



***Called  
To  
FAITH***

***Diocesan Guidelines for  
Sacramental Preparation:  
The Sacraments of  
Initiation and First Penance***

*The Catholic Diocese of Richmond*

# Called to Faith



## Study Text Edition

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Office of the Bishop

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Dear Sisters and Brothers:

At long last, I am pleased to publish the Diocesan Guidelines for Sacramental Preparation entitled "*Called to Faith*".

The guidelines, with much consultation, took a couple of years to complete. These guidelines are a *study text*, or interim text, in order that priests, pastoral coordinators, liturgy planners and religious educators have the opportunity to apply these guidelines in their own parishes. Then, after one year of use, they can make suggestions for any improvements in the text.

The guidelines center around the sacraments of initiation and first reconciliation. They are based on the principles set forth in the Rite of Christian Formation for Adults. Parishes have different experiences in implementing the RCIA. All these experiences are valid to the extent that they enhance the faith formation and spiritual development of all our people.

I am grateful to all, and there were so many, who gave of their time and expertise in the formulation of these guidelines.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter F. Sullivan".

Walter F. Sullivan

Bishop of Richmond

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(1). "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Peter 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full, conscious and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered above all else. . . (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #14)."

(2). "Taking into account existing circumstances and other needs, as well as the wishes of the faithful, the minister should make full use of the various options allowed in the rite. In addition to the adaptations that are provided in the Roman Ritual for the dialogue and blessings, the minister may make other adaptations for special circumstances (*Decree on Christian Initiation, General Introduction*, #34, 35)."

"Celebrants should make full and intelligent use of the freedom given to them either in Christian Initiation, General Introduction (no. 34) or in the rubrics of the rite itself... In all the rites the greatest freedom is left in the invitations and instructions, and the intercessions may always be shortened, changed, or even expanded with new intentions, in order to fit the circumstances or special situation of the candidates... or of the others present... (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Introduction*, #35)."

## Introduction and Overview

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These policies are presented to assist pastoral leaders in preparing individuals and communities for celebrating the three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. The first celebration of reconciliation is included because of the role of personal conversion in the ongoing process of initiation.

The goal of these policies is to ensure that these sacraments are faithfully kept within the context of a continuous initiation into the full life of the Church. Further, these policies hope to facilitate the celebration of these sacraments with the “full, conscious and active participation” envisioned by the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.<sup>1</sup>



These guidelines, along with their principles, constitute norms for the Diocese of Richmond. At the same time, they recognize the unique requirements of local needs and situations. Therefore, each parish should develop its own method for implementing them and parish leaders

should use discretion and sensitivity when applying them to individual circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

This document begins with overall policies for all three sacraments of initiation and the sacrament of penance. The next section deals in general with policies for sacramental preparation. The final section deals directly with each of the sacraments of initiation (and first reconciliation) with particular policies for catechesis, formation and liturgical celebration.

Notes and references are located in the column to the left of each facing page. When necessary and whenever space allows, a full or at least partial excerpt accompanies each citation.

## Overall Policies

### The Three Sacraments of Initiation

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(3). "The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Most Holy Eucharist are so interrelated that they are required for full Christian initiation (*Code of Canon Law, Canon 842,2*)."

"In the sacraments of Christian initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial and resurrection... Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God's people... By signing us with the gift of the Spirit, confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord... so that we may bear witness to him before all the world... Finally, coming to the table of the eucharist... we show forth the unity of God's people. By offering ourselves with Christ... we pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family. Thus the three sacraments of initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world (*Decree on Christian Initiation, General Introduction, #1,2*)."

(4). "The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. . . . Before they can come to the liturgy people must be called to faith and to conversion. . . . The liturgy in turn inspires the faithful to become 'of one heart in love' . . . it prays that 'they may grasp by deed what they hold by creed (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #9*)."

(5). "...with the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason (*The Code of Canon Law, Canon 97, 2*)."

## Overall Policies

### 1. The Three Sacraments of Initiation

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#### Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist as Sacraments of Initiation

1. The sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist are the three sacraments by which an individual is initiated into the full life of the Church. Whether these sacraments are celebrated all at the same time, or at various times in a person's life, they are invariably understood and carried out as major steps in the initiation process.<sup>3</sup>

#### Sacramental Preparation

2. Individuals preparing to celebrate any of the sacraments must participate in a substantial period of catechesis and formation.<sup>4</sup> Sacramental preparation involves either participation in the Rite of Initiation of Adults itself, or a process of catechesis modeled on the RCIA. In the case of infants or children who are not of catechetical age, the parents take part in a course of preparation.

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*Another section of the document expands on policies for sacramental preparation. It includes a full explanation of the RCIA as a model for all sacramental catechesis.*

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### **Liturgical Preparations**

3. When the sacraments, and any liturgical rites related to them, are celebrated, all involved should begin preparations well in advance.
4. Those who plan the liturgies, the ministers who will take part and the candidates as well as their sponsors should be thoroughly familiar with the rituals. Whenever it seems useful, an explanation of particular rites and symbols should be provided to the parish community ahead of time.
5. Any special requirements of the rites should be attended to and in place before the liturgy begins. All who have a special part in the liturgy should come ready to carry out their respective roles with confidence and proficiency. They should arrive in ample time for any final instructions or preparations.

### **The Sequence and Scheduling of the Sacraments of Initiation**

6. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the normative process for preparing for and celebrating the sacraments of initiation. When an individual is preparing to celebrate more than one of the sacraments of initiation at one time, that person participates in the RCIA process itself (or in its special rite for children [CICCA]). When an individual is preparing for just one of the sacraments of initiation (or for more than one, over an extended period of time), the sacramental preparation consists of catechesis that is modeled on the RCIA. A summary of the required forms of preparation is included in the notes for this section.
7. In certain circumstances, these three sacraments are celebrated all at once and in the same liturgy. In other circumstances, they are celebrated at different times and in separate liturgies. The order in which these sacraments are celebrated will also differ with various sets of circumstances.
8. The sequence of the sacraments, and how they are scheduled, are determined by the age of the person, and whether or not the person has already been baptized either as a Catholic or in another Christian tradition.

*[Throughout this document, the term "adult" includes young adults who are no longer teenagers or who have completed high school. The term "later teen years" refers to the age range for the 11th and 12th grades. The terms "age of reason" and "catechetical age" are generally synonymous terms for 7 years of age.]<sup>5</sup>*

## Overall Policies

### The Three Sacraments of Initiation

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(6). "This form of the rite of Christian initiation (Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age) is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Part II, #252*)."

(7). "It is necessary that the celebration of baptism be properly prepared. Thus: 1) an adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and, to the extent possible, be led through the several stages to sacramental initiation... (*The Code of Canon Law, Canon 851*)."

"Unless a grave reason prevents it, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, also receiving Communion (*The Code of Canon Law, Canon 866*)."

"What is prescribed in the canons on the baptism of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the use of reason (*The Code of Canon Law, Canon 852, 1*)."

(8). "Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth; as soon as possible after birth or even before it parents are to go to the pastor and request the sacrament for their child and be properly prepared for it (*The Code of Canon Law, Canon 867, 1*)."

A) *Any unbaptized adult, or any unbaptized child who has reached the age of reason (i.e., is of catechetical age), is enrolled into the Order of Catechumens, participates in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (or in its special rite for children [CICCA]<sup>6</sup>) and is initiated into the Church by celebrating baptism, confirmation and eucharist with the first reception of communion at one liturgy. The person is baptized, then confirmed and then receives first communion in that one liturgy.*<sup>7</sup>

B) *An unbaptized infant, or an unbaptized child who has not reached the age of reason (i.e., is not of catechetical age), is not enrolled into the Order of Catechumens. Instead, after a course of preparation with the parents, the initiation process begins with the infant's or child's baptism alone.*<sup>8</sup> When the person has reached the age of reason, and after the required preparation, the initiation process continues with eucharist with the first reception of communion. When the person reaches the later teen years, following the required preparation, the initiation process concludes with confirmation. The three sacraments are normally celebrated at different times in the individual's life, with first communion taking place between baptism and confirmation.

The Catechumenate is a period of formal catechesis. Therefore, *the unbaptized child of a Catechumen*, is not enrolled into the

Order of Catechumens unless the child is of catechetical age. This child may be baptized with his or her parent(s) at the Easter Vigil, but is not confirmed and does not receive first communion at that time.

- C) *A child who has been baptized and raised as a Catholic, and who has reached the age of reason (i.e. is of catechetical age), is not enrolled in the Order of Catechumens. The child continues the initiation process by preparing for and celebrating eucharist with the first reception of communion when that child has reached the age of reason (i.e., is of catechetical age). The child's initiation concludes with confirmation which takes place, with the required preparation, when the child reaches the later teen years. Confirmation follows first communion, with each sacrament celebrated at different liturgies.*
- D) *A child who has been baptized as a Catholic, but has not been raised as a Catholic, and who has reached the age of reason (i.e. is of catechetical age), may participate in the special initiation rite for children (CICCA) that is included in the RCIA. The child is not enrolled in the Order of Catechumens, but takes part in the rest of the initiation process and completes it by celebrating confirmation and eucharist with the first reception of communion, with his or her parent(s), at the Easter Vigil. This child is confirmed and then receives first communion in that one liturgy. Otherwise, this child continues and completes the initiation process in the same way as a child who has been baptized and raised as a Catholic.*
- E) *A child who has been baptized in another Christian tradition, and who has reached the age of reason (i.e. is of catechetical age), may participate in the special initiation rite for children (CICCA) that is included in the RCIA. The child is not enrolled in the Order of Catechumens, but takes part in the rest of the initiation process and completes it by making a profession of faith, celebrating confirmation and eucharist with the first reception of communion, with his or her parent(s), at the Easter Vigil.*

Otherwise, with the required preparation, the child makes a profession of faith and receives first communion with his or her parent(s) at the Easter Vigil. The

## Overall Policies

### The Three Sacraments of Initiation

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(9). ". . . catechetical training . . . gives clarity and vigor to faith, nourishes a life lived according to the Spirit of Christ, leads to a knowing and active participation in the liturgical mystery and inspires apostolic action (*Declaration on Christian Education*, 4)."

(10). "(The catechesis for the catechumenate) . . . should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart towards God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity and nurtures a life completely in accord with the Spirit of Christ (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 78)."

child is not confirmed at that time, but prepares for and celebrates confirmation during the later teen years.

- F) *An adult who has been baptized in another Christian tradition, participates in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The person is not enrolled in the Order of Catechumens, but takes part in the rest of the initiation process and is received into the Church by a profession of faith, confirmation and eucharist with the first reception of communion in one liturgy. The person makes a profession of faith, is confirmed and then receives first communion in that one liturgy.*
- G) *An adult who is a baptized Catholic, but has never received confirmation and eucharist, is not enrolled in the Order of Catechumens, but participates in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and completes the initiation process in one liturgy by celebrating confirmation and eucharist with the first reception of communion.*
- H) *An adult who is a baptized Catholic, has received first communion but was never confirmed, after a preparation of at least 4 months modeled on the RCIA process, completes the initiation process with confirmation conferred at Mass. These adults are confirmed either by the bishop at a liturgy for a group of parishes or by the pastor in the candidate's parish.*

## 2. Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation

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### **The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as a Model for All Sacramental Catechesis**

9. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults incorporates into its formation process the key elements of liturgical, pastoral, social and doctrinal development that are fundamental to any sacramental preparation. It does so with a deliberate sequence of activities and experiences. These events help manifest the character of the sacraments that are part of the process.<sup>9</sup> Their sequence parallels the spiritual development of the candidates.

10. The RCIA provides a method for individuals, coming from various stages of faith development, to establish themselves in the lifelong process of maturing in faith. At the heart of that process is the ongoing reality of personal conversion.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, conversion involves those events and circumstances by which all the faithful constantly evaluate, renew and expand their investment in the Christian mission and their commitment to Christian living.

11. The RCIA is a practical example of sacramental catechesis that prepares for Christian living. It presents a model that can and should be adapted and applied to preparation for all the sacraments.

Using the RCIA as a model does not mean, however, simply duplicating its various elements and superimposing them indiscriminately onto other catechetical situations. Patterning another sacramental catechesis after the RCIA means designing an ongoing process of faith development that fosters a lifelong process of personal conversion in faith. *This process should precede, include and continue after the celebration of a sacrament. It should take place within the scope of the Church's entire sacramental life and in the context of the Church's full mission of prayer, teaching and service.*

## **Overall Policies**

### ***Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation***

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(11). "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it; that is why they are called 'sacraments of faith' (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 59)."

### **The Nature and Aim of Sacramental Catechesis that is Modeled on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**

12. In celebrating the sacraments, individuals and the community prepare themselves for Christian living. The sacraments, then, are a major element in the ongoing process of catechesis by which Christians establish, develop and sustain a commitment to live out their faith.<sup>11</sup>

13. The process that is commonly known as sacramental preparation is not, therefore, a course of studies whose outcome is the celebration of a sacrament. The aim of sacramental preparation is, instead, to assist and enable people, at various stages of their faith development, to continue to live and grow as Christians.

14. The celebration of a sacrament is not the conclusion or the end product of sacramental preparation. It is, rather, an integral part of that process. It provides a point of culmination and juncture between preparation for the particular sacrament(s) and the ongoing process of readiness for Christian living.

15. Other forms of liturgical prayer are an essential element of sacramental catechesis. This includes prayer among the candidates and their catechists, as well as prayers and rites that take place with the candidates and the worshipping assembly on Sunday and at other appropriate times.

16. The interpersonal aspects of faith, such as bonding with other believers and especially with people in need, are also core to sacramental catechesis. This demands a group setting, among peers, for catechesis. It also involves opportunities for the candidates that foster a style of living

rooted in shared values, enriched from the contributions of others and fortified by an active commitment to the well being of others.

17. Retreats and other extended times for prayer and reflection should be scheduled at appropriate points in the preparation process. Such events can help a group of candidates unite in a spirit of mutual support; they can provide individual candidates with a sense of belonging to a community of shared faith. They furnish candidates with quality time for personal discernment and decision making, especially in anticipation of liturgical rites in which they declare their intentions or as immediate preparation for celebrating the sacraments.

18. Sacramental catechesis also involves education and formation in doctrine. This is more than an academic instruction before a sacrament is celebrated. An indispensable part of this formation occurs after the sacramental celebration. This postsacramental catechesis is an in-depth study of the teachings and convictions that are the foundation of the community's liturgical and pastoral practice.

### **The Shared Responsibility for Sacramental Catechesis**

19. Pastors and pastoral coordinators oversee the design and implementation of parish programs of sacramental catechesis and are responsible to determine the progress and readiness of candidates. The parish community is encouraged to recognize its active role in the formation of candidates, especially in the Sunday worship assembly. Special teams should be established to work directly with the various groups of candidates. Along with professional staff, the teams should include parishioners who are selected because of their interest and skills. Team membership should take into account the many aspects of the catechetical process, and the wide variety of skills that it requires.

20. The teams should collaborate with other parish groups including those responsible for education, worship and social outreach. They should engage the entire parish community in assisting the candidates with active prayer, encouragement and support.

21. Parents, both by word and example, are the first teachers of faith to their children. Parish catechetical programs for children or youth should foster and enhance this parental role. Catechetical teams working with children or youth, or with parents presenting infants for baptism, are partners with the domestic church that exists within each family unit. The parish should provide parents with direction and resources for their special work within the home.

## **Overall Policies**

### ***Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation***

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(12). *Note:* In the case of candidates who have already been baptized as Catholics, there is a certain positive symbolism to having an original baptismal sponsor (godparent) act as sponsor for the remaining sacraments of initiation. However, this should only be done if the original godparent is fully available to the candidate as a sponsor throughout the entire preparation process -- before, during and after the celebration of the sacrament(s). If this is not possible, the original godparent may have a special role in the sacramental celebration but does not replace the candidate's own sponsor at that liturgy.

### **The Role and Responsibilities of Sponsors**

22. Sponsors are active participants in the preparation and formation of their respective candidates. A sponsor not only vouches for the suitability and readiness of a candidate, but is a delegate of the parish community who becomes personally involved in the faith development of the candidate. The sponsor serves both as a mentor and as fellow believer both before and after the sacraments are celebrated.

23. Each candidate, then, should be assisted in choosing a sponsor with whom he or she can build a productive relationship of respect and trust. The sponsor must be able to serve as a reliable contact with the local community, and participate with the candidate in the ongoing life of that community. A sponsor, therefore, is normally an active member of the parish where the candidate is preparing for the sacraments. A person chosen from another parish, however, must be available to carry out fully the role and responsibilities of a sponsor throughout the entire preparation -- before, during and after the celebration of the sacrament.<sup>12</sup> In every case, the sponsor must be an practicing Catholic who is in good standing with the Church and who has received all the sacraments of initiation -- baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

Since parents have their own particular role in the faith formation of their children, and because of the unique aspects of the sponsor's role, parents do not serve as sponsors for their own children. A candidate's spouse, because of the spouse's special role in the candidate's faith life, does not serve as the candidate's sponsor.

24. Before agreeing to serve as a sponsor, an individual should be completely informed about the nature of the role, the responsibilities that are involved and the time commitment that is required. This information should include a complete schedule of all the activities that will involve sponsor participation.

25. Every preparation process should include activities, to be determined according to local needs and situations, when all the sponsors and candidates join together. Sponsors are expected to be present whenever candidates participate in special liturgical rites with the parish community as well as for the sacramental liturgy itself.

26. The involvement of sponsors in the faith development of their candidates does not end when the sacraments are celebrated. Sponsors should maintain frequent contact with their former candidates for a substantial period following the sacramental celebration. They should be available for guidance, support and partnership as those who have recently celebrated the sacraments progress in their identity and involvement as members of the local and broader church community.

### **Sacramental Catechesis for the Disabled**

27. Individuals with physical or developmental disabilities are certainly eligible candidates for the sacraments. Any assessment of their readiness to prepare for and celebrate the sacraments should be open to what might be their unique ways of relating and communicating.

28. While special needs and requirements of the disabled must always be recognized and respected, the disabled should, whenever possible, participate in sacramental preparation along with the others who are preparing for the same sacraments. They should celebrate the sacraments together with the others who have prepared for the same sacrament. As with all parents, the parents of disabled children are involved in the preparation process as the first teachers of faith to their children.

### **The Freedom and Particular Needs of Candidates**

29. As candidates approach any of the sacraments they come with their own set of needs and circumstances. Certainly, the general parish schedule of catechetical programs cannot accommodate every personal situation. *Candidates should not, however, be regimented into any program or process simply because they belong to a certain age group or only to meet preestablished time tables.*

## **Overall Policies**

### ***Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation***

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30. Every effort should be made to determine the disposition, readiness and individual requirements of each person who approaches sacramental preparation. A personal interview should take place before a person undertakes preparation. This interview should surface any special needs or circumstances, and establish which parish program is best suited to the individual's particular situation. The person should be informed of any sacramental documentation that will be needed to record properly the proposed sacramental celebration(s).

31. In the case of a married adult seeking to be initiated or received into the Church, the initial interview should also determine the canonical status of the individual's marriage. If there is any previous marriage, possible effects on the current marriage should be considered carefully. A previous marriage can have an effect whether it was witnessed by a Catholic priest or not, even if there is a civil divorce and regardless of any previous annulment that might have been enacted within another Christian or other faith tradition. If there is any doubt of the validity of the current marriage, or if there is a need for any tribunal process, the Marriage Tribunal should be contacted immediately.

32. In the case of infants or children being presented for a sacrament, the initial interview should take place with the parents or legal guardians. Ordinarily, an infant or child is not accepted as a candidate for a sacrament without the

knowledge and will of at least one of the parents or guardians. Whenever there is reasonable hope that the infant or child will be raised as Catholic, the infant or child is never to be refused a sacrament. If there is substantial reason to believe that the infant or child will not be raised as a Catholic, the requested sacrament is to be delayed, not completely denied.

33. Under no circumstances are parents or guardians encouraged to delay the baptism of an infant, or of a child who has not reached the age of reason (i.e., is not of catechetical age), so that the infant or child can be "enrolled as a catechumen" at a later age. An unbaptized infant or an unbaptized child who has not reached the age of reason, begins the initiation process with baptism. First communion takes place after the person has reached the age of reason and confirmation takes place when the person reaches the later teen years.

### **The Progress of Candidates**

34. Personal interviews should take place at various stages of catechesis, both before and after celebrating a sacrament, to appraise the progress, readiness and particular needs of each candidate. They should involve consultation with parents when appropriate. The pastor or pastoral coordinator makes use of these interviews to determine the readiness of the candidate to approach the sacrament(s).

### **Ongoing Spiritual Development**

35. Once again, sacramental catechesis does not conclude with the celebration of one or more sacraments. Parish programs of sacramental preparation should attend to this conviction in ways that are both practical and effective:

- A) The parish community in general should be instructed in the ongoing nature of sacramental preparation. Parish members should be invited to support and encourage those who have recently celebrated the sacraments to continue and sustain an active participation in the life of the parish community. The parish community should consciously continue with its formational role at liturgy, especially at the Sunday eucharist.
- B) Sponsors should stay in contact with and remain available to their former candidates. They should be ready to assist with the ongoing process of faith development and integration into the life of the church community.

## **Overall Policies**

### ***Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation***

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- C) Opportunities should be provided to those who have recently celebrated the sacraments so that they can continue to meet, interact and identify with those who celebrated the sacraments with them. These should include opportunities for socializing, study and discussion, prayer and reflection.
- D) Opportunities for adult education and formation, for fellowship, for extended periods of prayer and reflection, for training and participation in church ministries and outreach efforts should all be a central part of the community life of every parish. Those who have celebrated the sacraments should be invited to participate in parish-wide activities according to their age and ability. Participation and support of such activities by adults should stand as an example of the ongoing nature of faith development, especially to children, youth and young adults.

**A Summary of Particular Sacramental Preparation  
for Various Candidates**

- A) *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is provided as the normal means for sacramental preparation and celebration for the following individuals:
- Any person of catechetical age who has not been baptized.<sup>(1)</sup>
  - An adult who has been baptized in another Christian tradition.<sup>(2)</sup>
  - A child of catechetical age who has been baptized in another Christian tradition (with parents at the Easter Vigil).<sup>(3)</sup>
  - An adult who has been baptized as Catholic but has not received first communion and has not been confirmed.<sup>(2)</sup>
  - A child of catechetical age who has been baptized as a Catholic but has not been raised as a Catholic (with parents at the Easter Vigil).<sup>(3)</sup>
- B) A process of sacramental preparation and celebration for first communion and first penance, and/or for confirmation, *that is modeled on the RCIA*, is provided for the following individuals:
- A child who has been baptized and raised as a Catholic.
  - A child who has been baptized in another Christian tradition, or who has been baptized as a Catholic but not raised as a Catholic, if the child does not participate in the special RCIA process for children (CICCA).
  - An adult who is a baptized Catholic, has received first communion but has not been confirmed.
- C) A special course of preparation is required for the parents of the following individuals:
- An unbaptized infant or child who has not reached the age of reason (including the infant or child of a Catechumen).

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NOTES

- <sup>(1)</sup> The first section of Part II of the RCIA contains a special process for an unbaptized child of catechetical age (CICCA).
- <sup>(2)</sup> The special process for an unbaptized child of catechetical age (CICCA), contained in the first section of Part II of the RCIA, is adapted for baptized children of catechetical age according to the directives for baptized adults contained in the second section of Part II. Rituals for combining rites with the baptized and unbaptized are found in Appendix I of the RCIA.
- <sup>(3)</sup> Baptized adults participate in the RCIA according to the directives in the second section of Part II of the RCIA. Rituals for combining rites with the baptized and unbaptized are found in Appendix I of the RCIA.

## **Particular Policies**

# **1. Christian Initiation for Adults and for Children of Catechetical Age**

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The overall policies, along with their principles, contained in the first part of this document constitute a foundation for the particular policies that follow for *Christian Initiation for Adults and for Children of Catechetical Age*. It is essential, therefore, to read and apply the following section in the context of the two sections, “*The Three Sacraments of Initiation*” and “*Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation*” that precede it.

For a listing of eligible candidates for *Christian Initiation for Adults and for Children of Catechetical Age*, see #8 above, and the summary with it.

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### **The Process of Christian Initiation**

36. In the most profound sense, the Church itself, the assembly of believers united in Christ, is a sacrament. It is through an intimate bond of living faith and active love among themselves that individuals and the entire community are joined with Christ and share in his gift of salvation. The process of Christian Initiation, then, begins with and seeks to increase incorporation into the Church community.

37. Incorporation into the Church community involves building relationships of faith and love between candidates for sacramental initiation and other believers. The candidates are introduced to and invited to immerse themselves into the living tradition that is recorded in the scriptures and embodied in the daily lives of believers. In this way, the candidates are guided toward and naturally proceed to profess, ratify and celebrate their union with the Church through the sacraments of initiation — baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

38. Before taking formal steps toward incorporation, during the *Precatechumenate (Period of Inquiry)*, individuals delve into the fundamental values of the gospel and explore the teachings and practices of the Church.

As they proceed toward the sacraments, during the *Period of the Catechumenate*, they thoroughly study the doctrines of the Church and the scriptures. As candidates for the sacraments, during the *Period of Purification and Enlightenment*, they enhance this study with deep personal reflection and intense prayer.

After celebrating the sacraments of initiation, during the *Mystagogy*, the newly initiated members continue along their course of incorporation by delving ever more deeply into the mysteries that are the foundation of Christian living. This postsacramental exploration involves a growing investment of themselves and their personal resources into the mission of the Church. It is through this personal investment that they gradually take on their full stature as partners with Christ in the mission of redemption.

### **The Various Stages in the Process of Christian Initiation**

39. There are four distinct stages in the process of Christian initiation. They are the periods of the *precatechumenate*, the *catechumenate*, *enlightenment* and *mystagogy*. Ordinarily, the first three stages (*precatechumenate*, *catechumenate*, *enlightenment*), culminating with the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, and along with the beginnings of the final stage (*mystagogy*), extend over at least an entire year. The final stage (*mystagogy*), that follows the celebration of the sacraments, while it has formal elements at its beginning, actually extends itself throughout the life of the individual.

40. There are three formal steps that mark the close of one stage and the beginning of another stage in the process of Christian initiation. They are the *acceptance* into the Order of Catechumens, *election* as candidates for the sacraments and sacramental *initiation*. A special liturgical rite, celebrated with the parish assembly at a Sunday eucharist, is assigned to the first

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(13). The *RCIA, Part II, Section 1* indicates that it is "generally preferable" for children to celebrate the various rites outside the regular Sunday assembly (#257) "since the presence of a large group might make the children uncomfortable" (#260). If the judgment is made that the larger Sunday assembly would make the children uncomfortable, "these rites should be celebrated with the active participation of a congregation that consists of a suitable number of the faithful, the parents, family, members of the catechetical group and a few adults friends" (#257). Otherwise, the children can celebrate some or all of the rites with the Sunday assembly.

(14). ". . . the Easter Vigil should be regarded as the proper time for the sacraments of initiation" (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Introduction, #8*). "In regard to the time for the celebration of the steps of initiation, it is preferable that . . . the final step, celebration of the sacraments of initiation, take place at the Easter Vigil (see no. 8)" (*RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 1 - Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age, #256*).

two steps. The final step takes place at the Easter Vigil with the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

41. Other liturgical rites, some intended for the parish assembly and others more suitable for smaller gatherings with the candidates, are carried out during the second and third stages of the process.

42. The major elements of all the stages and their respective steps *are designed specifically for adult candidates who have never been baptized*. However, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* provides adaptations for *baptized adults* who are completing their initiation with confirmation and eucharist (*See: RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 4 - Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist or 5 - Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church*) as well as for *unbaptized children* who have reached catechetical age (*See: RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 2 - Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age*). The rites provided in the *RCIA, Part II* for unbaptized children of catechetical age are adapted for eligible *baptized children* of catechetical age.

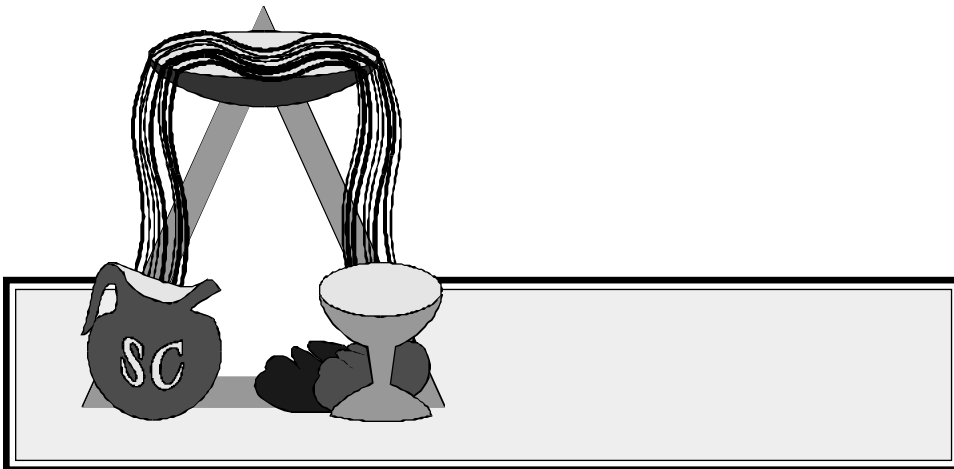
43. When there are both unbaptized and baptized adults to be initiated, they join together for the various stages and steps of the initiation process. The distinctions between unbaptized and baptized candidates are to be properly respected. However, equal respect is shown for what the candidates share in common so that their unity on the journey of faith is not diminished.

44. Unbaptized children (and in some cases, baptized children) of catechetical age, while they participate in formal

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catechesis and other elements of the process with candidates in their own age group, may join with the adult candidates for those rites that are meant to take place within a liturgical assembly.<sup>13</sup> Children normally join their parents and other adults to celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.<sup>14</sup>



(15). In the case of unbaptized children of catechetical age, a form of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens that has been adapted for children (*RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 1 - Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age, First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*) is used.

(16). There are two rituals, comparable to the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*, for use with adults who have already been baptized. (The two rituals can be adapted, using as a model the rite for children mentioned above, for use with baptized children of catechetical age.) When baptized and unbaptized adults are joining together, the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens* is combined with the *Rite of Welcoming Baptized but Previously Uncatechized Adults* (*RCIA, Appendix I: Additional [Combined] Rites, 1*). When there are no unbaptized adults joining with the baptized adults, the *Rite of Welcoming the Candidates* (*RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 4 - Preparation of Uncatechized Adults form Confirmation and Eucharist, 4A*) is used.

### An Outline of the Stages of the Rite of Christian Initiation

This outline gives the sequence and a brief summary of the *four stages*, the *three steps* that occur during those stages and the *liturgical rites* that accompany those stages and steps:

#### **STAGE I - Precatechumenate**

The first stage begins sometime after Pentecost, usually in the late spring or early fall. Also referred to as the *Period of Inquiry* or *Period of Evangelization*, this is a time for exploring the fundamentals of scripture and tradition. Participants are assisted in formulating a decision whether or not to continue the journey of faith in a special union with the Church community. For those who decide to continue, a rite either accepting them into the Order of Catechumens or welcoming them into the Church is celebrated, usually at the beginning of Advent. *Otherwise, interested individuals can continue the precatechumenate, with a view toward Advent of the following year.*

Either before or toward the end of the Precatechumenate (depending on local practice), each candidate chooses a sponsor from among those members of the parish who have made themselves available and have been prepared for that role.

#### **Step 1 - Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens**

This step concludes the Precatechumenate and inaugurates the Period of the Catechumenate. It is a liturgical rite celebrated with the assembly, usually on the First Sunday of Advent (or on no more than three other fixed dates before or during Advent), during which the candidates express their desire to begin or continue their faith journey united with the Church community. The candidates are presented with a book

of the gospels as a symbol of their commitment to integrate gospel values into their lives.<sup>15</sup>

Those who are already baptized, either adults or children, although they do not enter the Order of Catechumens by this step, participate in one of the adaptations of this rite as the first formal step in the process of completing their sacramental initiation.<sup>16</sup>

**STAGE II - *Catechumenate***

The second stage normally starts at the beginning of Advent and should conclude on the First Sunday of Lent. This is a time for the candidates to grow in their understanding and experience of faith and to strengthen their commitment to a lifetime of faith. *Individuals who are not ready to move forward to sacramental initiation at the end of this period, can continue as candidates with a view toward Lent of the following year.*

Throughout this period, the candidates partake in a gradual understanding, acceptance and integration of the truths of faith contained in both scripture and tradition. They can be provided with and guided through either a text or a series of texts, as well as other study sources, to aid them in the intellectual dimensions of this process. Likewise, to enhance the relational dimensions of the process, the candidates should be encouraged and directed to participate in parish-wide activities and events. Moreover, to give a spiritual foundation to this process, the candidates should be instructed in the Mass and should take part regularly in the Sunday assembly.

During the Period of the Catechumenate, the practice of dismissing the candidates after the homily at Sunday eucharist can be employed. Whenever this optional practice is used, it is followed immediately by a gathering of the candidates with a catechist to reflect further on the liturgical readings of the day. Whenever candidates are not dismissed, they remain within the liturgical assembly and participate in the rest of the Mass even though, unbaptized or baptized, they refrain from communion until they are confirmed at the Easter Vigil.

The rites that take place during the Period of the Catechumenate, either within the parish assembly or in smaller gatherings with the candidates, are the following (if not celebrated at Mass, these rites take place within the context of a Liturgy of the Word):

- Word Services Outside of Mass***
- Prayers of Petition (Exorcisms)***
- Prayers of Blessing***
- Anointings with the Oil of Catechumens***

**Step 2 - *Rite of Election***

This step concludes the Period of the Catechumenate and inaugurates the Period of Enlightenment. It is a liturgical rite, also referred to as the Enrollment of Names, celebrated with the assembly, usually on the First Sunday of Lent, during which the community accepts

## **An Outline of the Stages of the Rite of Christian Initiation**

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(17), In the case of unbaptized children of catechetical age, a form of the *Rite of Election* that has been adapted for children (*RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 1 - Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age, Second Step: Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names*) is used. The *Rite of Election* is optional for children.

(18), There are two rituals, comparable to the *Rite of Election*, for use with adults who have already been baptized. (The two rituals can be adapted, using as a model the rite for children mentioned above, for use with baptized children of catechetical age.) When baptized and unbaptized adults are joining together, the *Rite of Election* is combined with the *Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates* (*RCIA, Appendix I: Additional [Combined] Rites, 3*). When there are no unbaptized adults joining with the baptized adults, the *Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continual Conversion* (*RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 4 - Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist, 4C*) is used.

(19). The Scrutinies are defined as having a unique relationship to those who are approaching baptism (See: *RCIA, #463*). For this reason, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults does not provide a combined ritual for the Scrutinies when the already baptized join with the unbaptized. Instead, a separate ritual, the Penitential Rite (referred to as a Scrutiny) is provided for use with already baptized adults (See: *RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 4 - Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist, 4D - Penitential Rite [Scrutiny]*). Already baptized candidates, however, need not

the candidates as ready to make their final preparations for sacramental initiation. The candidates sign their names into the Book of the Elect.<sup>17</sup>

Those who are already baptized, since they have taken the first step of sacramental initiation, are not enrolled as the Elect. Instead, they participate in one of the adaptations of this rite provided for the baptized.<sup>18</sup>

Since, sometime after the *Rite of Election*, the candidates will join candidates from other parishes to present themselves and the Book of the Elect to the bishop, mention of this should be incorporated into the *Rite of Election*. If it seems appropriate, the *Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop* (*RCIA, Part II, 4B*), can be used either with the *Rite of Election* or separately on a weekend closer to the time when the candidates will gather with the bishop.

### **STAGE III - Purification and Enlightenment**

The third stage usually begins on the First Sunday of Lent. This stage, regardless of local scheduling, always coincides with the Lenten season and extends to the Easter Vigil. This is a time for the candidates to make their final preparations for sacramental initiation at the Easter Vigil. This is a period of well guided personal reflection and examination, marked by a progressive conversion and immersion into the paschal mystery of death and resurrection.

If the practice of dismissing the candidates after the homily at Sunday eucharist was used during the Period of the Catechumenate its continues throughout the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

Three scrutiny rites are to be celebrated during the Period of Enlightenment, one each at one of the weekend Masses on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent.<sup>19</sup>

Although certain options for the scrutiny rites contain explicit references to the gospel readings for the Lenten Lectionary Cycle A (often referred to as "The

be excluded from the celebration of the Scrutinies with the unbaptized. Baptized candidates participate in the Scrutinies as does the entire assembly (See: *RCIA, #9[5]*). The RCIA provides Scrutinies for use with unbaptized children of catechetical age (See: *RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 1 - Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age, Second Step*).

(20). There are two parts to each of the Scrutinies, *Intercessions for the Elect* and an *Exorcism*. There are two options (A and B) for each part. One set of options for each part do not make explicit reference to the gospel reading for Cycle A. These can be used with the other two lectionary cycles for Lent.

(21). For the initiation of unbaptized children of catechetical age, see: *RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 1 - Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age, Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation*.

(22). There are two rituals, comparable to the *Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation*, for use with adults who have already been baptized. (The two rituals can be adapted, using as a model the rite for children mentioned above, for use with baptized children of catechetical age.) When baptized and unbaptized adults are joining together, the *Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation* is combined with the *Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church* (*RCIA, Appendix I: Additional [Combined] Rites, 4*). When there are no unbaptized adults joining with the baptized adults, the *Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church* (*RCIA, Part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances, 5*) is used.

Catechumenate Cycle”), the scrutiny rites do not require the use of this cycle of readings. The lectionary cycle that is proper to the given year can be used instead of Cycle A.<sup>20</sup>

Other rites that take place during the Period of Purification and Enlightenment include the *Presentations* and the *Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday*. The *Presentations* are best included at a Mass either during the weekdays prescribed in the RCIA (the *Creed* after the *First Scrutiny*, the *Lord's Prayer* after the *Third Scrutiny*) or, just as appropriately, together on the Second Sunday of Lent. If none of those times are suitable, the *Presentations* can take place at one of the weekend Masses during the Period of the Catechumenate. The sequence of these rites is as follows:

***Presentation of the Creed***  
***Presentation of the Lord's Prayer***  
***Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday***

### ***Step 3 - Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation***

This step concludes the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and begins the Period of Mystagogy. It is a threefold sacramental rite, integrated into the Easter Vigil liturgy, by which the candidates are initiated into the sacramental life of the Church by baptism, confirmation and eucharist.<sup>21</sup> Those who are already baptized renew their baptismal commitment and are received into the Church by a profession of faith followed by confirmation and eucharist.<sup>22</sup>

The sponsors present and accompany their candidates throughout the rites of initiation. If someone to be baptized has chosen a godparent(s) in addition to the sponsor, the sponsor presents and accompanies the candidate for baptism, while the godparent(s) acts as a witness for the baptism.

## ***An Outline of the Stages of the Rite of Christian Initiation***

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The initiation sacraments should be carried out in a ways that fully express the power and richness of the gestures, words and symbols. Baptism may take place by immersion or with a substantial pouring of water. The chrism, to which a small amount of aromatic oil can be added, should be fragrant and applied for the anointing in a generous manner. The confirmation should take near the place of baptism or in front of the presidential chair. The communion bread should be of substantial form, prepared according to the rubrics, and able to be broken and distributed in sizeable portions without crumbling. The candidates should be the first to approach the altar table for communion.

The pastor or parish priest presides at all three sacraments (and the profession of faith) and distributes communion to the candidates.

The assembly should be given an opportunity to welcome the newly confirmed members before the preparation of the gifts for the eucharist.

### ***STAGE IV - Mystagogy***

The final stage, also referred to as the Postsacramental Catechesis, extends at least throughout the Easter Season to the Feast of Pentecost. This period models for the newly initiated members the lifelong process of faith development. It is during this time that the candidates are guided through the experience of exploring and living out the values and convictions, life-style and actions, that are at the heart of Christian living.

Following the Easter Vigil, the newly initiated members (neophytes) should participate in Sunday eucharist as a group throughout the Easter Season. They should be recognized in a special way on the Feast of Pentecost.

After Pentecost, and until the first anniversary of their initiation, the neophytes should be provided with opportunities to come together as a group for socializing, study and discussion, prayer and reflection. Sponsors should stay in contact with them and remain available to assist them during this first year. Parishioners should welcome and encourage the neophytes as they become established members of the parish family. The neophytes should be invited to support the new group of candidates for initiation and to assist them in appropriate ways during their formation. The parish community should join the neophytes in celebrating the first anniversary of their initiation.

## **2. Baptism of Infants and Children Who are Not of Catechetical Age**

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The general principles and policies contained in the first part of this document constitute a foundation for the particular principles and policies that follow for *The Baptism of Infants and Children Who are Not of Catechetical Age*. It is essential, therefore, to read and apply the following section in the context of the two sections, "*The Three Sacraments of Initiation*" and "*Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation*" that precede it. For a listing of eligible candidates for *The Baptism of Infants and Children Who are Not of Catechetical Age*, see #8B above, and the summary included with it.

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### **Baptism as the Gateway to Sacramental Life**

45. Baptism, the first of the threefold sacraments of initiation, is the entryway to the Church's sacramental life. It is the beginning of a lifetime of participation in the dying and rising of Christ. At baptism, the community of faith manifests itself as the household of Christ, its doors open to welcome those who seek to make the community their home. From the font of baptism, individuals continue toward the table of the Lord to be nourished and sustained while they grow and mature as members of the Lord's own household. It is from that table that they will rise to receive the anointing of Christ, to mark and seal their partnership with Christ and with Christ's faithful in the mission of salvation.

46. In presenting their own children for baptism, parents profess their faith in the promise of eternal life. They entrust their children to the waters of baptism to go down with Christ into death, so that they can rise with Christ to a new and eternal life. In making this act of faith, parents turn to the community to rely upon its members for companionship, help and support in raising their children in the faith.

47. In welcoming infants and children to the font of baptism, the community pledges to provide them with an environment that will model and foster their growth in faith.

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The members of the community extend themselves to the parents as willing partners in the endeavor to engender and nurture faith in their children.

#### **Preparations with the Parents**

48. The catechetical team that is responsible for baptism assists the parents in preparing themselves to present an infant or child for baptism. The team encourages the parents in their role as the first teachers of faith to their children, assisting the parents with guidance and educational materials and collaborating with them in arranging for the liturgy of baptism. Liturgical arrangements should include familiarizing the parents with the baptismal rite so they can participate with ease and confidence.

Parents should become directly involved in preparing for the baptism of each of their children. Even though they might have previously prepared for the baptism of a now older child, it is important for parents to relate to the faith develop of each child in a distinct and personal way. Parents should recognize that the catechetical process is not so much designed for their own formation as it is to help them give individual attention to the formation of all their children.

49. An initial interview is held with the parents to arrange a date for the baptism(s), to discuss the details of preparation and to gather information that will be needed to record the baptism.

50. Whenever it seems necessary, the initial interview is used to discuss and determine the best approach to any special needs or circumstances. This kind of personal attention should be extended when the

relationship of the parents to the Church is lacking or weak, or when the parents do not appear ready or able to take on the responsibilities of baptizing and raising a child in the faith. If it seems advisable to delay a baptism (*See: #32-33 above*), every reasonable effort should be made to establish a cooperative rapport with the parents that will in due time result in the baptism of their child. At the very least, attempts should be made at regular intervals to engage the parents in a process to secure their child's baptism.

### **The Role of Godparents**

51. Godparents are expected to develop a future bond of spiritual guidance and support with their godchild. More immediately, they stand with the parents as their companions and helpers, assisting the parents with and reinforcing their role as the first teachers of faith to their children.

52. One godparent, who is a fully initiated and practicing Catholic, is required for each infant or child who is to be baptized. This person should be mature enough to take on both the immediate and future responsibilities of a godparent. The godparent is chosen by the parents. If the godparent cannot be present for the baptism, a proxy, also a fully initiated and practicing Catholic, can be appointed. In addition to the godparent(s), a member of another Christian tradition or of a separated Eastern Church can serve as a Christian witness to the baptism.

### **The Liturgy of Baptism**

53. Baptism is properly celebrated by the parents' pastor in their parish church, within an assembly of the faith community and preferably at Sunday eucharist. A baptism may take place in another parish, with the permission of the parents' pastor and of the pastor of the other parish. Baptism should not be celebrated outside of the church building except for serious pastoral reasons, and only with the permission of the parents' pastor and of the proper pastor of the locality.

Since the Easter Vigil is the preeminent setting for baptism, those baptisms that can be scheduled for that time should take place at the Easter Vigil. In consideration of the nature of the Lenten Season as a preparation to renew baptismal faith, baptisms should be avoided during Lent and should not be celebrated at a Sunday eucharist during Lent.

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54. When baptism is celebrated within the Mass, liturgy begins with the presentation, naming and welcoming of the child. The usual liturgical greeting and penitential rite are omitted. The profession of faith during the rite of baptism replaces the creed. The rite of baptism begins after the Liturgy of the Word. If baptism is celebrated outside the Mass, it normally takes place within a Liturgy of the Word that includes at least a brief homily. Those who are to be baptized are mentioned in the general intercessions, and the names of their patron saints can be inserted into the litany of saints. The blessing formulas from the rite of baptism can be used at the end of Mass.

The baptism, whether within or outside the Mass, should be celebrated in a way that makes full use of the power and richness of the liturgical gestures, words and symbols. The various processions called for in the rite of baptism should be used in the best ways allowed by the liturgical space. The water should be clean and fresh, and heated when necessary. If not in a permanent font, the water should be in a vessel that is both ample and attractive. Except during the Easter Season, when special formulas are assigned, the water should be blessed at each baptism. The infant or child is baptized either by immersion or with a substantial pouring of water. The oil of catechumens and the chrism should be applied for the anointings in a generous manner. The paschal candle should be in place near the font, and the baptismal candle is lit from it. The baptismal candle itself, provided either by the parents or the parish, should be of good quality and size, able to be reserved for future celebrations with the child. The baptismal

robe, brought by the parents or provided by the parish, should be festive and of good quality and size.

The parents participate in ways that give clear expression to their role. Accompanied by the godparents, one of the parents should hold the child and both should be clearly seen and heard when presenting the child and responding to questions at various times during the rite. One or both of the parents assist the priest with an immersion. They hold the infant over the font or help the child at the font when the baptism is by a pouring of water. During the baptism, the godparents place a hand on the shoulder of either or both parents, or, if possible, on the infant or child.

55. Bishops, priests and deacons are the ordinary ministers of the sacrament of baptism. Whenever one or more of these ordained Catholic ministers are present for a baptism, only one of them presides at the baptism itself and carries out all of the major elements of the rite. Another ordained Catholic minister, or a Catholic lay minister, never shares or divides up the major elements of the rite with the presiding minister. A minister from another Christian tradition does not take part in the rite of baptism itself.

### **Catechesis Following a Baptism**

56. It is the duty of Catholic parents to raise their children in the practice of the faith. The role that parents play in the formation and development of their children's personality, value system and cultural outlook emerges immediately in the home life that they establish for their children. This influence begins, then, even before conception and continues on throughout the child's life, even into adulthood.

Parents plant the seeds of faith in their children within the home. Their own active faith life provides both the stimulus and the pattern for those seeds to take root and flourish in the life of the children. By their own example, and with careful and loving guidance, parents instill in their children an unceasing desire to discover and learn, internalize and live out the truths of faith. Parents recognize that the catechesis of their children is a lifelong process in which they are the first teachers of faith and the most prominent role models of an active life of faith.

Parents commit themselves to this process when they present a child for baptism. They live out that commitment as they guide and accompany the child through the other

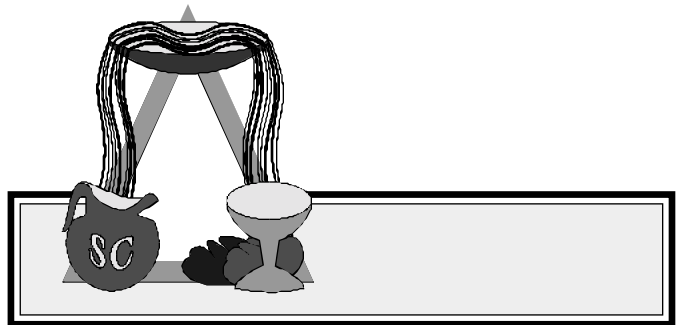
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phases of Christian initiation, to the table of the eucharist and to the anointing of confirmation.

Parents see to it that their children join together with their peers for regular Christian education and formation and for the special catechesis that comes before and after the other sacraments of initiation and the sacrament of penance. Parents form within their homes and with their children a domestic church that lives, works, plays, serves and grows together with a foundation in Christian prayer and celebration. They introduce their children to and involve them in the ongoing life of the parish community, especially to its liturgical life and to its mission of service to others.



### **3. First Communion and First Penance for Baptized Children of Catechetical Age.**

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The general principles and policies contained in the first part of this document constitute a foundation for the particular principles and policies that follow for *First Communion and First Penance for Baptized Children of Catechetical Age*. It is essential, therefore, to read and apply the following section in the context of the two sections, "*The Three Sacraments of Initiation*" and "*Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation*" that precede it. For a listing of eligible candidates for *First Communion and First Penance for Baptized Children of Catechetical Age*, see #8C above, and the summary included with it.

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#### **Eucharist as the Center of Sacramental Life**

57. The eucharist, one of the sacraments of initiation, is the core of the Church's sacramental life. Every facet of the Church's life has its birth in the eucharist, each word and action of the Church flows from the eucharist and all the Church's activities hasten and lead back to the eucharist. The faithful come to the table of the eucharist to bolster and sustain the faith of their baptism. Confirmed in faith, they go forth from the table of eucharist to live out their mission as the anointed people of God.

58. When its members gather for the eucharist, the community of faith manifests itself most completely as the Sacrament of Christ alive in and for the world. When the community welcomes new brothers and sisters to the table of the eucharist, it carries out the will of Christ who longs to bring all people together as daughters and sons of the one God who is Creator and Father of all.

59. Children who are brought to eat and drink at the eucharistic table continue the process of initiation that began at their baptism. In the eucharistic celebration they encounter Christ. The living Christ, with whom they were raised from death into the

fullness of life in baptism, offers himself to them in the bread of everlasting life and in the cup of eternal salvation. The servant Christ, who welcomes and cares for them in the embrace of his faithful people, prepares and strengthens them to be confirmed in a lifetime of dedicated service to all people.

#### **The Relationship Between the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation**

60. As children take their place with others to participate fully in the eucharist, they experience the joy of Christian fellowship and learn the value of being bonded and united with a community of faith. As they take communion with people of different ages and various racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, children come to understand and appreciate the realities of diversity, acceptance and tolerance. In this context, children can be invited to reflect on the realities of separation, alienation and rejection that can help them understand the nature of sin and realize the need for healing, conversion and reconciliation.

61. As a sacrament of love and unity, the eucharist celebrates and strengthens the bonds that exist among the members of the faith community. At the same time, the eucharist brings to light the failures in love and unity experienced by individuals and the community itself. The eucharist, then, constantly challenges the community and its members to mend any separations, heal any brokenness and cure every source of alienation that jeopardize and impede the love and unity that are destined to be enjoyed by all people.

62. There is, then, a real and active connection between the eucharist and the sacrament of penance. For this reason, children who are preparing to receive their first communion are at the same time introduced to and invited to celebrate the sacramental rite of reconciliation.

### **The Proper Age for Sacramental Preparation**

63. Children begin their preparation for first reconciliation and first eucharist when they have entered the 2nd Grade. If a parish decides that children at this age are not ready to prepare for these sacraments, the usual time for sacramental preparation can be delayed to the 3rd Grade.

64. Children should not begin this sacramental preparation unless, with their parents, they are already regular participants at Sunday Mass. Children should take part in the regular religious education programs (either with the parish or in a Catholic school) for at least a year before they prepare for these sacraments. Parents who have become lax toward their children's faith development should be encouraged and assisted to revitalize their role as examples and guides for their children, and to strengthen their own and their children's relationship with the parish community.

65. Both before and during the catechetical process, the parents and the catechetical team, in cooperation with the pastor or pastoral coordinator, discern a child's readiness to participate in first penance and first communion. If it seems advisable to delay these sacraments, every reasonable effort should be made to establish a cooperative rapport with the parents that in due time will result in first penance and first communion for their child. At the very least, attempts should be made at regular intervals to engage the parents in a process to secure their child's celebration of these sacraments.

### **The Process for Sacramental Preparation**

66. The children must prepare for, and have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of penance before they prepare to receive first communion. The preparation process is a collaborative effort of the catechetical team and the parents that is modelled on the RCIA. The parents work with their own children at home and take part in group meetings with the catechetical team. The work of the parents is supplemented by group meetings of the children with their catechists.

## ***Particular Policies***

### ***First Communion and First Penance for Baptized Children of Catechetical Age***

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67. Initial sessions with the parents precede the sessions with the children and their catechists. The parents are provided with materials and guidance to help them with their children's formation at home. The parents receive an overview of the catechetical process, directions and goals for their work at home and schedules for the preparation program and the sacramental celebrations. Sessions with the parents continue throughout the catechetical process to help deepen their understanding of the sacraments and to provide them ongoing assistance with their children.

68. Since the faith development of every child will follow its own unique path, parents should be personally involved in preparing each of their children for first penance and first communion. Even though they might have previously participated in this sacramental preparation with a now older child, it is important that parents take part each time one of their children approaches these sacraments. Parents should recognize that the catechetical process is not so much designed for their own formation as it is to help them give individual attention to the formation of all their children.

69. In the context of daily living, parents help their children grasp the sacred nature of family and community, of sharing food and fellowship at a common table, of forgiveness and acceptance in times of disagreement and of working together to meet needs and achieve goals. They help their children make connections between the ordinary events of life and the spiritual dimensions of living. They point out to their children, in descriptive and creative ways, how the scriptures, Church teachings, prayer and the liturgy relate to the human experience.

70. Group sessions with the children and their catechists are in addition to and distinct from the regular religious education programs provided by the parish or in a Catholic school. They are designed to lead the children to a full and active participation in the Eucharist and to a productive use of the sacrament of penance in their faith development. These sessions enhance the ongoing religious formation process with a specific focus on the liturgy of the Mass and the rite of reconciliation. There should be a particular emphasis on the sacramental presence of Christ, especially related to the liturgical assembly, the consecrated bread and wine, the sharing of communion and the experience of sacramental forgiveness and absolution.

### **The Liturgies for First Penance and First Communion**

71. Sometime before they celebrate the sacraments, the children can be presented as candidates during a Sunday eucharist. This should be a ritual, with prayers and blessings for the children, that affirms the children's progress in the Christian initiation process. It should in no way resemble a rite of enrollment since the children have already been baptized and are well into the ongoing process of initiation.

72. First penance is properly celebrated with the child's pastor with a liturgical rite of reconciliation that includes a Liturgy of the Word, communal singing, a communal examination of conscience with a public expression of sorrow, private confession with a personal expression of sorrow and individual absolution, a public action of reconciliation and a fellowship gathering afterwards. In addition to the catechists and catechetical team, the assembly for the rite of reconciliation should include the parents and other members of the children's family who will take part in the sacrament of penance. Other members of the parish community should also be invited to participate.

73. First communion is properly celebrated at a Sunday eucharist, preferably during the Easter Season, and administered by the children's pastor. There can be one celebration at which all the candidates receive first communion, or a number of celebrations for individual candidates. In either case, the children's parents and family members take an active and visible part in the celebration. The children should be with their families during the liturgy and should not leave them to stand around the altar during the Eucharist Prayer. The communion bread should be of substantial form, according to the rubrics, and able to be broken and distributed in sizeable portions without crumbling. The children,

accompanied by their families, should be the first to approach the altar table for communion.

#### **Catechesis Following First Penance and First Communion**

74. When parents present a child for baptism, they promise to devote themselves to the child's formation and development in faith (*See: Catechesis Following a Baptism, #56 above*). Parents who have escorted and attended to their child from the font of baptism to the table of the eucharist have remained faithful to that promise. By leading their child to the sacrament of penance, parents have introduced the child to the ongoing need for conversion in a life of faith. At this point, a child has progressed a good distance along the path of Christian initiation and is ready to move toward its final phase in the anointing of confirmation.

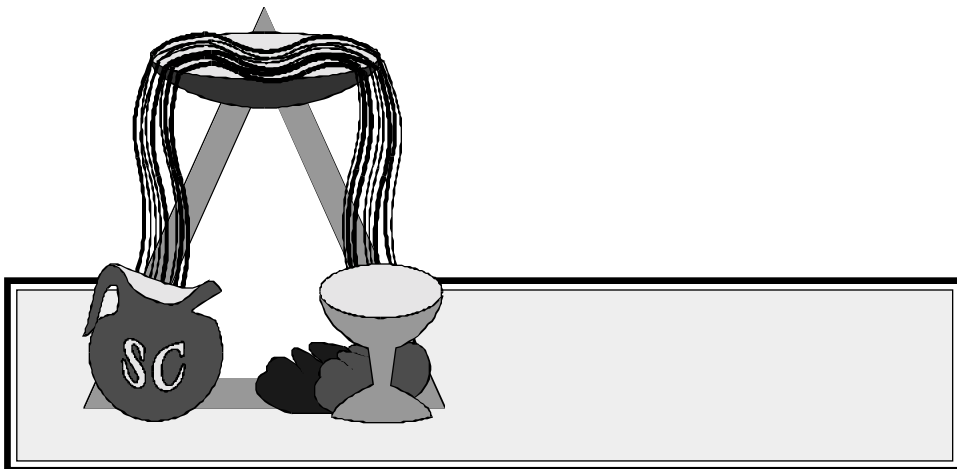
As children grow in age and maturity, especially as they approach and enter adolescence, it becomes increasingly important for them to strengthen bonds of faith within the family, with their peers and among the members of the parish community. During these critical phases in their faith development, children need the encouragement and support of their parents to remain involved in regular Christian education and formation, to stay constant with weekly participation in the Sunday eucharist and to deepen a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others.

Even as their children take on more individuality and independence, parents should continue to maintain within their homes and with their children a domestic church that lives, works, plays, serves and grows together with roots in Christian prayer and celebration.

At the same time, parents should encourage their children to become firmly grounded in the sacramental life of the community.

Parish leaders should actively and consistently promote frequent participation in communion and in the sacrament of penance by children and youth. Parents should give their wholehearted support to these efforts by both word and example with their children.

Through these endeavors, children are furnished with the essentials that they will need, as they enter their later teens, to complete their Christian initiation with the sacrament of confirmation. In this way, as they approach young adulthood, young people are able to make well formed and mature decisions about the future shape and direction of their own faith life.



## **4. Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion**

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The general principles and policies contained in the first part of this document constitute a foundation for the particular principles and policies that follow for *Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion*. It is essential, therefore, to read and apply the following section in the context of the two sections, "*The Three Sacraments of Initiation*" and "*Catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation*" that precede it. For a listing of eligible candidates for *Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion*, see #8C above, and the summary that is with it.

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### **Confirmation as the Culmination of Christian Initiation and the Threshold to Mature Christian Living**

75. The process of Christian initiation has its summit in the sacrament of Confirmation. The seeds of faith are planted at baptism. Faith sets down firm roots and comes to maturity at the eucharist table. People whose faith has grown up around the eucharistic table do not make a permanent dwelling place there. Rather, inspired and strengthened by the eucharist, they press onward

to live out their faith. Confirmation is the juncture between faith that is reaching maturity and faith that has matured. It is the turning pointing where disciples of faith become apostles of faith in the world.

76. With the laying on of hands, the Church endows those who are confirmed with a personal role in Christ's mission for the world. The oil of chrism, named for Christ, anoints them into the threefold ministry of Christ to live as priests, prophets and kings in the service of all God's people. As priests, they will invite and lead others to ponder and celebrate the mystery of God's immeasurable love for us. As prophets, they will announce the favor of God's choice to save and redeem us. As kings, they will give tangible witness to the reign of God who, in the person of Christ, rules among us not to be served, but to serve.

### **The Proper Age for Sacramental Preparation**

77. When a young person reaches the 10th Grade, or is between the ages of fifteen and sixteen, the preparation for confirmation begins through a year of participation in the regular religious education programs that are offered either in the parish or in a Catholic school. The preparation continues for a second year, when the young person is in the 11th Grade (or between the ages of sixteen and seventeen), with a special formation process in the parish.

78. A young person does not begin the special formation process for confirmation unless he or she has participated regularly at Sunday Mass and has taken part in the regular parish or school religious education program for at least a year. A young person who has fallen away from active involvement in the sacraments and formal religious formation should be encouraged and assisted to return to an active faith life before preparing for confirmation.

### **The Process for Sacramental Preparation**

79. The process of preparation involves the young people in two full years of participation in a regular religious education program either in the parish or in a Catholic school. During the second year, the regular religious education program is supplemented in the parish with a full year of special formation that is separate and distinct from the regular religious education program.

## ***Particular Policies***

### ***Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion***

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80. The special formation process, modeled after the RCIA, involves in group sessions with their peers and catechists. The sessions are designed to prepare the youth to complete their Christian initiation with a readiness to make a personal investment in the mission of the Church. These sessions enhance the ongoing religious formation process with a focused study of the gospel message, gospel values and life-style and the doctrines of the Church regarding mature and faithful Christian living. The goal of these sessions is to help the youth establish a solid identity as young Christian men and women who are making a commitment to a lifetime of active involvement and service in the Church.

81. Initial sessions with the parents and the catechetical team take place before the sessions with the youth and their catechists. The parents receive an overview of the catechetical process, materials and guidance for their work at home with the youth, and schedules for the preparation program and the sacramental celebration. Sessions with the parents can continue throughout the catechetical process to help deepen their understanding of the sacrament of confirmation and its implications, and to provide them ongoing assistance with their own children.

82. Since the faith development of every individual follows its own unique path, parents should be personally involved in preparing each of their children for confirmation. Even though they might have previously participated in this sacramental preparation with a now older child, it is important that parents take part each time one of their children approaches

confirmation. Parents should recognize that the catechetical process is not so much designed for their own formation as it is to help them give individual attention to the formation of all their children.

83. In the context of daily living, parents help their children recognize the parallels between their maturing toward adulthood and their movement toward an adult life of faith in the Church. They help their children make connections between the ordinary events of life and the spiritual dimensions of living. They point out to their children, in descriptive and creative ways, how the scriptures, Church teachings, prayer and the liturgy relate to and help support and sustain people of faith throughout the many events and experiences of life.

84. During the second year of the program, at the beginning of the special formation process, each candidate for confirmation chooses a sponsor (*See: The Role and Responsibilities of Sponsors, #22-26 above*). The sponsor is an active participant in the preparation and formation of the candidate, a mentor and fellow believer who remains involved with the candidate both before and after the celebration of confirmation.

In light of the sponsor's role and duties, a sponsor must be an active member of the candidate's own parish who has received all the sacraments of initiation and is truly available to serve in this capacity. Since parents have their own particular role in the faith formation of their children, and because of the unique aspects of the sponsor's role, parents do not serve as sponsors for their own children.

85. The candidates participate in at least one retreat, other extended times for prayer and reflection during the special formation process. These events can happen as joint efforts with other parishes. They can help the candidates unite in a spirit of mutual support and can provide them with a sense of belonging to an active community of shared faith. A retreat furnishes candidates with quality time for personal discernment about taking on the responsibilities of confirmation.

86. As part of their formation, youth should become acquainted with leaders and with the leadership structures and groups of the parish. They should become involved in service projects either from the parish or together with other parishes. Every effort should be made to promote regular participation by the candidates in Mass and communion and to foster their frequent use of the sacrament of penance.

## ***Particular Policies***

### ***Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion***

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87. Given their age, the ultimate decision to seek the sacrament of confirmation belongs to the candidates. Both before and during the formation process, the candidates with their parents and the catechetical team, in cooperation with the pastor or pastoral coordinator, discern their readiness to be confirmed. If a decision is made to delay the sacrament, every reasonable effort should be made to establish a cooperative rapport with the parents and the young person that in due time will result in confirmation. At the very least, attempts should be made at regular intervals to engage the parents and the young person in a process to secure the youth's celebration of this sacrament.

88. Before the sacrament is celebrated, candidates express their desire to be confirmed with a letter to the pastor or pastoral coordinator. The candidates relate their own understanding of the sacrament and their personal reasons for wanting to be confirmed.

89. Sometime before they celebrate confirmation, the youth can be presented as candidates during a Sunday eucharist. This should be a ritual, with prayers and blessings for the youth, that affirms their readiness to conclude the Christian initiation process. It should in no way resemble a rite of enrollment since the youth are now completing their initiation.

#### **The Proper Minister and Place for the Confirmation of Youth**

90. The bishop is the proper minister of confirmation for youth. Pastors join the bishop for the laying on of

hands with the candidates from their respective parishes.

91. Youth are confirmed at a Mass, during the Easter season, for which several parishes cluster together in the church building of the designated host parish. The parish where the confirmation liturgy takes place acts as host to the bishop and the other participating parishes.

### **Catechesis Following Confirmation**

92. By preparing for and celebrating the sacrament of confirmation, the youth have completed their initiation into the full life of the Church. Just as these young people are only beginning the first stages of young adulthood with the culmination of adolescence, so are they just beginning their adult life in the Church with the conclusion of initiation. Throughout the process of initiation, their parents and the Church community have provided these young people with a solid foundation for a lifelong commitment to faith. Now, as these youth stand at the threshold of their adult life as Christians, their need for support and encouragement continues and even increases.

As they move into young adulthood, these newly confirmed Catholics will face a variety of situations representing countless different value systems, life-styles and sets of beliefs. These will certainly present new challenges to their faith, could readily put the steadfastness of their faith commitments to the test. How they relate to these situations, the way they answer these demands, and the efforts they make to sustain their commitments will be a major part of their ongoing development and formation in faith. These young people will need to know and rely upon the availability of their parents, their baptismal godparents and confirmation sponsors, their friends and partners in the faith community. They will need the assistance and care of those who will be willing to listen to and understand their struggles, encourage and guide their efforts, be compassionate in their failures and rejoice with them in their victories.

In maintaining their bonds with various sources and groups of support, these young adults should be challenged to keep themselves grounded in a community that lives, learns, worships and reaches out in faith. They should be directed to recognize the continual need to form and inform their faith with study, prayer and good works. They should be invited and, when necessary, urged to approach the communion table regularly for courage and strength and to make use frequently of the sacrament of penance for

## ***Particular Policies***

### ***Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion***

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healing and the renewal of their resolve. They should be reminded constantly of their worth and dignity, affirmed often in their talents and their potential for good and called out of themselves to enjoy and be invigorated by the results of their loving service to others.

In this way, these young people will carry with them, throughout their life, the enduring faith of their baptism, the bold spirit of their anointed mission at confirmation and the endless power of their unbreakable bond with Christ and his people around the table of the eucharist.

## **5. Liturgy of Confirmation with Youth - Arrangements and Preparations**

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92. The host parish, under the direction of its pastor or pastoral coordinator, is responsible to arrange and oversee the liturgical preparations.

93. The various ministers for the liturgy are drawn from the participating parishes. Only those who have been trained and commissioned as readers and ministers of communion serve in those roles. The candidates can serve as lectors or in other roles, but should not distribute communion since their initiation is not yet complete. There should be an equal distribution of women and men. Pastoral musicians from the participating parishes can form a group or groups, who practice together in advance, for the liturgy.

94. All who take part in the liturgy, including the candidates and their sponsors, should be instructed in advance about their roles and tasks and should fully review the order of worship. They should come well prepared and should arrive in adequate time to make any final preparations. Readers should prepare their texts ahead of time and should become familiar with the sound equipment before they use it. Ministers of communion should prepare the bread or hosts, wine, vessels and other materials for communion. If bread is used, it should be carefully broken into pieces of proper size and shape. The ministers of communion come to the altar table before the fraction rite and receive communion from the bishop before going to their respective stations for distribution. Ushers or ministers of hospitality ought to be available to greet and seat people, and to help facilitate the processions for the confirmation rite, the preparation of the gifts and the communion rite.

95. Ordinarily, the assigned lectionary readings for the Sunday or weekday are used. Any changes in the selection of readings must have the bishop's approval.

96. Seating in the assembly is not assigned according to parishes. The candidates sit in the assembly with their parents and family, catechists, friends and guests.

97. The host parish should furnish the assembly with a worship booklet that contains music and necessary instructions for the liturgy. Copyright permission for any music that is printed must be secured and clearly indicated in the booklet.

## **Particular Policies**

### **Liturgy of Confirmation with Youth - Arrangements and Preparations**

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98. The host parish can provide the chrism for the anointing of the candidates.

#### **Musical Requirements for the Liturgy**

99. Music is chosen that respects the repertoire of the participating parishes. This is not a time to teach new music or to use music with which the people are not familiar. The music should clearly reflect the Easter season, and should enhance the liturgy and be respectful of the rite of confirmation as a peak moment in the liturgy. A variety of musical styles can be incorporated into the liturgy that is in keeping with the requirements of sound musical, liturgical and pastoral judgment. There should be a good balance of sung and instrumental music along with a creative use of silence.

100. If the optional sprinkling rite is used in place of the penitential rite, the Gloria is sung as an accompaniment by the assembly. The psalm response after the first reading should include a sung response by the assembly that is brief and easy to sing. The Alleluia before the gospel is sung. Instrumental music that is played softly is appropriate during the laying on of hands in the confirmation rite. A communion meditation is not included because of the already lengthy liturgy.

#### **The Celebration of Confirmation with Youth**

101. Before Mass begins, the candidates take their seats in the assembly with their parents and family, catechists, friends and guests. The candidates remain in the assembly when Mass begins and do not join in the entrance procession.

102. The Mass begins with a gathering song, entrance procession and the other gathering rites as usual. A sprinkling rite is optional in place of the penitential rite and should, if employed, be accompanied by the Gloria sung by the assembly.

103. The rite of confirmation begins after the homily. The creed is omitted here and replaced by the profession of faith made by the candidates before the laying on of hands. The general intercessions take place at the end of the confirmation rite.

104. The rite begins with the reading of a sample letter from one of the candidates (or brief excerpts from the letters of a few candidates). The letter or excerpts are chosen by the pastor, the catechetical team or a group from the parish cluster. It is read by a member of a catechetical team or someone else who has participated in the formation process.

105. Following the letter, the names of the candidates are read. They come forward with their sponsor. They stand facing the bishop, turned toward the altar. If a group is too large to come to the altar, they candidates and the sponsors stand at their places in the assembly for the profession of faith. If the candidates do not come forward, their names are read after they stand.

106. The profession of faith takes place between the bishop and the group of candidates only. The candidates respond to each question by saying, "*I do*". The members of the assembly add their assent at the end by saying, "*Amen*".

107. After all the candidates have made a profession of faith, they are called forward (in groups of 30 to 40) for the consecratory prayer. The sponsors accompany their candidates, standing behind them and placing their right hand on the should of the candidate. The candidates face the bishop, turning toward the altar. The bishop then lays hands on the candidates in silence. The pastors follow the bishop to do the same with the candidates from their respective parishes. After the laying on of hands, the bishop says the consecratory prayer.

108. At the completion of the consecratory prayer, the bishop anoints all the candidates in the group that has come forward. The sponsor introduces the candidate to the bishop before each anointing. The bishop anoints the candidate on the forehead with the words, "*Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit*". After the anointing, the candidate exchanges the kiss of peace, first with the bishop and pastor, and then with the sponsor and members of the catechetical team.

109. When the first group has been anointed, the next group is called forward and the bishop proceeds with the laying on of hands, consecratory prayer and anointing as stated above. This is done for each group until all are confirmed.

110. When all have been confirmed, the assembly exchanges the gesture of peace.

111. The confirmation rite concludes with the general intercessions following the assembly's exchange of peace.

112. The Mass continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the dismissal rites as usual.