

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CANDIDATES: IMPLEMENTING THE RITE
How are we doing?
Updated August 2018

I. Introduction

One of the challenges we face in implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is how to recognize and celebrate the efficacy of the baptism of candidates seeking full communion in the Catholic Church. Often, baptized candidates are either grouped into the same category with the unbaptized, or their baptism is recognized in name only. Recognizing the baptismal status of a candidate is essential. Uncatechized candidates often do not understand the efficacy of their baptism. Affirming one's own baptism should be a powerful moment in the journey of faith for candidates, especially those uncatechized.

As you implement the rite, we encourage you to give special attention to how baptized candidates in your parish are formed and received into the full Communion of the Church.

It is important to note that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* clearly distinguishes between catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (baptized). It further distinguishes between candidates who are uncatechized and those who are already catechized. Uncatechized candidates' formation is similar to that of catechumens. However, their baptismal status is to be recognized and affirmed throughout the process. Catechized, baptized Christians are to receive appropriate formation based on a discernment of each particular candidate.

II. Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist (RCIA, Part II.4)

From the Ritual Text:

#400 *Even though uncatechized adults have not yet heard the message of the mystery of Christ, their status differs from that of catechumens, since by baptism they have already become members of the Church and children of God. Hence their conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop* [emphasis added].

#401 *...the preparation of these adults requires a considerable time during which the faith infused in baptism must grow in them and take deep root* [emphasis added].

#402 For the most part the plan of catechesis corresponds to the one laid down for catechumens.... But...the process of catechesis...*should take into account that these adults have a special status because they are already baptized* [emphasis added].

In Summary:

Therefore, uncatechized candidates' formation:

- May look very similar to that of a catechumen
- May last as long as that of a catechumen

- Is conscious of their baptismal status and reflected in their formation, particularly in the celebration of the rites

The formation of candidates who are already catechized is very different than that of catechumens and uncatechized candidates.

III. Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA, Part II.5)

From the Ritual Text:

#473 *This rite is so arranged that **no greater burden than necessary** is required for the establishment of communion and unity [emphasis added].*

#477 *The baptized Christian is to receive both doctrinal and spiritual preparation, adapted to individual pastoral requirements, for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church...**Anything that would equate candidates for reception with those who are catechumens is to be absolutely avoided** [emphasis added].*

In Summary:

Therefore, catechized candidates' formation:

- May or may not include the various rites (cf. #478)
- Is often much shorter than the uncatechized candidate
- Is adapted to their pastoral needs:
 - ❖ It helps them become familiar with the parish community through participation in small faith communities and other parish activities.
 - ❖ They may not necessarily be involved in catechumenal sessions.
 - ❖ The degree of doctrinal formation they require must be discerned. Christians of some mainline denominations may only need instruction on particular Catholic doctrines (cf. #31, *National Statutes*).
 - ❖ Their reception can take place at any time, usually not at the Easter Vigil (cf. #32 & #33 *National Statutes*).

IV. What does this mean for our parish?

For Pastoral Consideration:

How do we respect a candidate's baptism? What are the implications in the RCIA process? Minimally, respect for the efficacy of baptism is shown by the fact that we do not re-baptize Christians who were validly baptized in another faith tradition. However, it is important that we go beyond this minimal approach and seek ways to exemplify that we value the grace of baptism that has already occurred in the lives of our candidates.

Some Practical Suggestions:

1. When you interview baptized candidates, take time to ask them about their religious upbringing and the meaning of baptism in their lives.

2. Discern with baptized and catechized individuals what they need to complete their initiation in the Catholic Church. Find out about the kind of catechesis they have received previously. What elements of Catholic teaching and practice must they learn? Discern an appropriate time for their reception into the Catholic Church rather than bringing them through the entire process with everyone else.
3. As leaders in the RCIA, it is important to understand and make choices out of a consistent theology of baptism. A consistent baptismal theology must inform your decisions regarding why candidates are included or not in the various rites and enable proper catechesis about the meaning of the rites for a baptized person.
4. In precatechumenate and catechumenate sessions it is appropriate, at times, to end with a separate prayer/and or ritual for the already baptized and for those preparing for baptism. In the catechumenate keep the minor exorcisms and anointing with the oil of catechumens for true catechumens (unbaptized), and use other prayers/blessings for the already baptized (e.g., from the *Book of Blessings*).
5. One way to honor baptism may occur at the last gathering before the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates. Bring the baptized candidates around the baptismal font and pray with them, asking God to renew, deepen, and open the meaning of their baptism to them.
6. Celebrate a separate Rite of Welcoming with those already baptized. If your parish celebrates the combined Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates, make clear distinctions between catechumens and candidates through music, words of explanation, and choreography. Please note that a separate Rite of Welcoming the Candidates ritually affirms the candidates' baptismal status and avoids confusion. Thus, this form of the rite is optimal.
7. Dismissal of candidates from the Sunday Eucharist is not foreseen by the rite. However, some candidates, especially uncatechized candidates, may choose to participate in the dismissal sessions, but others may desire to stay for the entire Mass. This should be discerned with each candidate.
8. For the celebration of the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, only those preparing for baptism should sign the Book of the Elect. Talk with your candidates before the Rite of Sending for Recognition by the Bishop, and help them to understand that they do not sign the Book of the Elect because they are already members of the elect by virtue of their baptism. Their names are already inscribed in the Book of the Elect.
9. Only the elect (the unbaptized) participate in the Scrutinies. Explain to candidates that they participate in the Scrutinies as baptized members of the Christian community. Like the rest of the Catholic community, they are in the process of renewing their baptismal commitment. Baptized, uncatechized adults may participate in the Penitential Rite on the Second Sunday of Lent (cf. #459-#463).
10. Think creatively about other ways you might highlight the baptism of candidates throughout the formation process at your parish. Possibly have separate catechetical sessions on various occasions for the baptized in order to convey to them the significance of their baptism.

11. Discernment of children who are already baptized must be given the same consideration as the adult candidates.

12. Initiation is completed at the Eucharistic table. The Eucharist is the pinnacle of initiation. Celebrating the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church outside of the Easter Vigil emphasizes this reality. It is optimal to receive candidates into the full communion of the Church through the Rite of Reception (cf. #475). This Rite of Reception may be celebrated several times a year when baptized Christians are ready to be received into full communion.