

COURIER-JOURNAL

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SACRAMENTAL LIFE IN THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER NEW YORK

Diocese of Rochester
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February, 1981

Dear Co-worker in Christ:

In January, 1980, I established a committee to review and revise the sacramental guidelines of the Diocese of Rochester. This had resulted both from the many concerns that had been raised to me about the sacramental life in the diocese and from the fact that some of the existing guidelines had become outdated because of subsequent documentation and experience.

Over these fourteen months since the sacramental guidelines committee began its work, they have studied the pertinent rites and documentation, gathered wide input from parishes through questionnaires and hearings, and consulted with qualified persons on various aspects of this undertaking.

I am now happy to present for implementation these revised sacramental guidelines. It is my hope that their publication will be an opportunity for us to renew our understanding of the sacraments in the ebb and flow of Christian life, and enable us to draw together more closely to the Lord Jesus whom we strive to follow.

I am deeply grateful to the members of sacramental guidelines committee who have worked long hours in the development of these texts. I am likewise grateful to the many more who collaborated with them on subcommittees and in consultation to make their work a helpful instrument for pastoral-sacramental practice.

May the Lord prosper the work of our hands.

Your brother in Christ,

Matthew H. Clark
+ Most Reverend Matthew H. Clark, D.D.
Bishop of Rochester

Foreword

To speak of sacraments is to speak of life and growth. For the Church has been given the sacraments, and administers them in the name of the Lord, so that God's People may have life in the fullest possible measure (John 10:10) and may grow up to full stature in Christ (Ephesians 3:16-19, 4:13). Sacraments are the life-blood of Christian living and maturing in holiness (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Written sacramental guidelines do not produce, of themselves, life and growth. These fruitful results depend solely on the way such guidelines are used. If there is any hope that the Christian People will grow in the Christ-life, it will be based on the knowledgeable, consistent and cooperative efforts of parishes to implement these guidelines so that through the administration of the sacraments God will be all in all (Colossians 3:8-11). These guidelines are presented with the hope that the deepest possible renewal of faith will occur in the hearts of the faithful People of our diocese, both individually and communally.

Parishes will find additional assistance for programming and planning by contacting the appropriate offices at the Pastoral Center: Office of Family Life, Office of Liturgy, Office of Religious Education, and so on.

All or parts of these guidelines may be reproduced for use within the Diocese of Rochester.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Introduction

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the norm for any structure which supports people on their journey of faith, and is directed toward the reception of Baptism, Confirmation and/or Eucharist. The restoration of this ancient rite emphasizes the importance of time, ritual and communal support in the conversion process.

The spirit of the document goes beyond sacramental initiation and is directed toward the interior conversion of the whole community. Therefore, it is not to be considered another tool to prepare candidates for the sacraments, but a process by which the faith community re-evaluates its response to the calls of conversion. Full implementation of this process will take time. Gradual adaptation within programs and rites which prepare for and/or celebrate the sacraments of initiation with adults and children should begin immediately.



The documents on which these guidelines are based include the following: Christian Initiation (1969), the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972), the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church (1972), the Rite of Baptism of Children (1969), and the Rite of Confirmation (1971).

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Adults who seek the sacraments of initiation are to be nurtured in their faith-journey through the process described in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (#1-239). The Rite should be implemented in every parish through an adaptation that takes into account:

1. the flexibility of the document
2. the unique needs of each candidate
3. the need of recognizing each step in the process and celebrating the rite of each stage with the parish community
4. the essential roles of the sponsor and the whole faith community
5. the responsibility of the community to support the newly-baptized (neophytes) and aid them in the process of continued integration into the community.

I. INITIATION OF UNBAPTIZED ADULTS

- A. In accordance with the RCIA, each period in the process is to be recognized (see D below), and each candidate must be given ample time to freely determine his/her readiness to celebrate the rite of each stage (RCIA #4-7, 20).
- B. Before and during the implementation of the RCIA, the community must be made aware of their call to be evangelizers and of the implications of the restored Rite to their own faith and place in the community. Likewise, they should pray for and offer personal support to the catechumens in their journey of faith (RCIA #41).
- C. A sponsor is chosen to accompany the candidate on the journey. Sponsors should be integrated members of the community who desire to share faith. They should participate in the formation sessions and all liturgical celebrations, and be available to the candidate for personal prayer, support and faith-sharing (RCIA #42-43).
- D. The stages and rites of the process are:

1) EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE (RCIA #9-13)

This period of inquiry includes the first hearing of the Gospel and an opportunity to share the stories of their faith journeys, so that the true desire of following Christ and seeking baptism may mature.

2) CATECHUMENATE (RCIA #14-20)

(a) The "Rite of Becoming Catechumens" whereby the candidates are presented to and welcomed by the community, initiates this period of pastoral formation. From this time on the catechumens are joined to the Church. They may marry in the Church, using the appropriate rite; and one who dies during the catechumenate receives a Christian burial.

(b) This formation period is the longest of the stages; it ordinarily lasts several months, but may extend for a longer period. A sharing of scripture and an instruction on Church, sacraments and Church traditions which express and celebrate the Paschal Mystery in our lives are included.

in this catechesis and are directed toward interior conversion.

- (c) Various options for the celebration of the Word of God, minor exorcisms and blessings are provided in the Rite (#106-132). These are important ways of preparing catechumens for sacramental celebrations, and raising the consciousness of the whole community to the workings of God's presence in their lives.
- (d) The "Rite of Election" concludes the catechumenate. It celebrates the choice of the catechumens to receive Baptism, and the community's choice to baptize.

The "Rite of Election" will be celebrated by the bishop at designated places at the beginning of Lent each year.

3) PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT (RCIA #21-36)

This is the time of more intense spiritual formation during the Lenten season, immediately before celebrating the sacraments of initiation. It provides time for prayer and scripture reflection with sponsors and the community.

- (a) Scrutinies and the presentation of the Lord's Prayer and Creed are rites celebrated during this period.
- (b) The sacraments of initiation conclude and climax this period. They are ordinarily celebrated at the Easter Vigil. Only for extraordinary reasons are they to be celebrated at another time. (The priest who baptizes continues the sacraments by confirming as well.)

4) PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGIA (RCIA #37-40)

This is a time of deeper integration and active participation in the community, which will continue to nurture the faith of the newly-baptized (neophytes). They are brought together for sharing of recent experiences of faith and community, and for service in the Church.

The period formally concludes at a Pentecost celebration (RCIA #237), but continued encouragement and support by catechists, sponsors and the whole community is essential.

II. INITIATION OF BAPTIZED/UNCATECHIZED ADULTS (RCIA #295-305)

- A. Baptized adults who have not received catechetical formation and the sacraments of Confirmation and/or Eucharist are nourished through this process of initiation. Having already become members of the Church through Baptism, their circumstances differ from the catechumens since their conversion is based on the Baptism already received. However, they may be supported through the process with catechumens.
- B. The framework of this process of initiation includes the same elements as the catechumenate:

- 1) a sponsor to accompany the candidate
- 2) presentation before and support by the whole community
- 3) a period of pastoral formation which recognizes the unique needs of the candidate
- 4) a prayerful, reflective Lenten period of immediate preparation
- 5) communal celebration of Confirmation and/or Eucharist at Easter or during the Easter season
- 6) the continued support and nourishment of those fully initiated by helping them enter more fully into the life of the community.
- C. The "Rite of Confirmation" is ordinarily celebrated by the Bishop during the Easter season.