

Diocese of Covington
RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual
Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

XII. Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and Reception into Full Communion with the Catholic Church

The elect and the candidates for reception into full communion, having been assessed by those concerned with their religious formation as being ready and themselves desiring to enter and live the life of a Catholic Christian, stand well-disposed for the grace given in the Sacraments. The elect will receive all three of the Sacraments of Initiation. The candidates for full communion, having already made a good confession in the Sacrament of Penance, will make a profession of faith and be received into the Catholic Church and then receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and first Eucharist. In this manner the elect and candidates for full communion “are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.” (RCIA, no. 206)

A. Pastoral Aspect – There are a few pastoral details that must be completed before this celebration.

1. **The candidates for full communion must celebrate the Sacrament of Penance before this celebration.**
2. **The authority to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation must be obtained.** (See details of this below in the Confirmation section C.3.)
3. If the valid baptismal status of any of those who are to be received into full communion is uncertain, they should be baptized conditionally during the celebration of initiation. It should be clearly explained to the one to be conditionally baptized, and even to the assembly during the celebration, that this is being done to ensure the person has been baptized validly, which is necessary for the valid reception of the other Sacraments. The formula to be used during the celebration for a conditional Baptism is: “If you have not been validly baptized before, I baptize you ...” (RCIA, no. 480)
4. The sponsors above all should understand what is going to happen during this celebration. They are to help guide and lead the one whom they sponsor through the ceremony. Only secondarily should the elect and candidates for full communion be required to know what is going to happen.

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5. The celebration might be made more personal in a number of ways.
 - a) The names of the patron Saints of the elect and candidates for full communion can be incorporated into the Litany of the Saints.
 - b) The prayers of the faithful could include them by name if practical.
 - c) Some of the neophytes should take part in the presentation of the gifts.
 6. A reception after the Easter Vigil celebration provides a time for members of the community to welcome and congratulate their new brothers and sisters in the faith. It also provides a time for words of appreciation, joy and gratitude to be exchanged.
- B. Catechetical Aspect** – As the elect and candidates are led through a rehearsal for the celebration, special references to their previous catechesis or reminders ought to be given.
1. Those conducting the rehearsal might include these catechetical reminders:
 - a) Jesus is the Light of the World
 - b) Jesus is the Light that conquers the darkness, most especially the darkness of sin and death
 - c) God calls us into a communion, into a people
 - d) Salvation has a long and wondrous history
 - e) Baptism is immersion into the saving death of the Lord Jesus
 - f) Baptism washes away original sin and all others committed before Baptism
 - g) Baptism makes us children of God and members of the mystical body of Christ
 - h) Confirmation seals and strengthens us with the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - i) The Chrism is consecrated and in name shares the same root word as Christ – the anointed one
 - j) In the Sacraments we not only meet Christ and are given grace but also vow ourselves to live as his disciples, as Catholic Christians
 - k) The Eucharist is truly, really and substantially the very presence of Christ
 - l) The Eucharist is the sacrifice of Calvary present to us in an unbloody way

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- m) Christ is present in the assembly, the minister, the Word and the Eucharistic species
 - n) Eucharist brings about communion with God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit as well as with the members of the Church
 - o) We are sent forth from the celebration of the Mass to live and share our faith.
2. Practically speaking, the manner in which Holy Communion is received needs to be reviewed and rehearsed by those who will receive Communion for the first time.
3. During the Mass, before saying: “Behold the Lamb of God,” the celebrant may briefly remind the neophytes and newly received of the preeminence of the Eucharist, which is the climax of their initiation and reception and the center of the whole of Christian life (RCIA, no. 243).
- C. Liturgical Aspect** – The usual time for this celebration is the Easter Vigil. (RCIA, no. 208 if the pastoral situation demands another time.) The RCIA ritual book provides rubrics and texts for the initiation of the elect alone at nos. 206-243. The RCIA ritual book provides rubrics and texts for the reception into full communion alone at nos. 473-499. The RCIA ritual book also provides rubrics and texts for a combined rite for the celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church at 562-594. **Please note that some texts have been revised in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal. These will be noted below.**
1. *Baptism* – The celebration of Baptism begins after the homily. The rubrics and texts as found in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal at nos. 37-53 are to be followed. **Please note that the texts before the Litany of the Saints, before the Blessing of the font and water, as well as the blessing of the font and water have been revised, making the ones found in the RCIA ritual book obsolete.** After the blessing of the font and water, the celebrant continues with the administration of the elect’s renunciation of sin, the profession of faith and the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism. These texts can be found at nos. 226-230 or in the combined rite text at nos. 572-574 of the RCIA ritual book. After the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith, the elect are baptized either by immersion, “which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and

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resurrection of Christ, (Christian Initiation General Introduction, no. 22),” referenced as option A; or by pouring of water, referenced as option B. If any of those baptized are not to be confirmed at this time (this applies only to children who have not completed their 8th grade year), they are anointed as described at nos. 228 or 577 of the RCIA ritual book. If the newly baptized are to receive a baptismal garment, this is to be accomplished as described at no. 229 or no. 578 of the RCIA ritual book. The giving of the baptismal garment is optional but highly recommended. The newly baptized then receive their baptismal candles as given in no. 230 or no.579 of the RCIA ritual book.

2. *Celebration of Reception* – If there are Candidates for reception into full communion, their profession of faith and reception follows the baptisms and precedes the celebration of Confirmation. This celebration is for only those who have received a valid non-Catholic Baptism. The rubrics and texts of the RCIA ritual book for this celebration are to be followed. They can be found at nos. 490-492 and in the combined ritual at nos. 584-586. *When receiving a candidate initiated in the Eastern Orthodox Church, contact the Chancery for specific instructions.*
3. *Confirmation* – All those who have reached their 8th grade year who have been baptized and those who have been received into full communion of the Catholic Church are to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The texts given in the RCIA ritual book are to be followed. These can be found beginning at no. 231 when no receptions take place; beginning at no. 493, when only receptions take place; or in the combined rite beginning at no. 587.

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- a) The major issue involved in the celebration of Confirmation is the authority to confirm. Priests who have the authority to confirm have this either by the law itself or by delegation from the bishop.
- (1) The law itself gives priests the authority to confirm all those of the age of reason whom they have baptized. This means that **only the priest who has baptized has the "authority" or "faculty" to confirm that same person.** Baptisms cannot be celebrated by one priest, and then the Confirmations of these by another priest. These Confirmations would be invalid. Nor can baptisms be celebrated by a deacon and then the confirmations by a priest. These Confirmations would also be invalid.
 - (2) **The pastors of the Diocese of Covington have been delegated the authority to confirm all those they receive into full communion with the Catholic Church. All other priests must receive permission from the pastor of the Parish to Baptize and Confirm those being brought to full communion with the Catholic Church.**
 - (3) **In the Diocese of Covington priests are not delegated to confirm those who were baptized Catholic but uncatechized.** If a person has been baptized Catholic, either the Bishop or the specially delegated priest must confirm that person, otherwise the Confirmation will be invalid. If one is in doubt about these matters please contact the Vicar(s) General. **The priest who wishes to confirm a baptized Catholic must write a letter of petition requesting that faculty from the Bishop far enough in advance that appropriate pastoral accommodations can be made.**
- b) The renewal of Baptismal promises and the sprinkling of the assembly with the Easter water takes place after the celebration of Confirmation as stated at no. 55 of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal. **This is different than that given in the combined ritual found in the RCIA ritual book.**

