



RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

I. Basic background:

By treating Baptism before all the other sacraments in part one of Book IV, the *Code of Canon Law* affirms this sacrament as the precondition for a valid reception of all the others and as the first of the three sacraments necessary for full Christian initiation. The thirty canons that comprise this title reflect the distinction between adult and infant baptism and the corresponding disciplines presented in the current rituals (*New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Hart, Kevin T., p. 1033).

As noted in canon 849, “Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation by actual reception or at least by desire, is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of words. Through baptism men and women are freed from sin, are reborn as children of God, and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church.”

Age: All candidates above the age of discretion (about the age of 7) are initiated into the Catholic faith according to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It will be necessary to make adaptation of the RCIA for children and adolescents. (see RCIA, part II) This involves the reception of all three of the sacraments we know as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in that order, at one complete celebration.

The process is flexible, of no set duration. It may encompass from one to several years, and is inclusive of many ministering endeavors of the entire community. Some minister as coordinators or directors of the process, others serve as sponsors, catechists, hospitality people, mentors on the journey of faith, and/or pastors, while others serve as witnesses to the faith and sisters/brothers in the community of church. The process turns on discernment of the personal journey of the “inquirer/catechumen/elect” and follows the liturgical year and its scriptures as well as the truths of the Creed, Our Father and Sacraments. It is an alive and dynamic formation process rather than an educational, theoretical program.

II. Canonical Requirements:

Canon 851 –

The celebration of baptism must be prepared properly; consequently:
1° *an adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and, is to be led insofar as possible through the various stages to sacramental initiation, according to the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms published by it.*

Canon 865 --

§1. *For an adult to be baptized, the person must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, have been instructed sufficiently about the truths of faith and*



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Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian life through the catechumenate. The adult is also to be urged to have sorrow for personal sins.

§2. *An adult in danger of death can be baptized if, having some knowledge of the principal truths of the faith, the person has manifested in any way at all the intention to receive baptism and promises to observe the commandments of the Christian religion.*

Canon 866 --

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.

Canon 852 --

§1. *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.*

§2. *One who is not of sound mind (non sui compos) is equated with an infant so far as baptism is concerned.*

Canon 857 --

§2. *As a rule adults are to be baptized in their own parish church and infants in the parish church proper to their parents, unless a just cause suggests otherwise.*

Sponsors:

Canon 873 –

There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

Canon 874

§2. *A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor.*

To be a sponsor for Baptism, one must fulfill the following conditions:

- a. Have the qualifications and intention of performing the role
- b. Have completed the sixteenth year
- c. Have received Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and live a life of harmony with the Catholic faith
- d. Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared



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Canon 874§1 --

To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:

- 1° *be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the one who takes their place, or in their absence, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role;*
- 2° *have completed the sixteenth year, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for just cause;*
- 3° *be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;*
- 4° *not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;*
- 5° *not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.*

Records:

Record of the baptism is to be entered carefully and without delay in the baptismal register by the pastor or his delegate. Records of Confirmation and Eucharist must be entered in proper record. Notification of Confirmation must be sent to the parish of Baptism.

Canon 877§1

The pastor of the place where the baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the baptismal book the names of those baptized making mention of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses if any and the place and date of the conferred baptism, together with an indication of the date and place of birth.

III. Catechetical/Liturgical guidelines for initiating adults:

The *Rite (Order) of Christian Initiation of Adults* outlines a process of steps and stages which is complex at first sight, incorporating time for personal conversion as well as more formal steps into the Catholic Church. It requires a deep commitment on the part of the parish as well as the ministers involved. However, it may be adapted to the needs of the person(s) involved and the resources of the local parish. The adaptations are to be made in terms of pastoral judgment, including prayerful discernment, and not personal whim or desire for efficiency or a school based model.



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The outline following this section gives the basic process guiding the preparation and celebration:

- The Periods (I, III, V, VII) include the stages of growth which happen through formation, prayer, involvement in parish activities, ritual celebrations, etc. (see #75).
- The Steps (II, IV, VI) include all of the celebrations which are possible or required.

For assistance in preparing for the formation process or the celebration of any of the rite, or for help in choosing resources, pastors and staff members are encouraged to call the Office of Worship and Christian Initiation or the Office of Youth Catechesis. Each person and parish is different and needs to discern and adapt.

The primary and most important resource is the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* which has excellent background information and which spells out each of the liturgical celebrations in both outline form and with all of the prayers. Options for use with children of catechetical age are given in part two. The appendices contain various options for special situations.

Revised & Promulgated
By Bishop Michael W. Warfel
January 2010



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OF ADULTS**
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RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

(Formation)

(Rites and ritual celebrations)

I. First Period - Pre-Catechumenate (Evangelization) (#36-40)
A time of faith and initial conversion

- A. Seeker - period of inquiry and investigation
- B. Local Community - establishes trust and communication

III. Second Period - Catechumenate (see #75 - 80)

- A. Doctrinal Formation
- B. Association with the Community
- C. Participation in Worship
- D. Sharing in the spreading of the Gospel.

V. Third Period - Purification and Enlightenment (#138 - 140)

- A. Interior Reflection
- B. Spiritual Preparation

II. Step One: Acceptance into the order of Catechumens and
Optional Rites

(Minor Rites)

1. Celebrations of Word
2. Minor Exorcisms
3. Blessings
4. Anointing (oil of catechumens) (#98 - 103)
5. Presentations (anticipated - #79, 104-5))

IV. Step Two: Election by Bishop (#118 - 128)

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|--------------|--------------|
| presentation | election |
| sponsorship | intercession |
| questioning | prayer |
| enrollment | |

(Lenten Rites)

1. Scrutinies (#141 - 146)
prayer laying on of hands
intercessions dismissal
exorcism
2. Presentations (#147 - 149)
Our Father and Creed
- in Lent (after 1st and 3rd scrutiny)
- community presentation



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(Rites)

(Third Period - continued)

C. Immediate Preparation (#185 - 186)
(Holy Saturday)

Prayer, reflection and fasting

1. Ephphetha
2. "Return" of Creed
3. Choosing a name, if not already done so

VI. **Step Three:** Sacraments of Initiation (#206 - 208)

A. Baptism (water bath) (#209 - 214)

Presentation of Candidates
Litany of Saints
Prayer over the water
Profession of faith (sin/faith)
Baptism
White Garment
Candle

B. Confirmation (#215 - 216)

Prayer/laying on of hands
Anointing with Chrism

C. Paschal Eucharist (#217)

General Intercessions mention the neophytes
Communion received for first time

VII. **Fourth Period** - Mystagogia (#244 - 251)
(postbaptismal catechesis)

- A. Reflection on the initiation recently experienced
- B. Deepen level of understanding and involvement
in the community

The basic text for this process of the faith journey is the Sunday Scriptures. There are many fine resources published which will aid the coordinator, sponsors and catechists. These include journaling, articles, books, Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is important to note that one size does not fit all. The coordinator needs to adapt materials to the needs surfaced by the catechumens. The resources can be used by individuals or at times by the group. Sponsor and peer discussion assist greatly in the process through the journey of faith and the understanding of Catholic teaching and tradition. The Office of Worship and Christian Initiation is available for resourcing and assistance.