist the baptized person to lead a life in harmony with Baptism and to fulfill the obligations following from it (Canon 872).

- a. One godparent, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex; (Canon 873)
- b. Therefore, for someone to undertake the office of godparent it is necessary:
 - i. That they be sixteen years of age. The minister of Baptism may for a just cause, and by way of exception, permit someone who is not sixteen to be a godparent;
 - ii. That they be Catholics, themselves confirmed, already have received First Communion, and who lives out their faith which befits the role to be undertaken. Those who do not regularly attend Mass or who are living in marriages not recognized by the Church may not serve as godparents.
 - iii. That they not be one of the child's parents;

- iv. That they not be bound by an infictive or declaratory sentence to any canonical penalty; (Canon 874 §1)
- v. A baptized person belonging to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only as a witness to Baptism and only along with a Catholic person who has the office of godparent (Canon 874 §2).

The Minister of Baptism:

The ordinary minister of Baptism is a bishop, presbyter or deacon. If the ordinary minister is impeded or absent, a catechist or some other person deputed by the Ordinary licitly confers Baptism (Canon 861). Since Baptism is celebrated in the midst of the community, other ministers, such as readers, cantors, and acolytes should be employed (General Instruction on Baptism, #7).

The Community

The baptized child is welcomed into a community of believers. Therefore, the celebration of the Baptism is to involve as much of the whole parish community as possible. This community witnesses faith by its presence at the celebration.

B. Sacramental Celebration

The Place of Baptism

- a. A church or oratory is the proper place for the celebration of Baptism.
- b. Ordinarily, children are to be baptized in their parents' parish (Canon 857).
- c. Baptism is not to be celebrated in private homes without the permission of the bishop (Canon 860).

The Time of Baptism

- a. In ordinary circumstances, the natural rhythm of the liturgical year determines the appropriate time for the celebration of the Baptism of children: the Easter Vigil, Sundays of the Easter Season or Sundays during Ordinary Time.
- b. Though celebration of infant Baptism during Sunday Eucharist is to be encouraged, this is not to be done too often (RBC #9). This practice may be implemented in different ways:
 - i. Prior consideration of Sunday readings can lead to the scheduling of "Baptismal Sundays."
 - ii. In larger parishes, the celebration of Baptism can be rotated to various Masses.
 - iii. If a large group of infants is ready for Baptism, a special baptismal liturgy can be planned.
 - iv. An integrated ritual for the celebration of Baptism of children within Mass is included for your convenience at the end of this section.

When Baptism is celebrated outside the Eucharistic liturgy, the Liturgy of the Word is always to be celebrated. It is the Word that stirs up the faith of parents, godparents and the whole community (RBC #17).

2. CHILDREN BAPTIZED AT INFANCY

b. RITE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

I. General Liturgical Principles

- A. The Second Vatican Council describes all sacramental celebrations as part of the prayer of the entire faith community. The relationship between the celebration of Confirmation and the wider prayer life of the Church can effectively take the form of prayer, preparation, and support for the candidates.
- B. The whole process of preparation and celebration for Confirmation is part of initiating candidates into the Christian community rather than of preparation for and completion of a single event.
- C. The need for NOBLE SIMPLICITY in the liturgical celebration is a constant challenge to pastors and planners. Special care must be exercised with regard to the scale and character of the celebration in areas of music, environment, special symbols and ritual action.
- D. Confirmation by the bishop of a child baptized as an infant is the most common pattern for Confirmation of Catholics in our Diocese. Most children are baptized as infants and, in this Diocese, receive First Reconciliation and First Eucharist about the age of seven. In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, children who were baptized as infants must have completed the sixth grade to be confirmed. The exact age of confirmation varies widely from seventh grade students to high school students, based solely on the local pastor's preferences.

II. Preparation for the Rite

- A. *“Ordinarily confirmation takes place within Mass in order to express more clearly the fundamental connection of this sacrament with the entirety of Christian initiation.”* Any departure from this norm requires specific approval of the bishop.
- B. **The Ritual Mass for Confirmation** may be used on any day except on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, Easter, and Solemnities. On these days, the first reading and the Gospel must be retained as are the presidential prayers for the day. **The Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston has asked that even if the Ritual Mass is chosen on a weekend (outside of those days listed above) that the prescribed readings be maintained. The Bishop also has stated his preference that when Confirmation is held on a weekday during the Penitential seasons of Advent or Lent that the presidential prayers are from the season rather than from the Ritual Mass. However, the readings may be changed based on their appropriateness for a Confirmation Liturgy. [added on 12/14/2015]**

- C. **The Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston has asked that a worship aid be printed that contains the order of service and all the sung parts of the liturgy, words and music. Copyright from publishers must be secured to legally print copyrighted material. Many publishers make available a one-time usage fee. Please contact the Office of Worship and Sacraments if your parish needs assistance with the creation of a worship aid. [changed and updated on 6/25/2015]**
- D. **The employment of one photographer, stationed in one position during the Anointing, is permissible. Please advise the photographer that, out of respect for the dignity of the liturgy, he or she must be as least intrusive as possible. The pastor/administrator should determine an appropriate spot in advance. Upon the arrival of the Bishop, please check with the Master of Ceremonies to ensure the correct placement of the photographer. [changed and updated on 6/25/2015]**
- E. **The following directive of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal is to be respected:**

“All in the assembly gathered for Mass have an individual right and duty to contribute their participation in ways differing according to the diversity of their order and liturgical function. Thus in carrying out this function, all, whether ministers or layperson should do all and only those parts that belong to them, so that the very arrangement of the celebration itself makes the Church stand out as being formed in a structure of different orders and ministries.”

- F. Whenever possible it is appropriate that the full complement of sacred orders be present to exercise their unique roles in the sacramental celebration. “The preeminent manifestation of the Church is present when the bishop... celebrates the Eucharist... surrounded by his presbyters and ministers (deacons) with the full, active participation of all God’s people” (Ceremonial #119). Hence, if a deacon ministers in your parish or the surrounding area, it is fitting that he be invited to perform the ministries proper to his order:

- proclamation of the gospel
- proclaim the Universal Prayer intercessions
- invitation to the assembly for the greeting of peace and the dismissal
- assistance of the bishop at the altar
- ministration of the chalice.

Since by tradition the reading of the scriptures is a ministerial, not presidential function, the bishop DOES NOT usually proclaim the Gospel. If there is not a deacon present, the proclamation is usually made by the pastor.

- G. In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, the bishop prefers to confirm while seated. If local circumstances permit, a chair for the bishop is to be placed in front of the altar for the actual celebration of confirmation so that the assembly may participate in the fullest way possible.
- H. Please have candidates wear name tags that will be easy for the bishop to read: To emphasize the intimate connection between baptism and confirmation, it is appropriate that the candidate's baptismal name be retained. However, if saint names are chosen, please ensure that name is on the tag:

R E B E C C A

III. The Actual Celebration of the Sacrament

A. The Order of Procession

(Beginning Procession) Censer Bearer
 Cross Bearer (or Paschal Candle Carrier)
 Two Candle Bearers
 Confirmandi (and sponsors if desired)
 Lectors
 Deacon with Book of Gospels (if present)
 Concelebrating Priests
 Assisting Deacon / Master of Ceremonies
 Bishop
 Miter Bearer, Staff Bearer and Book Bearers

NOTE: No distinction is to be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by girls and women.

B. Introductory Rites

1. An Entrance Song accompanies the procession of the ministers to the altar. **It is appropriate for the candidates to enter in the procession.** [changed on 6/25/2015] The bishop wears miter and carries staff.
2. The bishop hands off the miter and staff at the altar.
3. Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water. This rite is used in place of the Penitential Act as directed in the Roman Missal. The prayers for this rite itself are signs of our baptism, the first of the Sacraments of Initiation.

Or

The Penitential Act is celebrated (They are never both used in the same celebration).

4. **Gloria is always sung when the Ritual Mass is celebrated or during the times that it is appropriate (i.e. Easter Season, Ordinary Time, and Solemnities).** [added on 12/14/2015]

6. Collect (Opening Prayer)

C. Liturgy of the Word

1. The bishop is seated and is given the miter.
2. The Liturgy of the Word is celebrated in the ordinary way. In keeping with the solemnity of the occasion the responsorial psalm and the gospel acclamation are to be sung.
3. The readings are taken from the **Lectionary** (and the **Book of the Gospels** if available). **[changed on 12/14/2015]**
4. Before proclaiming the Gospel, the priest or deacon approaches the bishop for a blessing. If there is to be a gospel procession, this is done **AFTER** the bishop places incense in the censor.

If incense is not used, the bishop removes his miter and gives the blessing to the one who is going to proclaim the Gospel.

Bishop receives staff immediately after making sign of cross on forehead, lips and breast.

The Book of Gospels is taken to the bishop for veneration after the proclamation of the Gospel.

D. Sacrament of Confirmation

1. Presentation of Candidates

After the Gospel, the bishop is seated. It is preferable for the pastor to present the candidates to the bishop; however, in case of necessity, this presentation may also be delegated to the parish DRE or the catechist(s) who prepared the candidates. The pastor or delegate is to approach the ambo at this time.

Please have the pastor or delegate call each candidate by name. If there are a significant number of candidates and you prefer the candidates be called as a group, written permission must accompany your Liturgy Preparation Sheet. The candidates are to stand at their places when called by name and they remain standing until the bishop instructs them to sit.

If it is a combined Confirmation with several parishes, a representative (pastor or delegate) from each parish will approach the ambo to introduce their candidates.

2. Homily

The homily is given by the bishop.

3. The renewal of the baptismal promises follows the homily. In Mass, this takes the place of the creed and is done according to the format given in Appendix B (attached). Catechists should instruct candidates to make their acclamations of faith (*I do*) in a manner which respectfully reflects enthusiasm for their faith in God.

The bishop wearing his miter and holding his staff, STANDS for the baptismal promises. After the renewal of the baptismal promises, it is recommended that there be some form of faith assent on the part of the whole assembly. This is to be an acclamation, not a song, e.g. *Alleluia; Blessed Are You, O God*.

After the promises, the bishop removes his miter, and hands off the staff.

- E. If you have twelve candidates or fewer, the bishop will lay hands on them individually before he prays the common prayer for them. Please bring candidates into the sanctuary and place them so that the assembly is not blocked from the action. If there are more than twelve candidates, they can stand in place and Bishop will lay hands by extending them over the group.

F. The Anointing with Chrism

Afterward, the bishop moves to the front of the altar where he sits and receives the miter.

Chrism is brought to the bishop by a deacon, and then he receives the staff. Each candidate then goes to the bishop and kneels for the anointing.

The sponsor of the candidates stands behind them and lay their hand on the latter's shoulder.

The words of anointing are: **"N., BE SEALED WITH THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."**
The newly confirmed respond: **"AMEN."**

Chrism is **NOT** to be wiped off the forehead of the candidates.

The bishop then gives the sign of peace to the newly confirmed saying: **"PEACE BE WITH YOU."** The newly confirmed respond: **"AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT."**

During the anointing, suitable music may be sung or played but not so loud as to make communications between the candidates and the ministers difficult. The music is not to begin until after four or five candidates have been confirmed in order that the whole assembly may hear the entire ritual.

After the anointing, the bishop hands off the staff, washes his hands, and then removes the miter.

G. Universal Prayer

The Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful should reflect the special occasion. A model is given in the **RITE OF CONFIRMATION**.

H. Liturgy of the Eucharist

After the Universal Prayer, the bishop sits. When the Gifts are prepared, the bishop goes to the altar.

Preparation Rite: Only bread and wine to be consecrated at this liturgy are to be presented. Enough bread is to be presented so that pre-consecrated Hosts are not needed. (Pre-consecrated Hosts are reserved in the tabernacle for Communion to the assembly in the absence of an ordained priest, for Communion to the sick and for Eucharistic Adoration).

In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, the Eucharistic bread to be used must be the traditional form. Exceptions for “home-made” bread must be approved by submitting the bread recipe ahead of time to the bishop’s office.

I. Communion Rite

It is appropriate to offer Communion under both kinds to all who participate. Two Ministers of the Cup should be provided for each Minister of the Eucharistic Bread. If the size of the worship space is limited, or the congregation is small, then one Minister of the Cup for each Minister of the Eucharistic Bread is sufficient.

J. Announcements

Any necessary announcements are to be made after the **Prayer after Communion** but prior to the **Final Blessing**. It is appropriate for the parish priest to thank the bishop for coming and to announce the reception (if any) to be held in the church hall. The announcements should be brief.

K. Concluding Rites

1. Blessing

The Solemn Blessing or Prayer over the People may be used instead of the usual blessing at the end of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The bishop wears the miter for the entire blessing and receives the staff for the final Trinitarian blessing.

2. Recessional

The newly confirmed remain in the pews and do not join the recession out of the Church. [added on 6/25/2015]

IV. Immediate Preparation

- A. The bishop usually brings his own vestments. **On days when the ritual Mass for Confirmation is permitted, red is appropriate. If the Mass of the day is celebrated, the appropriate vesture color is employed. Please consult the ORDO if any questions arise. [changed and updated 6/25/2015]**
- B. Altar servers should not be assigned specific roles prior to the Confirmation liturgy. The Bishop's Master of Ceremonies will assign these roles upon arrival.
- C. **The Bishop will most likely bring his own Chrism. If this is not the case, the Master of Ceremonies will inform the pastoral staff: he will also ensure the proper placement of the Chrism prior to the liturgy. [changed and updated 6/25/2015]**
- D. Specific needs for the ritual:
See Appendix D—CHECKLIST FOR NECESSARY ITEMS FOR CONFIRMATION

CONFIRMATION LITURGY PREPARATION SHEET APPENDIX A

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES APPENDIX B
[changes made 5/19/2016]

GUIDELINES FOR MUSIC APPENDIX C

CHECKLIST FOR NECESSARY ITEMS FOR CONFIRMATION
APPENDIX D

V. CANDIDATES FOR CONFIRMATION

A. Who may be confirmed

The one to be confirmed must be baptized. If the baptized person has the use of reason, he/she is to be in the state of grace, properly instructed, and able to renew his/her baptismal promises. Recitation of baptismal promises is required, however, Confirmation IS NOT an adult affirmation of faith, and should never be presented as such.

B. Age

Any priests who baptize an adult or child old enough for catechesis or admit a validly-baptized adult or child old enough for catechesis into full communion with the Church is to confirm that person at the same time. It should be noted that if a child is unbaptized and is of catechetical age (7 years of age or older) that child should be enrolled in a catechumenate process.

According to Canon Law; a priest who receives adults and children over seven years -- ARE TO CONFIRM THEM. *Can. 852 §1 The provisions of the canons on adult baptism apply to all those who, being no longer infants, have reached the use of reason. Can. 866 Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, immediately after receiving baptism an adult is to be confirmed, to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist and to receive Holy Communion. Can. 883 the following have, by law, the faculty to administer confirmation: 2 ° the priest who by virtue of his office or by mandate of the diocesan Bishop baptizes an adult or admits a baptized adult into full communion with the Catholic Church.*

In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, the following norm is in effect: *CHILDREN WHO ARE BAPTIZED AS INFANTS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, OR RECEIVED INTO THE CHURCH AS INFANTS, MUST HAVE COMPLETED THE SIXTH (6TH) GRADE TO BE CONFIRMED.* Any exception to this norm requires an affirmative answer to a written request made to the Ordinary.

N.B. WHEN THERE IS DANGER OF DEATH, CHILDREN SHOULD BE CONFIRMED EVEN AS INFANTS -- BEFORE THE USE OF REASON.

C. Name

The preference is use of the baptismal name, thus, preserving the unity that exists between baptism and confirmation. Further, this demonstrates that it is the same person who is being called to ever-increasing participation and deeper initiation in the sacramental life of the Church. A special confirmation name may be chosen, but it should be the name of a recognized saint.

D. Catechesis

Appropriate catechetical preparation of the candidate is essential. Candidates should have been a part of the on-going parish catechetical program - or a school-based program. The proximate confirmation preparation program should be separate from on-going programs. Preparation should take place within the parish and no distinction should be made between school students and parish students in preparation for, or celebration of, the sacrament of Confirmation.

VI. SPONSORS

A. The Role of the Sponsor

To assist in the preparation of the candidate for the sacrament.

- To accompany the candidate in the celebration of the sacrament.
- To present the candidate to the bishop.
- To help the candidate in the fulfillment of his/her baptismal promises.

B. Qualifications of the Sponsor

1. Sponsors:

Must be 16 years of age. Exceptions for just cause can be made by the Ordinary at the request of the pastor.

Must be a member of the Catholic Church who has received all three sacraments of initiation.

Must not be prohibited by Canon Law from exercising the role of sponsor.
Must not be either the father or the mother of the person to be confirmed.

May be either male or female for any candidate.

2. Who may be chosen:

Ordinarily there should be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed. It is desirable that the sponsors (godparents) at Baptism, if present, also be the sponsor at Confirmation. This expresses more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective. A parent or guardian is not permitted to serve as a sponsor. A special sponsor for Confirmation may be chosen by the candidate or his/her family.

3. Catechesis:

There should be preparation for the sponsors and also for the parents of the candidates so they might better understand the history, theology, and liturgy of this sacrament and its meaning for Christian living. They are the most significant witnesses of "confirmed Catholicism" for the candidates. There should also be some involvement of sponsors and parents with the candidates in the preparation for the sacrament and follow up.

VII. CONFIRMATION OF PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CHALLENGES

More than 10 million American Catholics have some type of disability. These disabilities include mental challenges, visual, hearing, and physical impairments, learning challenges and mental illness.

The National Catholic Office for Persons With Disabilities states that there are few among the 10 million disabled Catholics whose needs cannot be met when appropriate accommodations for their inclusion.

It is important to note here that many persons who are physically handicapped are not mentally challenged. These are two separate and entirely different disabilities. Insofar as possible, a person who is physically handicapped wishing to be confirmed is to be instructed in the usual manner. Those who are physically disabled often have accompanying speech problems and are mistakenly thought to be mentally retarded and are treated as such.

A. A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The guidelines for the celebration of the sacraments with persons who are disabled by the U.S. Bishops states, "by reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling. . . Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them."

B. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

A simple interview with the person to be confirmed is suggested. It is, however, recommended that the pastor invite a catechist to participate in the interview.

Questions should be asked in simple words and may have to be repeated. There may difficulty in processing the question. Response to questions may be verbal or through gestures.

If the person seeking to be confirmed has some severe speech problems or language that is difficult to understand, the pastor should feel comfortable in letting the teacher guide the interview.

It is assumed that the pastor will approach the person in a gentle manner and speak quietly, without impatience. Perhaps at this time prayer might be appropriate where the person is asked to state why he/she wishes to be confirmed.

C. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sponsors for those to be confirmed should be chosen according to the Diocesan Guidelines. However, the sponsor chosen for the student with a disability should have had a long-lasting relationship built on mutual trust and should be convinced of the spiritual worth of the person to be confirmed.

The support of the parish community is tremendously important, both to the person being confirmed and to the parents. Many times the parents of children with disabilities are not made to feel very welcome in their own parish communities. Sometimes this is due to the fact that the child is not accepted into the parish community. At other times, it is due to people who are uncomfortable by the child's behavior or inappropriate responses. Simple acceptance by the total parish community is a significant and supportive action.

Ideally, the person with a disability should be confirmed along with the others of his/her parish. If, for some reason this is not possible or is not desired by the parents, this wish is to be respected.

VIII. OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES OF CONFIRMATION

A. Confirmation of newly baptized adults and children over seven years of age – at the Easter Vigil

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process is the normal pattern for unbaptized adults to enter into the Church. At the Easter Vigil those baptized are then confirmed and later receive Eucharist at the same liturgy. The practice of baptizing a child over the age of seven and then telling them to wait years for the bishop to confirm them is not what the Rite intends as the National Statutes for Catechumenate (NSC) states “nor should they [children over the age of seven] receive the sacraments of initiation in any sequence other than that determined by the ritual of Christian Initiation. (Can. 866 and NSC ¶ 18, 19)

B. Confirmation of an adult baptized Catholic as an infant and uncatechized – at the Easter Vigil

Over the years, particularly in areas like WV where there are many mixed marriages and sometimes access to the Catholic Church has been limited, there are many who were baptized by a well meaning parent, who then either were unable to or neglected their duty to catechize the child in the faith. Such a person is very different from a catechumen as they are already Catholic. According to the RCIA such a person would be confirmed at the Easter Vigil and complete their Christian formation with the newly baptized (RCIA 400). The local pastor by authority delegated by the Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston can confirm an adult baptized Catholic as an infant and uncatechized. According to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults such a person would be confirmed at the Easter Vigil and complete their Christian formation with the newly baptized.

Example: Sharon was born into a mixed marriage. Her father was Catholic, her mother was Baptist. At the time of Sharon's birth the parents took her to the local Catholic Church to be baptized as part of the father's wishes. Apparently a few years later her father began going to the Baptist Church with her mother and never returns to the Catholic Church in his lifetime, with the result that Sharon is never catechized. At the age of 57 Sharon has decided to "become" Catholic. Sharon is not a catechumen, nor is she a candidate for reception – she is already Catholic. See section under "Initiation of Uncatechized Catholics."

C. Confirmation of an adult, or child, baptized as a non-Catholic with reception into full communion with the Church – not at the Easter Vigil

According to the US National Statutes for Catechumenate #33 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 reflection upon the sacrament of baptism celebrated in another Church or ecclesial community.

Example: Janet was baptized in the Methodist Church as a child. She ended up marrying Frank who is a Catholic, and she agreed to raise the children in the Catholic Church. For 18 years, as the children were growing, Janet's family faithfully attended the local parish and participated fully in all the functions. When the oldest child was 17, Janet decided she was now called to become a Catholic.

The amount of catechesis for Janet was minimal as she knew the Catholic faith as well, if not better, than many Catholics because of her commitment to teaching her children the faith. The RCIA process is not the ideal place for Janet as she has been living out her Christian faith for many years. After a suitable amount of instruction and preparation, Janet can be received into the Church at any Liturgy, preferably NOT during the Easter Vigil which focuses on Newly Baptized.

D. Confirmation of an adult, or child over the age of 7, baptized as a non-Catholic with reception into full communion with the Church – at the Easter Vigil

According to the Forward in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults the combined rite is included "for use in those situations when pastoral circumstances warrant the integration" of the two rites. This combined rite is not seen as the norm. The Norm would be for such persons to be received into the Church prior to the beginning of Lent or at least prior to the Triduum, so that they might fully participate with the local community our most holy of days. An example of this would be the Smith family where the mother was baptized as a Baptist, the husband and 2 children, 8 and 10, were unbaptized. They all became Catholic in the same ceremony.

E. Confirmation in danger of death of a baptized adult, child or infant

Throughout the centuries many people have died at a young age. Because the Church desires that all its members should leave this life fully initiated, she states that (Can. 891), baptized Catholics in danger of death may be confirmed by any priest, older persons as well as newborn infants.

Example: Mike and Terry's small baby was in critical condition when born. The local nurse baptized the baby shortly after birth because of the uncertain nature of the child's illness. Shortly after birth the baby is diagnosed with a fatal illness and is within days of death. Because the child has already been validly baptized the local pastor confirms the baby in the hospital room in compliance with Church Law, and it dies two days later.

Example: Bill has been a lapsed Catholic for 45 years, having fallen away from the practice of the faith as a young adult. He had received first Eucharist and some catechesis but chose not to be confirmed as a teenager. He has been diagnosed with acute leukemia and is expected to die within a few weeks. He asks the local pastor for Confirmation.

After ascertaining his renewed commitment to the faith, and his resolution that should he survive he would return to a regular practice of the faith, the local pastor confirms Bill in the hospital. Bill dies three weeks later without ever leaving the hospital.

2. CHILDREN BAPTIZED AT INFANCY

c. CELEBRATION OF FIRST COMMUNION

The young baptized Christian is welcomed to the Table of the Lord and initiated into the Eucharistic communion of the Church and so begins a lifelong participation in the central mystery of our life in Christ.

“The Eucharist is the ‘source and summit of the Christian life.’ The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it...” (CCC, 1324)

I. OFFICES AND MINISTRIES

A. The Christian Community

Parish communities should welcome children being led to First Communion at the Sunday Celebration and offer liturgical participation in accord with the *Directory of Masses with Children* and the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*.

B. Parents

Because parents are the *first teachers, the best of teachers* (RBC, 70) it is their responsibility, in the first place to lead their children to Eucharistic communion with appropriate preparation. (CCL, 914)

Parents should bring their children **regularly to the celebration of Sunday Mass** in order to introduce them to the Eucharistic celebration.

This is so for three reasons:

- i. First Communion indicates that children are being integrated into the Church’s Eucharistic life. They must therefore become familiar with this life in a concrete way.
- ii. The liturgical year “unfolds the entire mystery of Christ” and “completes the formation of the faithful” (General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, no.1). Understanding the “mystery of Christ” is required for admission to Holy Communion (CCL, 913); celebration of the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year is a primary means of formation into the life of the Church.
- iii. Being baptized, these children have the right and responsibility to be present at the Sunday Liturgy with the assurance of the support and care of the community.

C. Catechists

Catechists assist both the progress of the candidates and the growth of the community (RCIA, 16). They should take care that their teaching is:

- i. Filled with the Spirit of the Gospel
- ii. Adapted to the signs and cycles of the liturgical year
- iii. Suited to the needs of the candidates
- iv. Thoroughly grounded in Catholic doctrine

D. Pastor

The Pastor is to collaborate with parents in order to lead baptized children to Eucharistic communion at the proper time and with appropriate formation.

The Pastor should insure that children not approach the Holy Banquet who have not reached the age of reason or who are not sufficiently disposed. (CCL, 914)

II. CANDIDATES

A. Baptized Children

Those who were baptized in the Catholic Church as infants are to be led to Eucharistic communion when they reach the age of reason (generally at the age of seven). (CCL, 914, 972)

Those who as infants received baptism in another Christian community but who, while still infants, were received into the Catholic Church are likewise led to Eucharistic communion when they reach the use of reason.

B. Children of Catechetical Age Who Are To Be Baptized Or Received Into Full Communion

Children of catechetical age who as infants were neither baptized as Catholics nor received into the Catholic Church are admitted to the Eucharist at the time of their Catholic Baptism or reception into full communion with Confirmation in its proper sequence. (Follow *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Part II, Chapter 1 or 5.) No other rite or practice is permitted. (CCL, 852.1, 866, NSC, nos. 18,19)

Once initiated, these children are to continue their formal catechetical training in the company of their peers.

(See separate guidelines “Christian Initiation for Children of Catechetical Age” for more information)

III. ADMISSION TO HOLY COMMUNION

To be admitted to First Communion, children “must have sufficient knowledge... to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity,” so they “can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.” (CCL, 913.1)

In **danger of death**, children may receive Holy Communion if they can distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food and receive communion reverently. (CCL, 913.2; PCS, no. 208) Note that such children are to be confirmed before communion as viaticum. (RC, no. 11; PCS, nos. 31, 246, 276, 280)

Children with **physical or learning disabilities** and those who are **behaviorally disturbed** are to be presented for Eucharistic communion along with their age mates seeking a degree of understanding appropriate to their individual condition.

Children with profound mental disabilities or illness are to be admitted to the Eucharist when they express a desire for the sacrament and in some way manifest their reverence for it. “The criterion for reception of Holy Communion is the same for persons with developmental and mental disabilities as for all persons, namely, that the person be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture, or reverential silence rather than verbally.” (*Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, no. 20)

Once admitted to the Eucharist, even in emergency circumstances, a child may continue to share in the sacrament as any other member of the faithful.

IV. READINESS FOR CELEBRATION OF EUCHARIST

Candidates for First Communion are to be led to “full, conscious, and active participation” in the Liturgy of the Eucharist according to the principles of the *Directory for Masses with Children*. Such participation is their “right and duty by virtue of their baptism.” (CSL, 14)

Lifelong formation begins with and includes **the whole period following the child’s baptism**. Thus, parents are to help their children develop a life of prayer, a knowledge and love of Jesus Christ and his teachings, and a practical relationship with the local Church. (RBC, 3; CCL, 914)

Through support and practical helps, parishes assist parents fulfill this role in the first several years of a child’s life.

Children should already be enrolled in a **catechetical program** which the Church provides to assist and augment formation within the Christian family. (*See the Catechetical Guidelines for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston*) Such programs should present the teachings and moral life of the Catholic Church through catechesis that is comprehensive and accommodated to the various stages of the child’s growth as faithful disciple.

If however, a child has reached the age of seven and have not previously been enrolled in a catechetical program in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, they are to be considered candidates for Holy Communion **in the second year** of such catechesis.

In the case of children who have not participated consistently in a process of formation, the pastor should consult with the parents and catechists to determine the type of preparation required for the child’s readiness.

Children with physical or learning disabilities should generally be led to the Eucharist and receive formation along with their age mates, seeking a degree of understanding and reverence appropriate to their individual condition.

Children with profound mental disabilities are to receive formation within the community according to their capacity, as is their right.

Eucharistic Readiness and the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance)

Before they come to Eucharistic communion, candidates are to celebrate **sacramental confession**. (CCL, 914) This is based on the general practice of the Church and must be interpreted in this light. **con-**

Thus, candidates for First Communion are to receive appropriate catechesis concerning the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) and are to be helped to develop and examine their conscience as they are led to celebrate sacramental reconciliation in readiness for Eucharist.

In rare and particular cases where **a child**, after appropriate preparation and invitation, **chooses not to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance)**, the pastor, in consultation with parents, should determine if it is advisable to proceed with Eucharistic communion. If the child is admitted to the Eucharist, care must be given to him or her continuing catechesis regarding the Sacrament of Penance, so that he or she may soon share it fruitfully.

Similar discernment is to be made in the circumstances of children with disabilities. (See the *Guidelines of the Sacraments with those with Disabilities*, nos. 22-25)

V. FORMATION

A. Doctrinal Formation

The doctrinal elements of catechesis for the **Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance)** must always reflect the teachings of the Church in its worship and its creed. Catechesis for this sacrament should reflect the teaching of the Rite of Penance that this sacrament is rooted in baptismal grace and leads toward complete reconciliation in the sacrament of Eucharist. **al-**
sac-

Baptismal dignity and the call to continuing conversion should be emphasized along with recognition of the reality of sin in the world and our lives and our consequent need for God's forgiveness in Christ. This formation should aim to instill in the children the desire to be spiritually ready for Eucharistic communion in the Lord.

The **doctrinal elements** of catechesis for First Communion must always reflect the teaching of the Church in its worship and its creed. In teaching, discussion and publications regarding First Holy Communion, it must be always be clear that the candidates are, by their baptism, already members of the Body of Christ and living in communion with the Lord. They are to be welcomed into full Eucharistic sharing, participating for the first time in the holy meal of the Lord's body and blood. **wel-**

This will not be the first time to 'meet Jesus' but rather it opens up to them a new, tangible, and wonderful way to encounter him truly present in the form of food and drink.

B. Formation of Parents/Guardians

All parents/guardians should be gathered and prepared in the year or so prior to the celebration of First Communion.

The **parents/guardians of all candidates** should be reminded of their essential role in the Christian formation of their children. They should be provided with practical information concerning preparation for the celebration of First Communion of their children and for the celebration of First Penance during the time of formation. Along with this, they should have the opportunity for personal spiritual preparation for these sacramental celebrations.

Parents/guardians who for the **first time** are leading a child to Eucharistic communion are to be provided with **catechesis** to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist in the life of the Church and in their own lives. This catechesis should emphasize the relationship between Eucharist and the call and dignity of Baptism.

Parents/guardians who have **previously participated** in sacramental preparation for Eucharist and Penance are to be welcomed and encouraged to take part again especially if some time has passed since they last participated.

Parents/guardians and families with special needs (i.e. family crisis, invalid marriage, alienation from the Church) are to receive particular pastoral care to enable them to participate fruitfully in the sacraments.

A candidate whose **parents/guardians do not participate** in such sacramental preparation programs may not for this reason be denied their right to Eucharistic communion (CCL, 843, 912).

C. **Mystagogy (Post-Sacramental Formation)**

After the celebration of First Communion, the children are to continue their journey in a type of mystagogical formation. Following First communion, continued opportunities should be provided for the new communicants to experience the joyful welcome of closer ties with the community of the faithful (RCIA, 246).

Continuing catechesis should help the new communicants to deepen their grasp of the paschal mystery through reflection on the gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church concerning the Eucharist, and through regular sharing in the Eucharist and increasing involvement in works of charity (RCIA, 244).

VI. **TIMES OF CELEBRATION**

The mystery of Christ unfolds through the **liturgical year**. At the center is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord and the renewal of baptismal life at Easter. The initiation of children into sacramental life should be accommodated to this pattern and be supported by its themes and Spirit (GNLYC, 1, 17, 18).

It is often ideal for First Communion may to be celebrated on one of the Sundays between Easter and Pentecost.

VII. LITURGICAL RITES

A. First Penance (Sacrament of Reconciliation)

When possible, the opportunity could be provided for those receiving First Penance to do so in the context of a **communal celebration** along with adults and other children.

Such celebrations should be adapted for use with children while maintaining the integrity of the liturgical structure emphasizing primary ritual acts and avoiding practices that inflate secondary elements. (General principles from the *Directory for Masses with Children* and the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* should be used.)

Planning the rite, selecting the readings, and preaching should reflect the teaching of the Rite of Penance.

B. First Communion

As initiation into the Eucharistic communion of the whole Church, the celebration of First Holy Communion most fittingly takes place during the **parish Sunday Liturgy**. There, in the event that most fully expresses the life, worship, and love of the Body of Christ, the local community welcomes its newest communicants. Celebrations on other days of the week must be considered exceptional.

Several such celebrations can be scheduled either for groups or for one or two candidates at a time. Ideally, where the number of candidates is small or manageable a single celebration may be arranged wherein the parish admits all candidates at the same time.

Parishes must consider **all candidates for First Holy Communion equally**. There must be no distinction or separation of children according to school or parish religious education.

In the **liturgy of First Communion**, the following must be considered:

- i. As practical arrangements for the celebration are being made, the placement of the candidates in the assembly should reflect both their place in their family and community giving consideration to their special presence as candidates for communion.
- ii. In the selection of music, texts, etc., principles of good liturgy should be followed consulting the *Directory for Masses with Children* and the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*. (nos. 484-487) Music should be selected from the parish repertory for Sunday Liturgy.
- iii. The special focus for children should be on their participation in the action of the Eucharist. The children should be well prepared to sing the acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer, join in the Lord's Prayer, share the sign of Peace and partake in Holy Communion. Some of them should be involved in the Presentation of the Gifts. Other liturgical roles (i.e., altar server, greeter, reader, and cantor) are better given to other competent young people (older siblings, cousins, etc.) and adults.
- iv. Since the Communion Rite includes the option of receiving both the Eucharistic bread and cup, children should be prepared to receive Eucharist under both species.

- v. Parishes are asked **not to require** a particular form of dress; however, candidates and their families need to be reminded of the sacredness of this occasion. Local custom may prevail as long as no family feels pressure to conform to purchase elaborate clothing.