THEOLOGY OF SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION; JOURNEYING WITH YOUNG ADULTS, TEENAGERS & CHILDREN WHO SEEK TO BECOME CATHOLIC

ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
OVERVIEW

- Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age
- Baptized Candidates
- Special Circumstances
Catechumens

- Unbaptized persons preparing for full initiation
- Easter Vigil as normal occasion
- 4 periods and 3 liturgies
- Precatechumenate
- Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens
- Catechumenate
- Election
- Purification and Enlightenment
- Initiation
- Mystagogy
INITIATION OF CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

• 242: This section is “intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age.”

• 243: Initiation “requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need.”
PREPARATION

- 244/1: They may be prepared with “a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for confirmation and eucharist.”

- 246: It is preferable that the final preparation “coincide with Lent and that the... sacraments of initiation take place at the Easter Vigil.” If possible they should “come to the sacraments of initiation at the time that their baptized companions are to receive confirmation or eucharist.”
Rites for Children
Part II/1

- Acceptance
- Optional enrollment (election)
- Penitential Rites (scrutiny)
- Initiation (with preparation rites)
- Mystagogy
SPONSORS

- RCIA 483 At the reception, the candidate should be accompanied by a sponsor and may even have two sponsors. If someone has had the principal part in guiding or preparing the candidate, he or she should be the sponsor.
BAPTISMAL SPONSORS

Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1/ be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;

2/ have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;

3/ be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;

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.
RITE OF ACCEPTANCE FOR CHILDREN

• Involvement of parents
• Dialogue changes
  • What do you want to become?
  • I want to become a Christian.
  • Why do you want to become a Christian?
  • Because I believe in Christ.
The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity. This is achieved in four ways.
Catechesis

- 75/1 A suitable catechesis is provided - Κατήχηση
- 75/2 They become familiar with the Christian way of life - Κοινονία
- 75/3 Suitable liturgical rites purify and strengthen them - Λειτουργία
- 75/4 Catechumens spread the gospel - Διακονία
• The rights of people with disabilities to full participation in the local Church community includes ready access to the Sacraments.... it needs to be stated clearly that they are not to be denied the Sacraments, and that readiness to celebrate the Sacraments is to be measured by their capacity to understand, even if in some cases that awareness is minimal.
269: “These penitential rites are a proper occasion for baptized children of the catechetical group to celebrate the sacrament of penance for the first time.”
If adults with disabilities present themselves for Baptism, appropriate adaptations to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults should be made, if required.
INITIATION

• 284: “Baptized children of the catechetical group may be completing their Christian initiation in the sacraments of confirmation and the eucharist at this same celebration. When the bishop himself will not be the celebrant, he should grant the faculty to confirm such children to the priest who will be the celebrant.”
“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.” CCL 852/1
**Adults and Children**

- The priest confirms a person he baptizes “who is no longer an infant or one already baptized whom he admits into the full communion of the Catholic Church” CCL 883/2

- “A presbyter who has this faculty must use it for those in whose favor the faculty was granted” CCL 885/2
Initiation, Maturity, Transfer

Deferred Confirmation

- Baptism of Adults
- Emergency Baptism
- Eastern Rites

Rite of Reception
**Constant Meanings**

- Gift of the Holy Spirit
- For the purpose of bearing witness
In accord with the ancient practice followed in the Roman liturgy, adults are not to be baptized without receiving confirmation immediately afterward, unless some serious reason stands in the way. The conjunction of the two celebrations signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized.
Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of Christian initiation,” whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace.
For “by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” [LG 11].
Although Confirmation is sometimes called the “sacrament of Christian maturity,” we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need “ratification” to become effective.
The sacrament of confirmation strengthens the baptized and obliges them more firmly to be witnesses of Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith. It imprints a character, enriches by the gift of the Holy Spirit the baptized continuing on the path of Christian initiation, and binds them more perfectly to the Church.
Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving confirmation.

To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.
CONFIRMATION

• Children with disabilities should be, as far as possible, prepared for the reception of Confirmation at the same age as others, and feel part of the group being confirmed.

• Children and adults preparing for Confirmation are to be instructed to the level of their capacity. Where that capacity is very limited the person should nevertheless be Confirmed.
The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.
The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the conference of bishops has determined another age, or there is danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise.
Meanings

Initiation and the paschal mystery

Completion of baptismal grace

Becoming more perfectly bound to Christ and the Church

Being enriched by grace of the Holy Spirit

Becoming witnesses who spread and defend the faith by word and deed
What is not here

Becoming a Catholic

Personally accepting my faith

Ratifying a commitment to the Church
305: “The celebrant should also pay attention to any previously baptized children of the catechetical group who at this celebration are to receive communion for the first time.”
EUCHARIST

• In the case of children with severe intellectual disability, teachers will endeavour to impart whatever understanding is possible for the child. "Often these people cannot use words which express their understanding, but they can show that they recognise the difference by their manner, the expression in their eyes, their gestures or the quality of their silence." However, even if awareness seems to be absent, Holy Communion may not be refused because of the right to the Eucharist given at Baptism.

• In some cases it may be more appropriate for a family member or carer to give Holy Communion to a person with disabilities.
Unbaptized Teens and Children

- May be included in the preparation of their peers, but need something special.
- Perhaps receive the 3 sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil of their second year of formation.
- Special formation separate from adults.
- Celebration of rites with adults, including Easter Vigil.
BAPTIZED CANDIDATES
Uncatechized Catholic

- Those baptized as infants who have received little or no catechesis, nor the sacraments of confirmation or first communion [Part II, Section 4]

- Give catechesis appropriate to the circumstance

- A priest needs permission from the bishop to confirm Catholics, even if they were prepared with an RCIA group
Valid Christian Baptism

• Trinitarian formula and meaning
  • Not baptism “in the name of Jesus”
  • Not “Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier”
• Baptism with water by immersion or pouring
VISION FOR CATECHESIS

• Inviting baptized Christians to formation

• Ask about Christian background

• Discern readiness
  • The Creed
  • “all that the Catholic Church believes, teaches and proclaims”

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

• RCIA 482 If the profession of faith and reception take place within Mass, the candidate, according to his or her own conscience, should make a confession of sins beforehand, first informing the confessor that he or she is about to be received into full communion. Any confessor who is lawfully approved may hear the candidate’s confession.
• RCIA 408 The period of catechesis for these adults should be properly coordinated with the liturgical year. This is particularly true of its final phase, which should as a rule coincide with Lent. During the Lenten season penitential services should be arranged in such a way as to prepare these adults for the celebration of the sacrament of penance.
PENANCE

• Strictly speaking only those in serious sin are obliged to seek absolution in the Rite of Reconciliation. However all are encouraged to be reconciled in the Sacrament of Penance for less serious sins. Persons with disabilities, therefore, have the same rights as others in this matter.
• Instruction of the penitents is to be in keeping with their capacity. Confessors should make sure that the setting is appropriate for wheelchairs, and that visual and auditory aids are also provide.... If the person has difficulty communicating, the priest might use... questions that invite a "yes" or "no" answer. It is possible for the deaf to use sign language or to write out their sins, or even to use a language interpreter of their choice who is thereby obliged by the seal of the confessional.
Occasion for the Rite of Reception

• Any time of year, when candidates are ready

• May be celebrated at Easter Vigil, combined rite may be used at Easter Vigil, however “any appearance of triumphalism should be carefully avoided” (RCIA 389/2)

  • Keeping baptism distinct

  • Helping other Christians to our table
The Reception of Children

• If the child is below the age of reason, a juridic act replaces the liturgical rites, and confirmation and communion follow later

• E.g., parents or guardians make a declaration in the presence of the pastor or his delegate, and reception is noted in parish register
THE RITE OF RECEPTION OF VALIDLY BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS

- 487 May take place on a Sunday, on other days the Mass for the Unity of Christians
- 490 Invitation, coming “of your own free will”
- 491 Profession of Faith
- 492 Act of Reception
- 493-494 Confirmation
THE RITE OF RECEPTION OF VALIDLY BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS

- 495 Celebrant’s sign of welcome
- 496 General Intercessions
- 497 Sign of peace
- 498 Liturgy of the Eucharist
Candidates from an Eastern Orthodox Church

- Normally the parallel Eastern Catholic rite performs this ritual
- May be done by Roman Catholic minister, but it does not receive into *Roman* Catholic Church
- Performed without ceremony
- Reception into Roman Rite possible, complicated, not advised