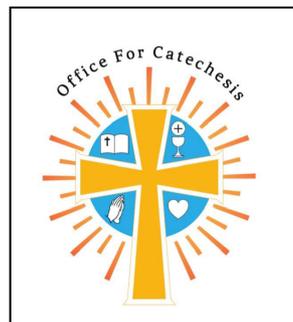


ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF SINGAPORE

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Guidelines and Commentaries on RCIA



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ABBREVIATIONS

- AG** Decree on Missionary Activity in the Church *Ad gentes*
Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965.
- CCC** Catechism of the Catholic Church
11 October 1992.
- CD** Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus dominus*
Second Vatican Council, 28 October 1965.
- CIC** The Code of Canon Law *Codex iuris canonici*
25 January 1983.
- CIGI** General Introduction, Christian Initiation
Congregation for Divine Worship, 1973.
- CT** Catechesis for Our Times *Catechesi tradendae*
Apostolic Exhortation, Pope John Paul II, 16 October 1979.
- GDC** General Directory for Catechesis
Congregation for the Clergy, 15 August 1997.
- LG** Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*
Second Vatican Council, 21 November 1964.
- PO** Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum ordinis*
Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965.
- RCIA** Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*
Congregation for Divine Worship, 1972.
- SC** Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*
Second Vatican Council, 4 December 1963.
- UR** Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*
Second Vatican Council, 21 November 1964.

FOREWORD

It has been more than forty years since the call to restore the catechumenate issued from the Second Vatican Council. Today, every parish in the Archdiocese of Singapore initiates new Catholics through the process known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Through the RCIA, those who wish to enter the Catholic Church are trained to be faithful followers of Christ. The work of initiation is much more than merely “getting people baptised.”

Implementing the RCIA in the parish is no simple task. The rite allows for adaptation that involves making distinctions: Who are those who come to us seeking initiation? How can the liturgy be adapted to the needs of our community? What kind of catechesis do we use? When do the different periods begin and end? What approach do we take to minister to Christians who are already baptised and want to join the Catholic Church? To what extent do we involve the rest of the parish? These and other questions need to be answered before a sound adaptation can be made to the RCIA for any parish community.

Experience in the RCIA ministry and careful reading of the Rite itself make two things clear: firstly, adaptation of the initiation process without understanding the Church’s intent risks an incomplete process of formation for catechumens. Secondly, and on the other hand, mere adherence to directives without sensitivity or creativity disregards the uniqueness and particular needs of each person who seeks faith in the Church.

Finding a balance challenges us to return to the ‘why?’ before we answer the ‘how?’ and ‘when?’ of initiation ministry.

These guidelines incorporate the pastoral vision that underlies the work of the Church in Christian initiation. They also take into account the wisdom of those who have experience in practicing the RCIA in our local context: priests, catechists, other ministers of the RCIA, and to an extent, even those who have previously participated in the RCIA as catechumens. We hope that these guidelines will serve as a useful reference for you and your parish community.

F O R E W O R D

Note on Usage

Paragraph numberings differ between ICEL English translations of the RCIA approved for the United States and that for the United Kingdom. In such cases references to the UK text are indicated within square parentheses.

These guidelines outline what constitutes as normative practice of the RCIA for the Church. They are supplemental to the rubrics found in the Order of Initiation. Norms are in red. Commentaries that accompany a norm are either explanations of that norm, or pastoral options for executing that norm.

Sections 1 to 9 concern the ordinary ministry of initiating non-baptised adults. Section 10 deals with exceptions and adaptations that are made to the process. Section 11 contains the norms concerning the reception of baptised adults from other Christian communities into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

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PART A: MINISTRY TO UNBAPTISED ADULTS FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION

“Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.” - Matthew 28:19-20

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Norm 1.0.0 Order of Initiation to be used

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is normative in the Archdiocese of Singapore. All parishes minister to those who are seek initiation into the Roman Catholic Church using the current order of initiation mandated for the universal Church.¹

Commentary

1.0.1

The parish pastoral council (PPC), with the parish priests, share in the pastoral concern for the life of the entire parish. They should make every effort to see that the RCIA, in its various stages and steps, becomes a consistent and well integrated part of parish life.

1.0.2

Each parish should provide comprehensive formation for those who seek Christian initiation. Equal emphasis is given to evangelisation, holistic catechesis, familiarity and integration into the Christian community, celebration of rites, opportunities for spiritual counsel or direction, formation in private prayer and public worship, and opportunities to participate in the apostolic life of the Church (see RCIA §75.4).

1.0.3

Parishes may have circumstances that prevent them from maintaining their own catechumenate, for example, insufficient number of inquirers, lack of facilities, insufficient trained ministers, and so on. These parishes should collaborate with another parish or other parishes to provide one well-developed process of initiation. In these cases, the rites are still ordinarily celebrated in the catechumen's parish and extra measures are taken to integrate them more fully into their respective parish communities.

¹ Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship for the use of the revised rite of Christian initiation, promulgated on 6th January 1972, prot. no. 15/72.

Norm 1.1.0 Rites Integral to Initiation

The liturgical rites provided for catechumens in the revised order of initiation are to be used because they are integral to the whole initiation process.

Commentary

1.1.1

Any non-baptised person taking part in the period of inquiry or the precatechumenate is called an 'inquirer'. An inquirer who enters into the period of catechumenate is called a 'catechumen'. A catechumen who enters into the period of purification and enlightenment is called an 'elect'. After celebrating the sacraments of initiation, an elect becomes a 'neophyte' until the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy is completed.

1.1.2

The rites of the RCIA are: the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, blessing of catechumens, minor exorcisms, anointing with the oil of catechumens, the rite of election or enrolment of names, the scrutinies, the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer inclusive of the rites of preparation prior to initiation (the ephphetha rite and the 'return' or recitation of the Creed), and the sacramental celebration of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist.

1.1.3

Priests and parish formation teams should provide parishioners appropriate instruction on the RCIA and nurture their appreciation of the liturgy so that, as a parish family, all can participate in the rites of Christian initiation as fully as possible.

1.1.4

The rites should be well prepared and celebrated in their prescribed forms, with adaptations if necessary. God speaks to the hearts of the catechumens through the initiation rites and inspires the faithful as well.

1.1.5

The rites are to be "celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating" (SC §27). The Holy Spirit regenerates and vivifies the Church through the RCIA; rites associated with Christian initiation should feature prominently in the liturgical life of the parish community.

2. MINISTERS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Proper implementation of the RCIA requires a diversity of roles that engage the many different gifts of the faithful. All who take part in the work of Christian initiation are involved in the Church's apostolic mission of building up the reign of God.

Norm 2.0.0 **The Parish Community**

Because Christian initiation is “the responsibility of all the baptised” (RCIA §9, AG §14), the parish community consciously and actively takes their part in the process of Christian initiation. The parish community is the primary minister to inquirers and catechumens in the RCIA.

Commentary

2.0.1

“A local community ought not merely to promote the care of the faithful within itself, but should be imbued with the missionary spirit and smooth the path to Christ for all” (PO §6). By its witness of Christian discipleship and its participation in the rites, the parish community becomes the primary minister of Christian initiation, drawing seekers “into the mystery of God’s love” (RCIA §37).

2.0.2

Catechumens and inquirers should be introduced and invited to be engaged in their Neighbourhood Christian Community (NCC) from the onset of their training. Other church organisations such as lectors, musicians, youth groups, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, prayer societies and the like should view service to catechumens as part of their organisation’s duties. Involvement with catechumens cannot be confined only to an ‘RCIA group’. Christian initiation should be seen as the work of the parish rather than the work of some individuals or of any one group.

2.0.3

Parishioners who live evident lives of Christian discipleship should be invited to serve, according to their gifts and after suitable training, as catechists, sponsors, or other ministers in Christian initiation.

2.0.4

The community’s faith is expressed through active participation in the rites of initiation where its life of Christian conversion is celebrated. The presence of the faithful is an important element in the training of catechumens.

2.0.5

Opportunities should be made for inquirers and catechumens to share fellowship with the larger parish community, and become involved in the apostolic life of the faithful to the extent that is appropriate to each stage of initiation.

Norm 2.1.0 Sponsors ²

Sponsors accompany the catechumens and stand as witnesses to their faith and intention. Sponsors exercise their ministry beginning from the celebration of the rite of acceptance through the period of the catechumenate and up to the rite of election (RCIA §10).

Commentary

2.1.1

Sponsors witness and assist their catechumens' spiritual progress. During the rites, they testify to the readiness of their catechumens. As representatives of the Church, sponsors show themselves to be examples of faith and are supportive companions to those being initiated.

2.1.2

The parish should help sponsors to acquire a firm understanding of the adult initiation process. Training for ministry as sponsors should be made available for parishes through the appropriate diocesan office.

2.1.3

Inquirers should be allowed to choose their own sponsors according to previous familiarity or common social background. The parish assigns a sponsor if the inquirer forgoes his or her own choice, or if there is need to relieve one sponsor from taking responsibility for too many catechumens. The effectiveness of the sponsors depends largely on the quality of their relationships with those whom they sponsor. Sponsors are not obliged to become godparents to their catechumens (cf. RCIA §10).

2.1.4

There is no regulation in the RCIA determining how sponsors are paired with catechumens. Parish priests and RCIA teams should decide at parish level if it is pastorally beneficial for spouses or people engaged to be married to sponsor their own partners. They also should decide if it is prudent for parents to sponsor their own children. Such decisions should be made on a case-to-case basis and explained with care.

² The English translation of the Code of Canon Law uses the word 'sponsor' for the Latin '*matrina*' and '*patrini*', meaning godmother and godfather respectively. This should not be confused with 'the sponsor' as defined by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, and used in this document, as being a distinct and separate office from the godparent.

Norm 2.2.0 Requirement of Sponsors

Sponsors are confirmed Catholics who receive the sacrament of the eucharist, not labour under canonical penalty, and are of evident faith. Spouses may sponsor their own partners, while parents may be sponsors but not godparents to their own children (, GICI §10.1). Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention (RCIA §10).

Commentary

2.2.1

Although the offices of sponsor and godparent are different in nature, their ministries share many similarities. As such, the *praenotanda* to Christian initiation stipulates similar criteria in choosing members of the faithful to serve as sponsors and godparents.

2.2.2

The minimum age of a sponsor to an adult in the RCIA process is sixteen. However, another minimum age may be deemed appropriate according to the judgement of the parish priest. The sponsor's role and requirement should be adapted in the circumstances of initiating children or youth.

2.2.3

There is no restriction on the number of sponsors a catechumen may have.

2.2.4

There may be cases where it may be necessary for one sponsor to accompany two or more catechumens. The effectiveness of the sponsor tends to decrease if too many catechumens are assigned to one sponsor.

Norm 2.3.0 Godparents

As the rite of election approaches, the catechumen consults with the priests or the RCIA team and chooses either a godmother, or a godfather, or both. A person designated to be a godparent is a fully initiated Catholic who is canonically free and willing to carry out the office, and is not younger than the age of sixteen (GICI §10, CIC 874 §1 nn 1-5; §2).

Commentary

2.3.1

A fully initiated Catholic is one who has received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, and is one who lives a life of evident faith. Any individual who is under explicit canonical censure is prohibited from becoming a godparent until the penalty ceases. Refer to the diocesan judicial vicar for further clarification.

2.3.2

From the time of election and thereafter godparents become responsible for guiding the elect in the practice of the Gospel, for sustaining them in times of difficulty and doubt, bearing witness to and aiding their progress in faith. Priests and RCIA teams should guide catechumens to make prudent selections of godparents. Godparents should be chosen early in the catechumenate so that they have sufficient time to become involved in the catechumens' discernment process.

2.3.3

Godparents enter into a permanent spiritual relationship with those who are baptised or confirmed. Although it is canonically permissible for a person to become a godparent to his or her own spouse, priests and initiation teams should exercise prudence in guiding catechumens who choose their own spouses as their godparent.

Norm 2.4.0 Archbishop Oversees Christian Initiation

The Archbishop, being chief catechist of the diocese (GDC §222), sets up and oversees the formation programme of the catechumenate (RCIA §12, 77, CD §14) with the assistance of priests and the diocesan catechetical office. This should be consistent with any relevant guidelines from the regional bishops' conference where applicable.

Commentary

2.4.1

The Archbishop regulates the catechumenate and ensures its quality by allocating human, material, and financial resources for its purpose. The Archbishop also lays down norms for its effective operation (RCIA §12, GDC §223, and CIC §775.1). Through the appropriate office of the diocese, the Archbishop establishes and directs programmes for formation of adult catechists in accordance with CIC §779 and §780 (see also CT §63).

Norm 2.5.0 Archbishop and Initiation Rites

The Archbishop, if unable to be present at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation with all of the local church, at least celebrates the rite of election, ordinarily at the beginning of Lent, for the catechumens of the diocese (RCIA §12, 34.6, 121 [§108]).

Norm 2.6.0 Diocesan RCIA Coordinator

The Archbishop regulates and guides the ministry of adult initiation through the diocesan RCIA Coordinator. The diocesan RCIA coordinator provides training and resources for parish teams, sponsors, and catechists in the ministry of Christian initiation.

Commentary

2.6.1

The diocesan RCIA Coordinator regularly conducts pastoral and catechetical training sessions at diocesan, district, and parish levels so that each and every parish is suitably equipped to fulfil the responsibility of forming their own catechumens and candidates.

2.6.2

The diocesan RCIA coordinator should convene often with parish coordinators at district or diocesan level to foster effective ministry, increased collaboration, and mutual support.

Norm 2.7.0 Priests

Priests associate with themselves men and women of the parish who, as catechists, sponsors, and in other roles, collaborate with them in the ministry of adult initiation. Priests have a special responsibility to oversee, to preside, and to preach at the rites of Christian initiation.

Commentary

2.7.1

Priests should have a sound and current understanding of Christian initiation, keeping themselves up to date on the liturgical, theological, and pastoral aspects of this ministry. Despite their many other pastoral responsibilities, priests of the parish should collaborate with each other in the ministry of Christian initiation, to avoid the impression that the work of initiation only belongs to one priest at any one time.

2.7.2

Priests assist the laity to discern their gifts and encourage them as far as possible to take up the many diverse roles that are needed in adult initiation ministry according to each individual's capacity and charism (see LG §30).

Norm 2.8.0 Priests Equip the Parish Community for Ministry

Parish priests, assisted by the parish RCIA team, are responsible for constantly providing formation and support to the parish community so that it can “always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ” (RCIA §9).

Commentary

2.8.1

Priests should catechise their parishioners on the structure and intention of the rites of initiation, especially through their preaching.

2.8.2

Priests should ensure that some form of preparation be given to members of the assembly prior to the celebration of any rite of initiation so that they are able to participate actively in the ministries of prayer and welcome. This can be done through announcements after Mass, bulletins, parish awareness sessions, and other methods of communication. Well prepared celebrations of the rites can contribute to the catechesis of the faithful in a way that is effective beyond words.

Norm 2.9.0 Priests Deputise Catechists

Priests of the Archdiocese of Singapore are authorised to depute properly prepared catechists, on behalf of the Archbishop, to preside at the minor exorcisms and blessings of the catechumens (RCIA §12, 16, 34.5, 91, 96; Book of Blessings §519-521), and at celebrations of the word of God (RCIA §81-89).

Commentary

2.9.1

If there is no public commissioning ceremony for catechists, priests should convey explicitly to the parish community, or at least to the catechists themselves, the deputising of this faculty.

Norm 2.10.0 Catechists

Catechists who minister in the RCIA process are faithful Catholics with a firm grasp of Catholic doctrine, trained in the role of presiding at prayer, and versed in catechetical methodology. These catechists are commissioned by the Archbishop to participate in the work of catechesis.

Commentary

2.10.1

The catechist in Christian initiation is called to act as a mediator who “facilitates communication between the people and the mystery of God” (GDC §156).

2.10.2

Priests share in the teaching authority of the bishops and are catechists *ex officio*. However, to avoid the impression that catechesis lies solely within the domain of the clergy, they collaborate in this task with other priests, members of the religious, and even trained lay parishioners.

2.10.3

By their baptism and their activity in the secular world, lay people have a unique experience of the incarnating Christ in their daily struggle to live the Gospel. Those receiving catechesis from laity find in them a model for their future as Christian believers (GDC §230). It is desirable that parishes constantly identify and train lay catechists to serve in Christian initiation. On completion of their basic formation, catechists should be commissioned with liturgical rites, preferably during Catechetical Sunday, so that they can be visible signs of the laity's participation in the Church's teaching ministry.

Norm 2.11.0 Catechists and the Rites

Catechists have an important role in the progress of the catechumens and in the growth of the community. They should have an active part in the rites of Christian initiation (RCIA §16).

Commentary

2.11.1

Catechists who are properly deputed may preside at the rites of minor exorcism and blessing of the catechumens (RCIA §12, 16, 34.5, 91, 96; Book of Blessings §519-521) and at celebrations of the word of God (RCIA §81-89).

2.11.2

Catechists take part in the rites of acceptance and election by being involved in the discernment of readiness of their inquirers and catechumens and by testifying on their behalf.

Norm 2.12.0 Parish RCIA Coordinator

The parish RCIA coordinator assists the parish priests in the organisation and pastoral implementation of the order of initiation. The RCIA coordinator is well prepared and ministers in close collaboration with the parish pastoral council, the parish liturgy committee, and the parish initiation team.

Commentary

2.12.1

Parish RCIA coordinators do not merely function in an administrative role. They should be adequately formed in the pastoral, liturgical, and catechetical aspects of Christian initiation so that they are able to coordinate the initiation process with care and understanding.

2.12.2

Besides maintaining collaboration among the parish initiation teams, parish RCIA coordinators should be in constant communication with the diocesan RCIA coordinator on matters concerning Christian initiation in their parish.

Norm 2.13.0 Parish RCIA Teams

The parish RCIA team collaborates with the priests of the parish and the parish RCIA coordinator in the work of Christian initiation. Members of such teams are faithful Catholics who are prepared for the ministry of initiation.

Commentary

2.13.1

Parish RCIA team members take part in initiation ministry through specific areas such as publicity, preparing sponsors, administration, music, hospitality, and so on. It is advisable that team members avoid taking on too many roles in the parish at one time that they are unable to fully commit themselves to any one responsibility.

2.13.2

Priests should affirm and show appreciation for their parish initiation ministers by acknowledging their unique roles in the RCIA ministry as well as ensuring pastoral care and support for them.

2.13.3

Team members who serve for an extended period of time should be encouraged to take sabbatical leave of absence for personal ongoing formation and prevention of burn-out. This would also provide opportunity for new members to serve on the parish RCIA team.

3. PERIOD OF EVANGELISATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

Norm 3.0.0 Importance of the Precatechumenate

The period of evangelisation and precatechumenate is a time for individuals to inquire about the faith and, with the help of the community, purify their intentions in order to make a free choice to commit themselves to Christ.

Commentary

3.0.1

The nature of this period, also known as the period of inquiry, is informal and evangelical. Care should be taken to foster an environment that helps inquirers to “believe and be freely converted to the Lord, and commit themselves sincerely to him.” (RCIA §36) Inquirers should not be pressured in any way to progress into the catechumenate, or even to continue in the precatechumenate if they feel unready (AG §13).

3.0.2

This period requires that pastoral attention be given to each inquirer so that, ideally, it lasts as long as each individual needs in order to progress to the catechumenate. Such a precatechumenate should be available throughout the year, catering for inquirers who respond to God’s Spirit at various times. If there is a need to predetermine the length of the precatechumenate, priority should still be given for inquirers to make a free and sincere choice to follow the Gospel before the rite of acceptance is celebrated.

Norm 3.1.0 Reception in the Precatechumenate

Any reception or service of welcome or prayer for inquirers at the beginning or during the period of precatechumenate is entirely informal. Such meetings take into account that the inquirers are not yet catechumens and that the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is not anticipated (RCIA §39.1).

Commentary

3.1.1

The order of initiation discourages any form of prayer or welcome resembling formal rites at this stage, because it may detract from the inquirers’ experience of the liturgical rite of acceptance. Elaborate ritual ceremonies during this time may be mistaken for ‘commitment rites’ and impose undue pressure upon inquirers who feel obliged to continue the process.

Norm 3.2.0 Formation in the Precatechumenate

Inquirers are introduced to the basic teachings and values of Christ. They are provided a suitable explanation of the Gospel that is appropriate to the precatechumenate.

Commentary

3.2.1

Catechesis during this stage should serve the aim of evangelisation, namely, to lead inquirers to initial conversion towards a self-chosen faith relationship with Christ the Saviour. This first evangelisation is always done in close connection with human nature and its aspirations; it shows how the Gospel fully satisfies the human heart and is the key to Christian hope (see RCIA §37, GDC §117). This period is an improper time for detailed and systematic exposition of Roman Catholic doctrine.

3.2.2

In order to provide inquirers with “a sense of the Church, and some experience of the company and spirit of Christians” (RCIA §42), opportunities should be made for them to meet Catholic families and Neighbourhood Christian communities to gain an appreciation of Gospel living in the home, in the community, and in society at large. Exposure to the life of the Catholic community is aimed at helping inquirers to appreciate the uniqueness of the Catholic Church and its mission to manifest the reign of God.

4. RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

Norm 4.0.0 Discernment for Acceptance ³

Priests, with deacons, catechists, and sponsors, are responsible for discerning and, if necessary, purifying the motivations of inquirers during the period of evangelisation and precatechumenate before the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is celebrated.

Commentary

4.0.1

Discernment for entering the catechumenate focuses on the inquirers' overall disposition towards Christian discipleship in the way of the Gospel. Priests should make every effort to interact with the inquirers, taking into account pastoral counsel of the parish initiation team and the sponsors, to discern the readiness of inquirers to participate in the rite of acceptance.

4.0.2

An inquirer should show at least some of the following before being considered ready to celebrate the rite of acceptance: indications of first faith, desire to enter into deeper relationship with God in Christ, the beginnings of spiritual life, and assimilation of the fundamentals of Christian teaching. These are expressed by the inquirer through: initial conversion and intention to change their lives, sorrow for their sins, a start to calling upon God in prayer, and a sense of the Church by experiencing the Christian community (RCIA §42).

4.0.3

Discernment should be carried out with sensitivity. Inquirers who are unready to progress into the catechumenate should not be made to feel inferior. They should be assured of the community's care while they continue their preparation until they are ready to celebrate a rite of acceptance at a later time.

³ The basis for discernment for the rite of acceptance is same as that of the rite of election (see 6.0.0).

Norm 4.1.0 **Celebrating the Rite of Acceptance**

The rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is celebrated when a group of inquirers have embarked on the beginnings of a spiritual life and have adopted the fundamentals of Christian teaching (RCIA §41-74).

Commentary

4.1.1

The rite of acceptance is celebrated in the parish church at a time when a good number of the parishioners can participate.

4.1.2

Adaptations of the rite should only be done whenever permitted by the ritual text, and with respect to the intent of the rite.

4.1.3

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei has no Commentary for the optional rites of first exorcism and renunciation of false worship (RCIA §70-72), the rite of giving of a new name (RCIA §73), and the other rites signifying reception into the community (RCIA §74). Parishes may incorporate these into the rite of acceptance according to the needs of the inquirers.

4.1.4

Catechumens are dismissed from the assembly after the rite of acceptance is celebrated, before the liturgy of the eucharist begins (RCIA §75.3). The baptised community sends the catechumens off in a fitting way to reflect deeper on the word of God.

4.1.5

The names of those accepted into the order of catechumens should be recorded in a parish register for catechumens (RCIA §46).

Norm 4.2.0 **Time for Celebrating the Rite of Acceptance**

The rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is celebrated whenever there are unbaptised inquirers who are ready to take this step. This rite may be celebrated a number of times throughout the year, according to pastoral need.

Commentary

4.2.1

The order of initiation suggests multiple celebrations of this rite (RCIA §18), indicating the assumption that a period of pre-catechumenate is available all year round. Individuals, whenever they are ready, enter the catechumenate at any rite of acceptance that is celebrated at designated times in a year.

5. CATECHUMENATE

Norm 5.0.0 Status of the Catechumen

Catechumens are linked to the Church in a special way since, moved by the Holy Spirit, they are expressing an explicit desire to be incorporated in the Church. By this very desire, as well as by the life of faith, hope, and charity which they lead, they are joined to the Church which already cherishes them as its own (LG §14, CIC §206).

Commentary

5.0.1

Catechumens are accorded various prerogatives which are proper to Christians (CIC §206.2, see also 10.6.0 and 10.12.0).

5.0.2

Those who leave the catechumenate after celebrating the rite of acceptance retain their status as catechumens. If they wish to continue in the catechumenate at another time or in another parish, they need not celebrate the rite of acceptance again. The status of catechumens may be ascertained from the register for catechumens of the parish where they celebrated the rite of acceptance.

Norm 5.1.0 Duration of Catechumenate

The duration of the catechumenate should be long enough for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong. This period, for which the rite recommends several years if necessary, begins at the rite of acceptance and concludes at the end of the period of purification and enlightenment (RCIA §76). It extends, at the least, through one year of formation, instruction, and probation (NCCB #6).

Commentary

5.1.1

In Singapore parishes, the catechumenate usually extends from Lent in one year until Easter of the following year.

Norm 5.2.0 Non-Parish Catechumenate

If the catechumenate takes place outside of a parish setting, catechumens are introduced into the Christian life of their own parishes from the beginning so that, after celebrating the sacraments of initiation, they will not be isolated from the ordinary life of their parish.

Commentary

5.2.1

Non-parish centres that conduct the catechumenate should make it their concern to deepen the bond between the catechumens and their respective parish communities.

5.2.2

Every parish that has no catechumenate and sends its catechumens for formation elsewhere should make conscious effort to remain in contact with their catechumens. Priests of such parishes have the responsibility of seeing to the integration of their catechumens into the parish community.

Norm 5.3.0 Celebrations of the Word of God

Catechesis during the catechumenate is solidly supported by celebrations of the word (RCIA §75.1). Celebrations of the word of God are intrinsic to the formation of catechumens and are arranged frequently for their benefit (RCIA §81-89).

Commentary

5.3.1

The source of catechesis is the word of God proclaimed in the life of the Church and transmitted in the scriptures (CT §27). Priests and catechists should make it a priority to instil in catechumens a love for sacred scripture and to impart the necessary skill to receive the word of God fruitfully in personal prayer and liturgical worship.

5.3.2

The eminent form of celebration of the word of God is the liturgy of the word. Catechumens should be immersed into the predominant way scripture is encountered by the Catholic community - its proclamation in the sacred liturgy. Christ, in the proclaimed word, implants in the hearts of catechumens the teachings of the Gospel and transforms them gradually, preparing them to join God's priestly people in eucharistic worship (RCIA §82). For this reason, participation of catechumens in the liturgy of the word and their subsequent dismissal for deeper reflection on the word (RCIA §75.3, §67) is not only appropriate but of paramount importance to their formation in the Christian life.

Norm 5.4.0 Other Rites of the Catechumenate

Minor exorcisms (RCIA §90-94), blessings of catechumens (RCIA §95-97 [§95-96]), and anointing with the oil of the catechumens (RCIA §98-103) are proper to the period of the catechumenate and should be celebrated according to need.

Commentary

5.4.1

The Church lovingly nourishes catechumens with rites of the catechumenate. These rites should be used at appropriate moments to express the community's faith and to show its care and concern for catechumens. Minor exorcisms are used to highlight the catechumens' struggle in Christian living and to petition God for help and consolation. Blessings are joyful prayers for God's grace which strengthens and encourages the catechumens. Anointing with oil signifies the catechumens' need for God's help in order to overcome all obstacles and commit themselves more fully to the Gospel.

5.4.2

Ministers of minor exorcisms and blessings of the catechumens include priests, deacons, and properly deputed lay and religious catechists. The rite of anointing with the oil of the catechumens is presided over by priests or deacons.

5.4.3

The oil of the catechumens is blessed by the Archbishop at the Chrism Mass. The liturgy commission of the archdiocese ensures that there is sufficient quantity of oil for parishes to celebrate rite of anointing of the catechumens regularly. In the case of need, priests may bless oil for this rite (see Rite of Blessing of Oils, Rite of Consecrating Chrism, Introduction §7).

Norm 5.5.0 Catechesis during the Catechumenate

A comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and the moral life, aided by approved catechetical texts, is provided to catechumens during the period of the catechumenate.

Commentary

5.5.1

Catechetical ministry within the catechumenate is oriented to conversion in the life of the catechumens. “The whole initiation must bear a markedly paschal character” (RCIA §8). Separated from this, catechesis falls short - no matter how attractively it is presented.

5.5.2

Priests and lay catechists are responsible for catechesis that respects the learning capabilities of adult catechumens, is linked to the liturgical celebrations of the community, and is firmly grounded on the word of God (RCIA §75.1). An integrated approach reunites liturgy with catechesis: using the liturgical life of the faith community as a source for catechetical reflection.

5.5.3

Catechetical methodology should take into account the overall formation of adults. Catechists should enable adults to be agents of their own learning. Catechesis through active dialogue with life experience, sharing of faith stories, and gradual exposition of the Christian vision challenges catechumens to become mature in faith.

5.5.4

Parishes that wish to explore new adult catechetical approaches or revise their existing programmes may contact the diocesan RCIA Coordinator for assistance. Parishes should keep the Archbishop informed by making known to the diocesan RCIA Coordinator details regarding the schedule, content, and duration of their catechetical programme.

6. RITE OF ELECTION

Norm 6.0.0 Discernment of Catechumens for Election ⁴

It is the responsibility of priests, with deacons, catechists, sponsors and godparents to discern the readiness of catechumens to celebrate the rite of election.

Commentary

6.0.1

Christian discernment is the process of discovering the will of God. Discernment of catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation involves two movements. On one hand, individual catechumens are responsible for discerning their personal readiness to celebrate the rite of election (individual discernment). On the other hand the community of believers, especially those who have journeyed closely with the catechumens, engage in active and prayerful discernment in order to validate the catechumen's decision (communal discernment).

6.0.2

Communal and individual discernment occur throughout the catechumenate. These two elements constitute the discernment necessary for the Church to mediate God's election of catechumens. It should be made clear to all, especially to ministers of initiation, that election is not merely a human process of choosing but a divine action mediated through the ministry of the Church.

6.0.3

Conditions that indicate a catechumen's readiness to celebrate the rite of election are conversion in mind and action, a sufficient acquaintance with Catholic teaching, a spirit of faith and charity, and an express desire to receive the sacraments of initiation (RCIA §120 [§107]). Ministers of Christian initiation should defer the rite of election for catechumens who are not disposed to or who show no intention of receiving the sacraments of initiation at Easter.

⁴ The Church makes its discernment and subsequent election of catechumens based on its own election by God (RCIA §119 [106]).

Norm 6.1.0 Sending Catechumens for Election

When the period of the catechumenate draws to a close the optional rite of sending of the catechumens for election may be celebrated prior to a diocesan celebration of the rite of election.

Commentary

6.1.1

The rite of sending catechumens for election has its origins from the American Catholic Church. Being unable, at most times, to be present at the diocesan rite of election the parish community expresses its approval and support of the catechumens and sends them for election with this rite.

Norm 6.2.0 Celebrating the Rite of Election

The celebration of the rite of election normally coincides with the first Sunday of Lent. During this rite, on the basis of the testimony of godparents and catechists and of the catechumens' reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation.

Commentary

6.2.1

All parishes with catechumens receive an annual invitation to participate in the archdiocesan celebration of the rite of election. Catechumens who complete their discernment and ask to be initiated at the approaching Easter Vigil are expected to participate in the archdiocesan celebration of the rite of election.

6.2.2

The book of the elect serves as a record of the catechumens' election, listing the names of the catechumens, the name of the presider and the date of the celebration. Parishes are to keep a record of their elect.

Norm 6.3.0 **Parish Celebrations of the Rite of Election**

When, for pastoral reasons, it is not possible for one or several catechumens to attend the archdiocesan celebration of the rite of election, delegation for a priest to celebrate the rite in a catechumen's parish is obtained from the Archbishop.

Commentary

6.3.1

The Archbishop of Singapore delegates all parish priests and their associate priests to celebrate the rite of election in parishes for catechumens who are unable to take part in the diocesan celebration.

7. PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Norm 7.0.0 Elect and the Sacrament of Penance

Elect do not celebrate the sacrament of penance prior to their baptism. They participate instead in non-sacramental penitential rites (the Scrutinies, RCIA §150-156 [§137-143], §164-177 [§151-164]) so that they come to understand the reality of sin and appreciate the comforting message of God's pardon.

Norm 7.1.0 Scrutinies

All three scrutinies are used for elect preparing for the sacraments of initiation.

Commentary

7.1.1

The scrutinies are normally celebrated on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. The cycle A readings of the lectionary for Lenten Sundays are always used during the scrutinies even during cycles B and C (see RCIA §146 [§133]).

7.1.2

The three scrutinies are not omitted from the elect's preparation for baptism unless there is some serious reason and the Archbishop's dispensation is obtained (RCIA §20).

7.1.3

In the celebration of the scrutinies, the significance of laying on of hands should be preserved during the prayers of exorcism. RCIA §154 [§141], §168 [§155], and §175 [§162] recommend that this be done if convenient; that is, if the numbers of elect are not too large for one or two priests to lay hands on each individual.

Norm 7.2.0 **Other Rites of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment**

The presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer normally take place during the period of purification and enlightenment. For pastoral reasons, however, the presentations may be celebrated during the period of the catechumenate.

Commentary

7.2.1

If the rites of presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are celebrated outside of the period of purification and enlightenment it is kept in mind that being symbolic acts of entrustment, they retain their full significance only when celebrated with catechumens or elect who have reached sufficient maturity in their understanding and application of Christian doctrine and prayer.

Norm 7.3.0 **Immediate Preparation for Initiation**

For immediate preparation for the sacraments of initiation, the elect may celebrate the ephphetha rite (RCIA §197-199 [§184-186]), the choosing of a baptismal name (RCIA §200-202 [§187-189]), or, if it has been deferred, the presentation of the Lord's Prayer (RCIA §149 [§136], §178-180 [§165-171]), or the recitation of the Creed (RCIA §193-196 [§180-183]).

Commentary

7.3.1

The rite of 'return' or recitation of the Creed is only celebrated if the rite of presentation of the Creed has taken place beforehand.

8. SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Norm 8.0.0 Ordinary Ministers of Baptism

The ordinary ministers of baptism are bishops, priests, and deacons. In imminent danger of death, when no priest or deacon is available, any member of the faithful, indeed anyone with the right intention, can and should administer baptism (CIGI §11, 16).

Commentary

8.0.1

The words for conferring baptism in the Roman Catholic Church are: *I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* (CIGI §23).

Norm 8.1.0 Times for Celebrating Initiation

The normal time for celebrating the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil. However, in the case when Christian initiation is celebrated outside the usual times indicated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, it is recommended that the texts for the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season, including the readings from cycle A, be used (RCIA §247 [§237]).

Commentary

8.1.1

Although provision is given, parishes that are currently celebrating the sacraments of initiation outside the Easter season should note that this is not the norm. Measures should be taken as far as possible to reunite Christian initiation with its native time frame, that is, Lenten preparation and Easter initiation.

Norm 8.2.0 Reception of Sacraments at One Celebration and in Proper Order

The Christian Initiation of Adults includes at one celebration: the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the first sharing in eucharist. In accord with the ancient practice of the Church, these sacraments are received together and in their proper order (RCIA §215 [§208], CIC §866).

Norm 8.3.0 Place for Baptism

The celebration of baptism takes place in the parish church. Baptisms in private homes or hospitals are permitted only in cases of emergency.

Commentary

8.3.1

Anyone who baptises in a case of emergency is obliged to notify a priest of the baptised person's parish so that the baptism is recorded in the appropriate register (CIC §877.1, §878).

Norm 8.4.0 Baptism by Immersion and Partial Immersion

Because baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament (CCC §1214, 1239, 628), provision is made for its more frequent use in the baptism of adults. The provision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for partial immersion, namely, immersion of the candidate's head, is taken into account (RCIA §226).

Norm 8.5.0 Provision for Immersion Font

In the Archdiocese of Singapore, whenever a new church is erected, provision is made for a baptismal font that allows for immersion. When a church is renovated, the font is constructed to allow for the immersion of adults, if possible.

Commentary

8.5.1

In order to factor in liturgical considerations, parish building committees should consult with the Liturgy Commission and the Building Commission of the diocese when planning renovations to the parish church.

Norm 8.6.0 Elect and Confirmation

The elect are confirmed at the same celebration as their baptism or, if this is not possible, at the earliest opportunity.

Commentary

8.6.1

Although the Rite allows for the sacrament of confirmation to be postponed for serious reasons (RCIA §24) pastors are reminded that separating confirmation from baptism is not the norm.

8.6.2

Catechumens express during the rite of election their intent to receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Those who are being prepared in the catechumenate receive catechesis on confirmation, are aware of its effects and obligations, and already participate in the community's apostolic life to some degree. No minister should deny catechumens so disposed any or all of the sacraments of initiation (CIC §843.1).

8.6.3

Poor catechesis and celebrations of liturgy may result in the catechumens not being able to distinguish the reception of confirmation among the rites of initiation. This can be rectified in two ways: firstly, replace minimalist celebration of the rites with conscientious use of full liturgical forms and symbols; for example, immersion during baptism, and ample pouring of oil during confirmation. Second, conscientiously implement the catechumenate to enable catechumens to integrate with the parish community in its apostolic and liturgical life.

Norm 8.7.0 Priests Receive the Faculty to Confirm

Priests who baptise catechumens receive from the law itself (CIC §883.2) the faculty to confirm, and are obliged to use it for the sake of the newly baptised (CIC §885.2).

Commentary

8.7.1

Even if it is delayed for serious reasons, confirmation should be administered at the end of the period of mystagogy (RCIA §24).

Norm 8.8.0 Reception of First Communion

The preparation of adults for reception of first eucharist is an integral part of Christian initiation and requires a contemporary catechesis as outlined in GDC §85-86.

Norm 8.9.0 Readiness for First Communion

Priests, in consultation with catechists and other appropriate ministers, determine the readiness of the elect to receive their first communion. This readiness must include a sufficient familiarity with the nature of the eucharist in order for the communicant to participate actively and be aware of the implications of such a celebration.

Commentary

8.9.1

Persons with developmental disabilities can indicate readiness for first communion by the following: relationships with people who share faith and prayer, a sense of the sacred as manifested in behaviour, and desire for communion. If those with disabilities cannot use words to express their understanding of communion, they can show their awareness by their manner, facial expression, their gestures, and the quality of their silence.

9. POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

Norm 9.0.0 Duration of Postbaptismal Catechesis

A suitable period of mystagogy or postbaptismal catechesis is offered the neophytes so that they might live more deeply the mysteries they have celebrated. Ideally, postbaptismal catechesis and pastoral care extends for one year.

Commentary

9.0.1

The newly baptised, or neophytes, joining with the community deepen their grasp of the paschal mystery during this period. Mystagogical catechesis and reflection stem from the neophytes' experience of the sacraments of initiation and unite them more closely to the life of the community.

9.0.2

The neophytes should be invited to celebrate a special Mass of thanksgiving with the Archbishop during the Easter season (RCIA §251 [§241]).

9.0.3

Pastoral care for the neophytes should extend beyond the time of initiation. During this period of mystagogy, transition should be made to active sharing in the mission of the Church.

10. SPECIAL PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Norm 10.0.0 Adapting the Rites of Initiation

Variables to be considered for adapting the rite include the many forms of God's grace in a local setting: the disposition of individuals, the need of the participants, and the action of the Church in a particular time and place (RCIA §5, see also §35).

Commentary

10.0.1

In any adaptation of the initiation process, primacy is given to God's work in the unique life-setting of each individual. Ministers should keep in mind that the structure of RCIA mandated by the Church is flexible for the reason of accommodating to each individual seeker's needs and abilities.

Norm 10.1.0 Abbreviated Form of Initiation

The integrity of the rites of the Church is maintained at all times. In extraordinary circumstances, however, the parish receives the Archbishop's permission to use the abbreviated form of the order of initiation, also known as Christian Initiation of Adults in Exceptional Circumstances (RCIA, Part II).

Commentary

10.1.1

Special circumstances may prevent or excuse a catechumen from completing all the steps of the catechumenate. For example, if a catechumen has already attained a depth of Christian conversion and a degree of religious maturity, or if a catechumen is due to migrate to a country where Christian initiation is difficult or unavailable, or if there is physical or mental disability, advanced age or serious illness (see RCIA §331-339 [§307-315]).

10.1.2

Careful consideration should be given before celebrating the abbreviated rite. Individuals who are evidently disinclined, for whatever reason, to Christian commitment should have initiation deferred rather than hastened.

10.1.3

The Archbishop of Singapore has delegated to all parish priests the authority to celebrate the abbreviated rite at their discretion.

Norm 10.2.0 **Initiation outside Easter**

Because determining the time of initiation is the Archbishop's prerogative parish priests who wish to celebrate initiation apart from the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday because of unusual circumstances or pastoral needs require his permission to do so (RCIA §34.2, 26).

Commentary

10.2.1

Unusual circumstances include very large numbers to be initiated, limited parish resources, lack of priests and catechists, and so forth. In such cases it is preferred that the initiation process occurs such that a day within the Easter season is chosen as an alternative time for initiation (RCIA §26).

Norm 10.3.0 **Change in Time of Initiation Does Not Affect Integrity of Rite**

If the time of initiation is changed, even though Christian initiation occurs at a different part of the liturgical year, the structure of the entire rite remains the same but for the adjustments in RCIA §27-30.

Norm 10.4.0 **Marriage Preparation and Christian Initiation**

When a catechumen is engaged to be married, the initiation process is not rushed merely to allow for initiation before the marriage is celebrated.

Commentary

10.4.1

Because Christian marriage is a serious vocation, its preparation should not be abbreviated because of one's participation in the catechumenate. If it is not possible to participate fully in both processes, preparation for Christian marriage takes precedence over that for Christian initiation. It may be more appropriate to postpone or extend the catechumenate in such cases.

10.4.2

The same kind of pastoral care should be provided for catechumens preparing for marriage as for any other member of the baptised community who marries in the Church.

10.4.3

It is pastorally prudent to refer the newly married couple to their respective parish priest who can then assume the responsibility for seeing that the catechumen has the opportunity to complete the process of initiation.

Norm 10.5.0 Christian Marriages Involving Catechumens

Because catechumens are already joined to the Church as part of the household of Christ, they are entitled to celebrate their marriage in the church (LG §14, RCIA §47).

Commentary

10.5.1

If two catechumens marry, or a catechumen marries a non-Catholic Christian or an unbaptised person, no dispensation needs to be granted for the catechumen. However, the prenuptial enquiry should still be completed and filed with other parish records. It should be noted on the prenuptial form that the marriage involved a catechumen.

10.5.2

The marriages of catechumens, whether with other catechumens or with baptised Christians or even non-Christians, should be celebrated at a liturgy of the word and never at the eucharistic liturgy. Chapter III of the Rite of Marriage is to be followed, but the nuptial blessing in Chapter I, §33 may be used⁵, omitting all references to eucharistic sharing.

10.5.3

The marriage should be properly recorded in the parish marriage register and in the parish register of catechumens.

Norm 10.6.0 Dispensation Required For Catholics to Marry Catechumens

When a catechumen marries a Catholic, the Catholic party is required by Church law to seek a dispensation from disparity of cult (CIC §1086.1, §1086.2).

⁵ See 'The Rites of the Catholic Church', ICEL: The Liturgical Press, 1990, pp. 730-731.

Norm 10.7.0 Declarations of Nullity

Non-baptised persons who need a declaration of nullity from their previous marriage are free to enter into the catechumenate but are not accepted for the rite of election. Such restrictions hold until a declaration of nullity is granted.

Commentary

10.7.1

Priests, with their parish RCIA teams, should uncover the need for a declaration of nullity through personal interviews early in the initiation process. Non-baptised persons in need of declarations of nullity who are received into the catechumenate must clearly understand from the outset that until they receive the declaration of nullity, they may not be initiated at the approaching Easter.

Norm 10.8.0 Catechumens not Intending Remarriage

A catechumen who is divorced, not remarried, and does not intend to remarry is not in need of a declaration of nullity to be accepted for the rite of election or, consequently, the sacraments of initiation. However, the implications of future attempts to remarry without a declaration of nullity must be carefully explained before the discernment for the rite is completed.

Commentary

10.8.1

Ministers of initiation should consult with and present relevant marriage cases to authorities that are prepared to give special attention to such cases; such as the archdiocesan matrimonial tribunal or the judicial vicar of the diocese.

Norm 10.9.0 Validation of Marriages

When a marriage is validated in the Church, the validation ceremony takes place prior to celebrating the initiation sacraments. One cannot enter the full sacramental life of the Church unless one is completely free to receive the sacraments. It is pastorally advisable to validate the marriage in the Church as early in the initiation process as possible.

Norm 10.10.0 Conferral of Conditional Baptism

Unless there is a reasonable doubt about the fact or validity of baptism already conferred, ministers do not confer the sacrament of baptism again conditionally. The requirements for conferral of conditional baptism are established through careful investigation in accordance with CIC §869.2 and §869.3.

Norm 10.11.0 Catholic Funeral and Modes of Committal for those departed before Baptism or before full reception in the Catholic Church

Because they are already part of the household of Christ, catechumens have the right to Christian burial in the Catholic Church (CCC §1258-1260, CIC §1183.1).

Commentary

10.11.1

If a catechumen should die before initiation, the funeral liturgy, including the funeral Mass, should be celebrated as usual, omitting only language referring directly to the sacraments, which the catechumen had not yet received.

10.11.2

At the discretion of the priest, the funeral Mass may be omitted in deference to the sensibilities of the catechumen's immediate family.

PART B: MINISTRY TO BAPTISED CANDIDATES FOR RECEPTION INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

“May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.” -John 17:21

11. INITIATION FOR CANDIDATES

Norm 11.0.0 Rites used for Candidates ⁶

The optional rites found in the RCIA, Part II, Section 4 are used for baptised but uncatechised non-Catholic adults.

Commentary

11.0.1

Initiation ministry to baptised non-Catholics for the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church is understood within the context of Christian unity. Unlike catechumens who are initiated into the Paschal Mystery, baptised candidates are formed into a deeper understanding of the mystery received at their baptism and to live it out within the Catholic community (see UR §3, RCIA §400). As such, pastors can always celebrate the rite of reception for candidates at suitable times apart from the Easter Vigil; e.g. week of prayer for Christian unity, Epiphany Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, or World Mission Sunday.

11.0.2

Baptised candidates have rites proper to their own formation, these include: the rite of welcoming candidates, the rite of sending candidates for recognition by the bishop and for the call to continuing conversion, the penitential rite (scrutiny), and the rite of reception of baptised Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Parishes may celebrate these rites at appropriate times and according to the candidates' needs. Candidates do not take part in the rites for catechumens.

11.0.3

Where there are catechumens as well as baptised candidates seeking initiation, and when the parish wishes to celebrate the rites for catechumens and the rites for the candidates at the same time, the combined rites found in the RCIA, Appendix I are used.

⁶ Rites for baptised candidates and combined rites for candidates and catechumens are adaptations of the RCIA approved by the United States Bishops' Conference for use in North America and are currently in use in many English speaking countries. The US bishops apply these rites to baptised but uncatechised Catholics as well. However, the Singapore archdiocese situates ministry to these 'returning' Catholics (who have received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist) as reconciliation rather than initiation.

Norm 11.1.0 Formation for Candidates

Baptised candidates preparing to celebrate the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church are invited to participate in the precatechumenal and catechumenal process to the extent that it helps their spiritual formation.

Commentary

11.1.1

Formation for baptised candidates depends on their background and need. Part II, §4-5 of the RCIA should be studied carefully to provide for the needs of these candidates. Although it is often useful for candidates to join in the catechumenal process, there should be no presumption that they require the same formation as catechumens. Candidates who have had a sound Christian upbringing and are evidently of mature faith and Christian practice should not be expected to follow the same formation process as catechumens who are first coming to faith.

11.1.2

A clear distinction should always be made between baptised candidates and those who are unbaptised. The unique and irrevocable gift of baptism is respected and its significance not overlooked, “it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brethren by the children of the Catholic Church” (UR §3). Catechists and homilists can use this distinction to create opportunities for catechesis on the dignity and effect of baptism.

11.1.3

Baptised candidates, if they do not have godparents from their baptism or if their godparents do not fulfil necessary requirements (see GICI §10), choose up to two sponsors to accompany them in their catechetical formation for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA §483).

Norm 11.2.0 **Combined Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion**

In the archdiocese of Singapore it is usual that catechumens celebrate election and baptised candidates celebrate recognition for reception into the communion of the Church at the same time. The Archbishop normally presides at the combined rite of election of catechumens and the call to continuing conversion of candidates (RCIA §550-561) annually at the beginning of Lent.

Commentary

11.2.1

All parishes receive an annual invitation to participate in the archdiocesan celebration of the rite of election and the call to continuing conversion. Baptised candidates are encouraged to participate in the diocesan call to continuing conversion but are not obliged to do so.

11.2.2

The rite of calling candidates to continuing conversion is optional. It may be celebrated at diocesan level or at the parish. No delegation is necessary from the Archbishop for the parish priest to preside at this rite in the parish.

11.2.3

The names of those who participate in the rite of calling of candidates to continuing conversion are not inscribed in the book of the elect but in a separate parish record book, clearly indicating their status as baptised candidates.

Norm 11.3.0 **Baptised Candidates and the Sacrament of Penance**

Baptised candidates receive thorough catechesis on the sacrament of penance and are encouraged to celebrate the sacrament, especially during the period of purification and enlightenment. Candidates should celebrate the sacrament of penance prior to their reception into the Catholic Church if they labour under the guilt of serious sin (RCIA §482).

Commentary

11.3.1

Baptised candidates do not take part with the elect in the scrutinies which include prebaptismal prayers of exorcism. Instead, they may celebrate the penitential rite prescribed in RCIA §464-472. Candidates are invited to celebrate the sacrament of penance before they are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Norm 11.4.0 Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

Adults who were validly baptised in a non-Catholic Christian community are formally received into the Catholic Church through the rite of reception of baptised Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA, part II, §473-504 [§387-417]).

Commentary

11.4.1

The names of adults who are received into full communion should be recorded in the appropriate parish register.

Norm 11.5.0 Faculty to Confirm Candidates

Priests who receive Christian candidates into the full communion of the Catholic Church receive from the law itself (CIC §883.2, RCIA §481) the faculty to confirm, and are obliged to use it for the sake of the newly received adults (CIC §885.2).

Norm 11.6.0 Unconfirmed Catholics

Baptised and catechised Roman Catholics, who, for whatever reason, have not had the opportunity to be confirmed, are invited to complete their initiation after an appropriate catechesis. These adults may be confirmed either at the next visit of the bishop to the parish for confirmation, or at the Easter Vigil by a priest.

Commentary

11.6.1

Canon §1065.1 strongly recommends that Catholics receive the sacrament of confirmation prior to their marriage. Understood as a sacrament of initiation (CCC, part 2, section 2, chapter 1), confirmation helps one to live marriage as a Christian vocation.

Norm 11.7.0 **Marriage Preparation and Reception into the Catholic Church**

When a candidate is engaged to be married, the initiation process is not rushed merely to allow for reception into the full communion of the Church before the marriage is celebrated.

Commentary

11.7.1

Because Christian marriage is a serious vocation, its preparation should not be neglected or abbreviated because of one's participation in the formation towards full communion of the Catholic Church. If it is not possible to participate fully in both processes, preparation to celebrate Christian marriage takes precedence over preparation for Christian initiation. It may be more appropriate to concentrate on the preparation for Christian marriage and postpone or extend the formation required for reception into the Catholic Church.

11.7.2

The same kind of pastoral care should be provided for candidates preparing for marriage as for any other Catholic who marries in the church.

11.7.3

It is pastorally prudent to refer the newly married couple to their respective parish priests who can then assume the responsibility for seeing that the candidate has the opportunity to complete the process of initiation.

Norm 11.8.0 **Candidates Requiring Declarations of Nullity**

Baptised candidates who require a declaration of nullity from their previous marriage are not accepted for the rite of calling to continual conversion, until such a declaration of nullity is granted.

Commentary

11.8.1

Baptised persons who require declarations of nullity from their previous marriages (eg. Remarried candidates or those intending to remarry) must also understand that they are not able to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church until they are granted such a declaration.

Norm 11.9.0 **Candidates Not Intending Remarriage**

A candidate who is divorced, not remarried, and does not intend to remarry is not in need of a declaration of nullity to be accepted for the rite of calling candidates to continuing conversion, or, consequently, the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist. However, the implications of future attempts to remarry without a declaration of nullity must be carefully explained before the discernment for the rites is completed.

Commentary

11.9.1

Ministers of initiation should consult with and present relevant marriage cases to authorities that are prepared to give special attention to such cases; such as the archdiocesan matrimonial tribunal or to the judicial vicar of the diocese.

Norm 11.10.0 **Catholic Funeral and Modes of Committal for those departed before Baptism or before full reception in the Catholic Church** Because they are already part of the household of Christ, candidates have the right to Christian burial in the Catholic Church (CCC §1258-1260, CIC §1183).

Commentary

11.10.1

If a candidate should die before initiation, the funeral liturgy, including the funeral Mass, should be celebrated as usual, omitting only language referring directly to Eucharistic sharing.⁷

11.10.2

At the discretion of the priest, the funeral Mass may be omitted in deference to the sensibilities of the candidate's immediate family.

⁷ See *Order of Christian Funerals*, 'The Rites of the Catholic Church', ICEL: The Liturgical Press, 1990.

A p p e n d i x A : L i s t o f C a n o n s

Can. 206.1

Catechumens are linked with the church in a special way since, moved by the Holy Spirit, they are expressing an explicit desire to be incorporated in the Church. By this very desire, as well as by the life of faith, hope and charity which they lead, they are joined to the Church which already cherishes them as its own.

Can. 206.2

The Church has a special care for catechumens. While it invites them to lead an evangelical life, and introduces them to the celebration of the sacred rites, it already accords them various prerogatives which are proper to Christians.

Can. 775.1

While observing the provisions made by the Apostolic See, it is the responsibility of diocesan bishops to issue norms concerning catechetical matters; to ensure that appropriate means of catechesis are available, even by preparing a catechism, if this seems opportune; to foster and to coordinate catechetical initiatives.

Can. 779

Catechetical formation is to be given by employing all those aids, educational resources and means of social communication which seem more effective in securing that the faithful, according to their character, capability, age and circumstances of life, may be able more fully to learn catholic teaching and more effectively put it into practice.

Can. 780

Local Ordinaries are to ensure that catechists are duly trained to carry out their office properly, namely, that continuing formation is available to them, that they have an appropriate knowledge of the teaching of the Church, and that they learn both the theory and the practice of the principles of pedagogy.

Can. 843.1

Sacred ministers may not deny the sacraments to those who opportunely ask for them, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

Can. 866

Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, immediately after receiving baptism an adult is to be confirmed, to participate in the celebration of the eucharist and to receive holy communion.

Can. 869.2

Those baptised in a non-catholic ecclesial community are not to be baptised conditionally unless there is a serious reason for doubting the validity of their baptism, on the ground of matter or the form of words used in the baptism, or the intention of the adult being baptised or of that of the baptising minister.

Can. 869.3

If...a doubt remains about the conferring of baptism or its validity, baptism is not to be conferred until the doctrine of the sacrament of baptism is explained to the person to be baptised, if that person is an adult. Moreover, the reasons for doubting the validity of the earlier baptism should be given to the person or, where an infant is concerned, to the parents.

Can. 874.1.5

To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor (*meaning 'godparent'*), a person must not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptised.

Can. 877.1

The parish priests of the place in which the baptism was conferred must carefully and without delay record in the register of baptism the names of the baptised, the minister, the parents, the sponsor (*meaning 'godparent'*) and, if there were such, witnesses, and the place and date of baptism. He must also enter the date and place of birth.

Can. 878

If the baptism was administered neither by the parish priest nor in his presence, the minister of baptism, whoever that was, must notify the parish priest of the parish in which baptism was administered, so that he may register the baptism in accordance with Can. 877.1.

Can. 883.2

In respect of the person to be confirmed, the priest who by virtue of his office or by mandate of the diocesan bishop baptises one who is no longer an infant or admits a person already baptised into full communion with the Catholic Church [has, by law, the faculty to administer confirmation].

Can. 885.1 and Can. 885.2

The diocesan bishop is bound to ensure that the sacrament of confirmation is conferred upon his subjects who duly and reasonably request it. A priest who has this faculty must use it for those in whose favour it was granted.

Can. 1065.1

Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to marriage, if this can be done without grave inconvenience.

Can. 1086.1 and Can. 1086.2

A marriage is invalid when one of the two persons was baptised in the Catholic Church or received into it and has not by a formal act defected from it, and the other was not baptised. This impediment is not to be dispensed unless the conditions mentioned in Can. 1125 and 1126 have been fulfilled.

Can. 1183.1

As far as funerals are concerned, catechumens are to be reckoned among Christ's faithful.

A p p e n d i x B : R e f e r e n c e s

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