

# SACRAMENTAL LIFE

## III. INITIATION OF CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE (RCIA #306-313)

- A. The adult process is adapted to meet the unique needs of unbaptized children of catechetical age who present themselves for initiation into the community.
- B. Parents or guardians, sponsors and companions play an indispensable role in the faith-journey of these children. Parents or guardians must give their permission and be willing to support their children in the process.
- C. The period of instruction must be adapted to include the pedagogical and spiritual needs of the candidates.
- D. The rites celebrated are integral to the process, but should be adapted to provide a celebration meaningful to the candidates.
- E. The sacraments of initiation should be celebrated within the community at the Easter Vigil. Confirmation is celebrated by the priest who baptizes.
- F. The post-baptismal period includes opportunities for continued catechesis and participation in the life of the community. Sponsors, in particular, should support the newly-baptized at this time.

## Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians

This rite takes into account the unique situation of a candidate baptized in another Christian tradition who seeks full communion in the Catholic Church. The RCIA remains the norm for the formation process, but care must be taken to identify where candidates are in their faith-journey.

- A. The role of sponsors and community remains an integral supportive element of this process, as in the other rites of initiation.
  - B. Candidates who are uncatechized will be provided with a period of instruction similar to other such candidates. Those who have already heard the Gospel and have been catechized will need instruction only in those unique responses of the Catholic faith to the Paschal Mystery.
  - C. The sacraments of initiation are celebrated in a way which respects response and call already celebrated.
    - 1) *Conditional Baptism is celebrated only when there is reasonable doubt as to the validity or fact of previous Baptism, and then only privately (Rite of Reception #7).*
    - 2) *Confirmation should be administered by the priest who receives the candidate(s), but it should not be repeated if already validly received.*
    - 3) *A profession of faith is always included in the Rite.*
    - 4) *When parents are not ready to assume their role as Christian mothers and fathers, it is the obligation of the parish community to offer these parents opportunities for adequate development of their faith.*
    - 5) *A priest will not baptize a child whose Baptism has been delayed for legitimate reasons in another parish. Some consultation with the priest who has delayed the Baptism is in order to bring the situation to a resolution. Recourse may have to be made to the chancellor.*
  - B. Parishes must provide parent preparation, not only for those lacking in the above (see A: 2,3), but for all parents preparing for the Baptism of a child, especially the first. This will be part of a continuous process of help and support to families as they continue the Christian formation of their child toward full participation in the life of the Church (RBC #5).
    - 1) *This preparation should be part of the entire parish sacramental program modeled on the RCIA, and should be planned and carried out in discussion among all those involved in sacramental preparation and general parish development (Christian Initiation #7, RBC #4-5).*
    - 2) *The number and content of the preparation sessions should be determined on the basis of the needs of the parents involved, and on the resources available.*
    - 3) *Parents must be informed of the options available to them in the celebration of Baptism, as indicated in the Rite. They are also to be involved in the planning of the celebration.*
    - 4) *The appropriate forms are to be filled out during this preparation period.*
    - 5) *It is better if the preparation begins before the child is born, or it may begin after. Since the child may be considered a "catechumen" because of the desire for Baptism on the part of the parents, the infant or small child has the right to Christian Burial. The "Funeral Mass of a Child Who Dies Before Baptism" should be used (Sacramentary, pages 986-987).*
  - C. As with other forms of initiation, the role of the sponsor/godparent is most important, although in this case, he/she is secondary to the parents.
    - 1) *The sponsor/godparent should be fully initiated (having received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist), and be a practicing Catholic (see A:2 above for criteria). A practicing Christian of another communion may also be chosen to witness the Baptism with a Catholic godparent.*
    - 2) *The godparents should participate in the preparation with the parents, insofar as this is possible.*
- ### II. CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM
- A. Because of the paschal nature of Baptism, it should be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday. For the same reason, careful thought should be given before Baptism is celebrated during Lent.
  - B. The Rite may take place at a special celebration of the Eucharist, or at a regularly scheduled Sunday Eucharist. It may also be celebrated without a Eucharist.



- C. The celebration of Baptism, like the initial interview and the preparation for the sacrament, will take place in the parish of the family of the child. Only extraordinary circumstances would allow the Baptism to take place outside a family's own parish, and then only after consultation between the priest/deacon of the "home parish" and the priest/deacon who will baptize. Whenever possible, families should be combined so that the communal nature of this sacrament is more evident.

### III. CONTINUING FORMATION

Parishes should assist new families, growing families and hurting families in their ministry of fostering faith in each other, and with supportive services that will help meet their needs. Fostering family prayer in a variety of forms, providing religious instruction for parents and children, and encouraging family-to-family contact are especially important.

## Rite of Confirmation

The present reform of the liturgical rites and the tradition of the Church make it clear that Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation, intimately connected with Baptism and First Eucharist. Yet through a long and complicated evolution, Confirmation has become separated from these other sacraments. Thus, what we have inherited in practice is an independent ritual which uses what tradition called the completion of Baptism, "the sealing," as an occasion for intensified catechesis and a conscious commitment to Christ and his Church.

In understanding Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation, these guidelines will try to direct pastoral practice according to the principle that "any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing." (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #23)

### I. PREPARATION

- A. Fundamental in the preparation of baptized persons for the sacrament of Confirmation is facilitating the continual process of conversion, and enabling full, active and conscious participation in the life of the Church with ever-growing depth (RCIA #1, RC #1-2).
- B. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults proposes a model of progressive steps in the process of intensifying one's conversion. It seems appropriate that the preparation for Confirmation parallel and be integrated with the process of adult initiation, namely the catechumenate.
- C. Based on this model, and especially realizing that each person's spiritual development is a unique opportunity for growth, Confirmation should not be locked into one grade level or age. Readiness of each candidate, not age, should be the determining factor, and those reasonably prepared cannot be delayed from celebrating Confirmation. (RC #11)
- D. The implementation of this approach should be gradual but steady. What is key is the catechumenate model of pastoral formation, that is, the content of the preparation.
  - 1) *All parish staff members and all who are involved in Confirmation preparation should have an in-depth knowledge of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.*
  - 2) *Because the catechumenate model demands full pastoral formation and not merely instruction, preparation should take place in a communal (parish) setting, and not in a classroom alone.*
  - 3) *Parishes may eventually develop multi-level programs for Confirmation preparation.*
- E. The program structure, outlined in Appendix I of this section, should be followed in Confirmation preparation.
- F. Provision should be made in the preparation program for persons who have special needs. Persons who are developmentally disabled, who have severe learning disabilities, or who have other handicaps should be made to feel welcome in the parish programming and have their needs met. Whenever possible, they should participate in

regular liturgies and activities, and they should be included in the parish sacramental celebrations.

- G. Among the many roles that surround the celebration of Confirmation, perhaps the most important is that of the sponsor (RC #5-6).
  - 1) *The sponsor should take an active role in the preparation of the confirmand. The sponsor helps and guides the confirmand in the Christian way of life, and should take some responsibility for the continued spiritual development of the confirmand.*
  - 2) *The sponsor should be spiritually qualified and sufficiently mature for this role. The sponsor should be a fully-initiated Catholic (having received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist).*
  - 3) *It is highly recommended that the godparent at Baptism also be the sponsor at Confirmation. Parents too may present their children for Confirmation. A special sponsor may also be chosen for this sacrament.*

### II. CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

- A. Because of the paschal nature of the sacraments of initiation, the Easter season is especially appropriate for the celebration of Confirmation. Insofar as possible, however, Confirmation will not be celebrated during Lent.
- B. Confirmation should be celebrated during the Eucharist in order to express more clearly the fundamental connection of this sacrament with the entire process of initiation.
- C. Guidelines for planning the liturgy of Confirmation are found in Appendix II of this section.
- D. The bishop will ordinarily preside at and administer the sacrament of Confirmation. However, when there is a need, the bishop may associate priest with himself as special ministers of Confirmation (RC #10).
- E. There is no reference in the Rite to the choice of a new name at the time of Confirmation. Since Confirmation is closely related to Baptism and continues the initiatory process, it is highly recommended that the baptismal name be used. This more clearly signifies the connection of the two sacraments. However, because of customary practice, another name may be chosen.

### III. CONTINUING FORMATION

Because conversion is a life-long process, parishes have the responsibility to provide all their members with opportunities for continual spiritual, biblical and doctrinal formation, and for service to the community.

In the particular case of children who are confirmed, the post-Confirmation interview outlined in Appendix I of this section is most important.

## First Eucharist of Children

A child in the process of Christian initiation is led gradually according to personal capacity, to participate fully in the Eucharist. This continuing formation takes place in the midst of the family and parish communities.

### I. PREPARATION

- A. Parents, having chosen to begin the process of Christian initiation in the lives of their children through Baptism, are the primary teachers in the preparation for the celebration of First Eucharist.
- B. Every parish has the responsibility of assisting the parents in this role by providing parish programs that include both the theological understanding of the Eucharist and the practical ways of preparing children to participate in the celebration of it.
  - 1) *Parental programs and involvement must be adjusted to the particular pastoral concerns of individual children and parents with special needs (for example, foster children, one-parent families, etc.).*