

**GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE  
ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION  
OF ADULTS**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS**

Office for the Catechumenate  
Kenrick Pastoral Center  
7800 Kenrick Road  
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First Sunday of Lent  
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## CONCERNING NAMES...

*The RITE of Christian Initiation of Adults is an early mistranslation of the Latin "Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum." The ORDER of Christian Initiation of Adults is a liturgical order -- a series of rituals and periods including three sacraments of initiation that celebrate the one mystery of our salvation in Christ.*

*The use of the acronym RCIA is discouraged. Most acronyms are about programs and groups: PSR, CYC, etc. "RCIA" suggests a program rather than the ongoing evangelization and initiation that is integral to the very vitality of a parish. For the archdiocese of St. Louis, the recommended alternative is: Christian Initiation, e.g., the Christian Initiation team, Christian Initiation at ..... Parish, sessions for the Christian Initiation process will meet at .....*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the RCIA-Steering Committee from the diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts, for permission to use their *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Worcester* as a starting point for the formation of these guidelines.

We are grateful to Eliot Kapitan, Director of the Office of Worship and RCIA in Springfield, Illinois, for permission to use his material for the first interview (APPENDIX II).



# THE CATHOLIC CENTER

Archdiocese of St. Louis

## Feast of Christ the King

Dear Ministers of Christian Initiation,

As Christians our mission is to proclaim the good news, to invite and welcome all persons to discipleship in Christ. How we initiate new members into our Church is significant both to the continuation of our mission and to the vitality of our Christian community.

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults provides the vision for incorporating new members in our times. It is the result of the mandate of the Vatican Council II for the restoration of the catechumenate process. The Congregation for Divine Worship prepared the Rite of Initiation of Adults approved by Pope Paul VI in 1972. After the use of a provisional English translation, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in 1986 including combined rites for both the baptized and the unbaptized. The Congregation for Divine Worship confirmed that approval in 1987.

These Guidelines for the Implementation of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults have been prepared by the Archdiocesan Catechumenate Team in consultation with theologians, liturgists and pastoral ministers. They intend to give direction and clarity to the implementation of initiation in our archdiocese.

I endorse these guidelines as normative for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. I heartily encourage all involved in Christian initiation to become familiar with the content of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults as well as with the Guidelines.

I thank each of you for your ongoing involvement and dedication to Christian initiation. Your faith and service gives life to the Church. I invite you to contact the Office for the Catechumenate should you have any questions or comments concerning these Guidelines.

Cordially in Christ,

Most Reverend John L. May  
Archbishop of Saint Louis

## INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended to be of assistance in implementing and restoring the Christian initiation of adults in our time. They are neither comprehensive nor complete in themselves. There can be no substitute for reading the official document and its prescriptions.

## OVERVIEW

1. The order of Christian initiation of adults is the discernment and ritualization of the stages of conversion over a period of time leading to sacramental initiation. Conversion cannot be programmed; the journey of initiation is a process. It is the manner in which the Church chooses to initiate new members into its communion. The order of Christian initiation has been mandated by the Church (Canons 850 and 851 and the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy *Newsletter*, March, 1988, Vol. 24, indicating September 1, 1988 as mandatory effective date of implementation in the dioceses of U.S.A.).
2. The primary concern of the order of Christian initiation of adults is the ongoing conversion of the individual to God within a particular community. This conversion is the turning of the whole person (not just the intellect) to God revealed in Christ and proclaimed by the Church. This conversion for both the unbaptized and the baptized is not simply "becoming a Catholic." To embrace the Catholic faith is to convert one's life to the work of the Church, particularly its mission to preach the good news of Jesus and to build up the reign of God. In this understanding, one must always keep in mind that conversion is the work of God in which we, the Church, participate.
3. The order of Christian initiation of adults is divided into four major periods: a) **Precatechumenate** b) **Catechumenate** c) **Purification and Enlightenment** d) **Mystagogy**. Except for the precatechumenate period, each period begins with a special liturgical rite that both completes the previous period and gives direction to the following period.

# GUIDELINES

## IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

4. Among those who approach the Church seeking life in its communion, there are at least six different types of individuals, each of whom approaches with very different needs and backgrounds. These individuals can be typified as follows:
  - a) **Unbaptized.....**persons (age of discretion and older) who need a process to help them grow in awareness to God's call to conversion as well as ways to respond to that call.
  - b) **Baptized in Another Christian Church.....**those catechized and uncatechized persons who are seeking full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.
  - c) **Baptized but Uncatechized Catholic Adults.....**persons who were baptized as infants and not given any religious upbringing within the Catholic tradition. These people need to be prepared to celebrate the sacraments of penance, confirmation and eucharist.
  - d) **Partially Catechized Adult Catholics.....**those adults who have been baptized, received eucharist and only basic catechesis, needing to continue conversion, catechesis and celebrate the sacrament of confirmation.  
  
Individual consideration should be given to the needs of the persons described in c) & d) if they have resentment toward the Church. If so, they should not be placed with those who are approaching the Church for the first time.
  - e) **Returning Catholics.....**those who are returning after a period of time away from the Church. The greater need for these individuals is special preparation for the sacrament of penance; some may need preparation for confirmation. It is important to determine if such persons harbor any resentment, bitterness, or anger toward the Church. If so, his/her need in returning is different from someone entering the Church.
  - f) **Children.....**The order is designed primarily for adults, but does provide adaptations and rites for the initiation of children who are older than infants and not yet adults (roughly between the ages of seven and sixteen). Some may be unbaptized, other baptized but uncatechized as Catholics.
5. A Christian initiation process is sensitive to the diverse needs of those who present themselves. Multiple teams need to be functioning year round to assist these individuals in their faith journey. Hence, a single "educational" program is not adequate.
6. Given the breakdown above, consider these reminders:
  - a) The concern of the order is sacramental initiation; therefore, baptized Catholic adults looking for updating and spiritual support should be directed to adult religious education/formation programs and processes. Their needs and concerns are different from those seeking initiation.

- b) It is important to be sensitive to and respect the baptism of those who join us from other Christian traditions. Most of these people are validly baptized, since they were baptized with water using the Trinitarian formula. (See APPENDIX I in this document for further discussion).
  - c) The *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* (*RCIA*: Appendix III) recommend that candidates celebrate the sacrament of penance before being received into full Catholic communion or completing their initiation as Catholic Christians. Those being initiated at Eastertime join the whole Catholic community in its Lenten focus on conversion and fidelity to their baptismal covenant. Candidates can be encouraged to participate in a parish communal celebration of penance.
  - d) Since we profess “one baptism for the remission of sins,” the elect (unbaptized) do not celebrate the sacrament of penance before initiation.
7. Early in the precatechumenate period, a member of the team interviews each inquirer. The interview allows for personal contact, opportunity to assess faith experience and religious formation and enough personal information to avoid any difficult or complicated canonical/pastoral situation later in the process. (See APPENDIX II in this document).

## TEAM FORMATION

8. Of its very nature, Christian initiation is communal. All the baptized share in the mission of the Church in the world. Thus, the task of initiation, the work of conversion as noted in paragraph 2, is the work of the **whole** parish and of the **whole** diocese (*RCIA*, nos.4, 9). Therefore, the involvement of the local community in the initiation process is both primary and key. Ongoing catechesis, including occasional preaching on the nature of Catholic community, mutual communication, active participation in ritual celebrations and invitations to involvement are vital to the community’s ownership of the process.
9. The process and ministries that implement initiation image our vision of initiation and the role of the community. A collaborative model with a differentiation of roles calls forth the gifts of all the baptized. From this collaborative model, the concept of a team emerges. The team model will vary with parish size, locale, and community gifts. Possible roles include: a **Coordinator** as the “keeper of the vision” who oversees and organizes the process; a **Sponsor Coordinator** responsible for the recruitment and formation of sponsors and godparents; **Catechist Coordinator** responsible for recruitment, formation, scheduling and communications with individual catechists or catechist teams; **Hospitality Coordinator** responsible for creating an inviting environment by arranging space, providing decor and refreshments; **Liturgy Coordinator** responsible for planning and preparation of the liturgical rites with the parish liturgy commission; **Communications Coordinator** responsible for ongoing communication with the parish and parish groups, the parish staff, among team members, with families of candidates and catechumens, etc.; **Priest, Deacon and Non-ordained Presiders and Preachers** who preside at the liturgical rites and act as resource and spiritual guide to team members and candidates and catechumens. The ideal situation would have a different person for each responsibility. Some tasks, however, may be combined according to a parish’s available talent.

Separate teams for precatechumenate, catechumenate and mystagogy provide for year round implementation of the ongoing processes.

10. The first responsibility of the team is to grow in faith and community life. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). A team meeting includes prayer and a sharing of faith and life. In this way a team models the church to which we invite others. It is from this experience that a team establishes a ministry plan, sets priorities and communicates with the parish staff and community.
11. The ongoing tasks of a team include: modelling hospitality and openness as an essential element of **Evangelization**; the continuing **Formation** of team members; serious **Evaluation** of the team’s planning, ministry and activities; and **Discernment** of readiness of those who approach the various stages within the rite.
12. Team effectiveness calls for: **Prayer and Faith Sharing**; **Communication** among team members and with catechumens/ candidates, and the parish staff; **Conflict Management**; and **Clear Role Descriptions**.

## THE ROLE OF SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS

13. The rite makes a distinction between the sponsor and the godparent for those being initiated. Sponsors are companions in faith during the initial periods of conversion up to election or the call to continuing conversion. The godparent accompanies the catechumen or candidate through the final periods (election and initiation) and continues as a companion with that individual throughout life. A sponsor is assigned or at least approved by the Christian initiation team. Those being initiated have the right to choose their own godparent. Often they choose their sponsor to be godparent.
14. According to canon law (Canon 872-4), a parent may not act as a sponsor or godparent; a grandparent, a spouse, or an intended spouse may act as a sponsor and/ or godparent, although there are pastoral advantages to having another person share the journey of faith.
15. Sponsors are members of the local community who: a) are fully initiated, b) are at least sixteen years of age (in St. Louis we designate the same age that canon law requires for godparents), c) have the time and willingness to undertake this ministry, d) have experiences in common with the catechumen or candidate, e) are actively involved in the life of the parish, f) receive adequate preparation for the role (*RCIA*, nos.10, 404).
16. The sponsor should be named early in the precatechumenate period. At the very latest, a sponsor must be named prior to the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens or the rite of welcoming the baptized.
17. The role of a sponsor can be understood as: “a compassionate guide, an understanding mentor, a living sign of conversion, a link between the candidate and the larger community called church” (James Wilde, *Finding and Forming Sponsors and Godparents*, p. 37).

18. Sponsors are integral to the celebration of the various rites. As a link between the individual and the larger community, sponsors present them, sign them with the cross, offer testimony, etc. We do not rehearse with catechumens and candidates so that they may more fully enter into the moment of the rite rather than be worried about mistakes and what they are to do next. In this way, they depend upon the sponsor or godparent who knows the rite and can lead the catechumen or candidate through the liturgy with regard to where to stand, what to do, etc. This is not to say that the candidate does not need preparation for the liturgy; preparation does not necessarily mean a rehearsal.

## PERIODS AND STEPS

### PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

*"This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginning of faith."*

19. *"Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt 28:19). Whenever Jesus is proclaimed as the Christ, whether in word, deed, service, or worship, this is evangelization. (See *On Evangelization In The Modern World*, Pope Paul VI). Evangelization is participation by the parish in the mission of the Church and the way this mission is lived by the community.
20. The initial work of the order of Christian initiation in this period calls for an atmosphere of hospitality and openness on the part of the parish. The effort to evangelize is not limited to events or programs, but rather is an ongoing attitude and quality of the life of the parish that seeks, welcomes, and invites others to accompany them on the journey of faith.
21. The pre-catechumenate period is a time of **active listening** to the stories, questions and the experiences of the inquirers and of the Church. We offer authentic witness, genuine respect and freedom for the inquirer to probe and choose. The kingdom of God resides within. Inquirers are searching for God because God is calling. We (the Church) do not give God to the inquirers. We facilitate their search by sharing our experience of God in community, by praying with them, and by helping them name their experience of God through the stories of the Sacred Scripture and our tradition as Roman Catholics.
22. In this period, the facilitator needs to know the difference between evangelizing and catechizing and the different needs of the individuals who inquire. When evangelizing, the facilitator listens, makes connections between the inquirer's stories and the Sacred Scripture, and formulates questions that lead the inquirer to a deeper awareness of God in his/her life. When catechizing those who are already evangelized, the facilitator listens and makes connections between their experience of Christianity and the Catholic tradition.
23. An ongoing pre-catechumenate is a response to the awareness that God's call in our lives cannot be programmed. A continuous process available all year long represents a welcoming community whose doors are always open.

## FIRST STEP: RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS and RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

*"This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ."*

24. The order specifies that the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens may be celebrated two or three times during the year. In Ordinary Time the Sunday readings may be changed to those suggested in the ritual (*RCIA*, no. 62). It may be that the Sunday readings or those of certain feasts are suitable: e.g., All Saints, Triumph of the Cross, Christ the King. (Readings of the Sundays of Advent are not appropriate and cannot be changed to those suggested in the ritual).
25. Likewise, the rite of welcoming the candidates may be celebrated throughout the year (*RCIA*, no. 414) and/or may be combined with the rite of acceptance (*RCIA*, no. 505 ff).
26. Prerequisites for making this first step is evidence of a combination of: a) the beginnings of a spiritual life, b) the fundamentals of Christian beliefs having taken root, c) initial conversion, d) the first stirrings of repentance, e) a start to call upon God in prayer, f) a sense of Church, g) and some experience of the spirit of Christians. Emphasis needs to be placed on beginnings, not on a completion (*RCIA*, no. 42).
27. Consideration should be given to adapting liturgical texts, where permitted. These adaptations include the intercessions and the presider's exhortations prefaced by the directives "in these or similar words." When one adapts these texts, those provided in the rite should serve as models for the presider's own version.
28. One of the components of this liturgical celebration is the presentation of the catechumens and candidates with the Sacred Scripture. Many candidates come from a tradition that has studied the Bible extensively. Consideration should be given to presenting candidates with the lectionary, for it is this sequence of readings that is the foundation of catechesis during the catechumenate and the ongoing nourishment of initiated members.

## PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

*"This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens; faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the Word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process."*

29. During this period the serious catechetical work of passing on the truths, stories, prayer and experiences of our tradition happens.
30. Through their sponsors, catechumens and candidates continue to experience the many and various components of the life of the parish, i.e., liturgical, apostolic, educational and formative, social aspects. They are choosing life with **this community**, not simply with the Christian initiation team.

31. The parish needs to consider seriously the dismissal of the catechumens. The dismissal presumes that the catechumens are not dismissed from the **liturgy**, but only from the **assembly**, that they might gather elsewhere to break open the word of God, to feed on its truth, since they cannot feed on the eucharist.
32. A pastoral decision needs to be made by the Christian initiation team concerning the dismissal of individual candidates. While most candidates find dismissal beneficial, for some, depending upon their background and life situation, dismissal may not be advisable. Factors to consider might be: previous experience of the liturgical community, personal understanding of the word of God, appreciation and understanding of the eucharist. (See *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 30, 31).
33. By their dismissal, the catechumens and candidates are a sign and witness to the community that stays. It calls for those who remain to consider their privilege of sharing at the eucharistic table, and challenges the faithful to become more active witnesses of this gift of faith.
34. The lectionary is the primary source of catechesis for the catechumenate period with the discovery of its rhythm and cycle through the liturgical year. Other resources may supplement the lectionary, but it is the main text and resource (*ACIA*, no. 75.1).
35. The catechumenate period for catechumens should extend for at least one year of formation, preferably beginning before Lent in one year and extending until Easter of the following year (*National Statutes for Catechumens*, no. 6). This time frame enables the lectionary as it spans the full liturgical year to cover all the appropriate and necessary catechetical material.
36. Individual consideration needs to be given the length of catechumenal formation for candidates. Factors to consider could be: the individual's acceptance of the gospel message, formation within a community of faith, experience in living a Christian life, and familiarity with liturgical life (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 30ff).
37. During the catechumenate period, special rites mark progress on the extended journey and serve to encourage the catechumens and candidates.
  - a) Rites for both catechumens and candidates would include celebrations of the word, blessings, and presentations of the creed and the Lord's prayer.
  - b) Rites for catechumens only would include exorcisms and anointings with the oil of catechumens.
  - c) The presentations and anointings with the oil of catechumens are properly celebrated by a priest or deacon. Celebrations of the word, blessings, and exorcisms can be celebrated by a deputed catechist when these rites are not a part of the eucharist. (*ACIA*, nos. 12, 16).
  - d) Priests are given the faculty in the Archdiocese of St. Louis to depute "truly worthy and properly prepared" catechists to celebrate exorcisms and blessings (*ACIA*, no. 34).
38. Catechumens are members of the household of faith and as such they enjoy certain rights, eg., Christian burial and marriage. (See *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, nos. 8, 9, 10).

## SECOND STEP: RITE OF ELECTION or ENROLLMENT OF NAMES and the CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION OF CANDIDATES WHO ARE PREPARING FOR CONFIRMATION AND/OR EUCHARIST OR RECEPTION INTO FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

*“ This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens’ readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express their will to receive the sacraments.”*

39. The requirements for the election of a catechumen are: a) a conversion in mind and action, b) sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching, c) a spirit of faith and charity, and d) a desire to participate in the sacramental life of the Church (*RCIA*, no. 120). Pending canonical procedures (i.e., “annulment cases” for those in a second marriage) must be resolved before election.
40. The elect, those chosen by the Church for the sacraments of initiation at the coming Easter Vigil, are the **primary symbol** of the Lenten season. The conversion process of the catechumen is one of the historical roots of Lent. As the faithful journey toward the paschal feast, they also are renewed in the course of the Church’s ministry to the elect.
41. The rite of election is to be celebrated with the bishop on the First Sunday of Lent (*RCIA*, no. 12). Since admission to election is proper to the bishop, the rite of election is not a parish celebration.
42. The rite of sending (*RCIA*, no. 106 ff, 434 ff, 536 ff) may be celebrated at the parish prior to the rite of election and call to continuing conversion. The use of this rite is recommended because it allows the parish to hear the witness of the godparents and affirm the readiness of the catechumens and candidates for election and the call to continuing conversion. It also assures them of the care and support of the parish (*RCIA*, no. 107).
43. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the elect are to sign a parish *Book of the Elect* at the rite of sending. This book is used in the diocesan rite of election. During Lent the book can be displayed in the church; after Lent it is stored with the other sacramental record books.
44. Candidates (those who have been baptized) are not “elected”, as such, for they are already numbered among the elect. Instead, they are called to continuing conversion. Requirements for completing their initiation are: a) a deeper appreciation of their baptism, b) an understanding of the apostolic teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church, c) participation in prayer and community worship, and d) advancement in a life of love and service to others.
45. The call to continuing conversion is appropriately celebrated at the beginning of Lent for those who will complete their initiation during the coming Easter Season.
46. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the call to continuing conversion of candidates who are preparing for confirmation and/or eucharist or reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church is combined with the rite of election (*RCIA*, no. 547 ff). The combined ritual respects the difference between the two groups. If it seems appropriate to inscribe the names of candidates during the parish rite of sending another section of the *Book of the Elect* or another book is recommended.

## PERIOD OF PURIFICATION and ENLIGHTENMENT

*"This is the time immediately preceding the Elects' initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by the celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday."*

47. Again, the elect are the primary symbol of the Lenten season. Their role and presence throughout this season should be obvious especially in the specified rites. The elect should be invited and encouraged to participate in the Lenten programs of formation and prayer of the faithful (e.g., ashes, stations of the cross, missions, fasting, almsgiving, etc.).
48. Their formation during this period consists "more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction" (*RCIA*, no.139). The character of this time is a retreat with spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery.
49. An integral aspect of this period is the celebration of the scrutinies, ordinarily during the eucharist on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. These rites are exorcisms (prayers of uncovering and healing all that is weak, defective and sinful and strengthening all that is upright, strong and good) for those to be initiated. Because the focus of these rites progresses from personal to social to cosmic sin, all three scrutinies are to be celebrated.
50. The readings of Cycle A are essential to the celebration of the scrutinies. Hence, Cycle A readings (all three with appropriate prayers from the *Sacramentary*) should be used at Masses when the elect are present on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent.
51. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, dispensation on the basis of some serious obstacle from one scrutiny or in extraordinary circumstances, even from two may be obtained from the chancellor or the Office of Worship (*RCIA*, no. 34).
52. Candidates (those who are already baptized) participate in the celebration of the scrutinies as members of the faithful, not as the elect. The optional penitential rite on the Second Sunday of Lent and the celebration of the sacrament of penance can assist in their ongoing conversion during the Lenten season (*RCIA*, no. 459 ff).
53. Holy Saturday is to be a day of prayerful reflection and fasting. A gathering of those to be initiated is encouraged to celebrate the preparation rites (*RCIA*, no. 185-205).

## THIRD STEP: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

*"This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation and the eucharist."*

54. Ordinarily, the initiation of the elect takes place during the parish celebration of the Easter Vigil. The fundamental symbol of baptism is the washing with water, either by immersion or by pouring. Immersion of the whole body under water is a more suitable sign of dying and rising with Christ. When the water is poured, it should convey washing and uniting with Christ, hence, a significant amount of water should be used.

A white baptismal garment should be provided. As clothing, it should resemble a tunic, poncho or robe.

55. The rite indicates that the Easter Vigil is the high point of the formation of candidates (*RCIA*, no. 409). The *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* (no. 34) indicate that a clear distinction between the baptized and unbaptized should be maintained during the celebration of the Easter Vigil using the combined rite: "Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the sacraments of initiation and the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic church." To avoid confusion between the elect and candidates or to give full emphasis to baptism, the reception into full communion may be celebrated on another Sunday during the Easter Season (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, nos. 32, 33).
56. Confirmation is an integral part of Christian initiation; an adult may not be baptized unless confirmation is administered immediately afterward. This connection signifies the unity of the paschal mystery and the close relationship between the mission of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
57. Priests confer the sacrament of confirmation when: a) Baptizing an adult or child of catechetical age (age seven and above). b) Receiving a baptized Christian into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Confirmation is conferred even if the person was confirmed in another denomination, except in the case of an Eastern Orthodox whose confirmation is valid. (Where clarification is needed, call the Office of Worship). c) There is danger of death.
58. The usual minister of confirmation for a baptized Catholic is the bishop. An uncatechized Catholic who has not received eucharist and has participated in the catechumenal process may be confirmed with other candidates by the priest who requests that faculty from the Chancellor or the Office of Worship.

## PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

*"This is the time, usually the Easter season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharist."*

59. The Sunday Eucharist is the central focus of this period. The neophytes should be remembered in the intercessions and could be invited to present the gifts at the preparation of the gifts.
60. The *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* (no. 24) specify that this period should last at least a year. The focus of catechesis is a fuller and more effective understanding of the mysteries of the gospel message and the sacramental experience and continued sharing on their experience of being integrated into the community. Therefore, a place should be provided for them apart from the gathering of others involved in catechumenate formation.

Weekly sessions should continue through Pentecost; after that time, monthly sessions might be more appropriate.

61. The neophytes could be invited to witness (to tell the story of their faith conversion) at Sunday eucharist, either in conjunction with the homily or after communion.
62. All neophytes and newly received with their godparents or sponsors should be encouraged to participate in the archdiocesan celebration of eucharist with the bishop.
63. Neophytes should be included in any parish missioning or commissioning on the feast of Pentecost that celebrates the mission of the Church to bring the good news to the ends of the earth. If there is no parish missioning, an appropriate ritual could be part of the neophyte session.
64. During this first year, the celebration of the eucharist at least once in a small group setting with the mystagogical community, i.e., neophytes, newly received, godparents, sponsors, and team, is encouraged.

## SOME PASTORAL ISSUES

65. A person, even if not baptized, who has attended eucharist on a regular basis has been partially catechized through the liturgy of the word. Thus, the period and the content of catechesis for this person may be adjusted.
66. “Those baptized persons who have lived as Christians and need only instruction in the Catholic tradition and a degree of probation within the Catholic community should not be asked to undergo a full program parallel to the catechumenate” (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 31).
67. A clear distinction between catechumens and candidates should always be maintained in the rites especially when the combined rites are celebrated. This can be done through placement, clear expression of dialogue, and celebration of the proper rites with the individuals.
68. Participation of the assembly is vital to the celebration of the rites. Their participation helps the rite express that the community initiates and not just an individual or a team. This can be achieved by: sung responses and acclamations, gestures of prayer and hospitality, (e.g., extension of hands, applause, movement within the worship space).
69. The usual setting for initiation is the parish of the catechumen or candidate. “If the catechumenal preparation takes place in a non-parochial setting, such as a center, school or other institution, the catechumens should be introduced into the Christian life of a parish or similar community from the very beginning of the catechumenate, so that after their initiation and mystagogy they will not find themselves isolated from the ordinary life of the Christian people” (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 3).
70. Music is especially helpful to enhance symbolism and to emphasize important elements of ritual. The participation of the assembly is essential to good ritual celebration. A cantor is particularly helpful to engage the assembly in full, conscious and active participation.
71. Silence, too, is a quality of good ritual celebration. Silence enables the assembly to enter into prayerful reflection, or focuses attention on the ritual action itself.

## CHILDREN'S ISSUES

72. There is only one order of Christian initiation in the Church. The one ministry of initiation includes people of all ages. While separate sessions and different ministers are appropriate for various age groups, the practice of having "children's" initiation ministry apart from "adult" initiation ministry is to be avoided.
73. Christian initiation ministry with children follows the same ritual and steps as Christian initiation ministry with adults, but is adapted to the child. The principles of Part I of the Order serve as the foundation for ministry with children. A thorough understanding of these principles is essential. Part II, Chapter 1 (no. 252-330) provides some principles for working with children, and **adaptations** of some of the rituals.
74. The principal rituals (e.g., acceptance into the order of catechumens) are included in the adaptation for children. Other rituals can be adapted following the same principles. Celebrations of the word, blessings, exorcisms, anointings, presentations, etc., are equally important in the growth and formation of young catechumens. Children and adults can celebrate the rites together, especially the principal ones: acceptance into the order of catechumens or welcoming, sending, election or call to continual conversion, the scrutinies or penitential rite, the sacraments of initiation.
75. The conversion experience of the child is central to the initiation process. The readiness of the child for initiation cannot be determined solely by age or level of education. Their conversion should correspond to that of other children of their maturity level. Some helpful indicators can be: openness to the word of God, attention to prayer, desire for the sacraments, manifestation of virtues, and participation in the Christian community.
76. As with adults, the child's preparation for initiation is formed by an immersion in the mystery of salvation, prayer, liturgical catechesis and the life of the faith community. For both adults and children, religious education continues to develop and nurture the faith life begun through initiation.
77. Christian initiation with children is family centered. Children enter into and participate in the ongoing conversion of the parents. Parents serve as source and model for the faith formation of their children (*RCIA*, no. 254.2). It is recommended that a sponsoring family be provided when a family is in the initiation process or when the parents are returning to the practice of the faith.
78. Children are companioned by other baptized children from the parish community who are preparing for the celebration of confirmation and eucharist (*RCIA*, no. 254.1). These peer companions participate as fully as possible in the entire process of formation.
79. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis children are welcome to join the adults who celebrate the rite of election and call to continuing conversion with the bishop on the first Sunday of Lent.
80. Anyone who is of catechetical age (age of discretion, normally around the age of 7) must be confirmed and receive eucharist when they are baptized. It is not an option to separate or to delay the confirmation and first eucharist of a child who seeks baptism.
81. As with adults, appropriate adaptation of the rite is made for baptized children of catechetical age who are to be received into full communion with the Catholic church. Their formation may be similar to unbaptized children preparing for initiation. (See *National Statutes for the*

*Catechumenate*, no. 19). These children are to be confirmed at the time of their reception. Usually, children of parents being received into full communion with the Catholic Church are received with their parents.

82. Children below catechetical age (age of discretion) are considered to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church when one or both parents are received. Their original baptism together with information regarding parents' reception into the Church should be recorded in the parish books.

## APPENDIX I

### CONCERNING BAPTISM IN OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

#### **A. Baptism cannot be repeated**

"All those who have been justified from faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ, and so have a right to be called Christians and are with good reason acknowledged as brothers (and sisters) in the Lord by the sons (and daughters) of the Catholic Church" (*Decree on Ecumenism*, par.3).

"The sacrament of baptism cannot be repeated and therefore it is not permitted to confer it again conditionally, unless there is a reasonable doubt about the fact or validity of the baptism already conferred. If serious investigation raises such prudent doubt and it seems necessary to confer baptism again conditionally, the minister should explain beforehand the reasons why this is being done and a non-solemn form of baptism is to be used" (*RCIA*, no. 480).

#### **B. Dedication Ceremony is not Baptism**

Many Christian denominations have a dedication and/or naming ceremony for infants which is not baptism. In such cases, baptism is generally conferred by them either at the age of discretion or at the approximate age of 13.

#### **C. Baptism in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and the Re-Organized Church of Latter Day Saints (RLDS)**

The Decree of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith dated June 5, 2001 holds that the baptism of the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints called Mormons" is invalid. This is due not to the lack of matter or form, but to a whole different theological understanding of God, man, Jesus and redemption, etc. (Adapted from a newsletter from Bishop William K. Weigand, Salt Lake City, Utah, October 13, 1988).

A distinction must be made between this group and the Re-Organized Church of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) which seems to baptize validly.

#### **D. Reception of Eastern Orthodox Christians**

A person baptized in an Eastern Non-Catholic (Orthodox) Church (i.e., Russian, Armenian, etc.), making a profession of faith before a Latin-rite Catholic priest, does not become a Latin Catholic, but a Catholic of the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church. Such professions are noted in the baptismal record as "enrolled" or "ascribed" into the Eastern Catholic Church. This is important because it may affect the validity of a future marriage. A Latin-rite priest has no authority to witness the marriage of two Eastern rite persons without the Eastern bishop's permission. An Eastern Orthodox person who wishes to become a Roman Catholic has to apply for "change" or transfer of rite through Rome and then make profession of faith. If the rite is not transferred, the Orthodox has actually become an Eastern Catholic.

**E. To Help Candidates Understand Why They Cannot be Baptized Again even if They Request or Desire It**

The ritual action (the pouring of the water, praying of the Trinitarian formula with the gathered church) effects a relationship with God, with Christ and with the Church that is irrevocable. Through baptism a person is irreversibly claimed for God and given membership in the church. These effects are the results of God's activity, not the understanding, awareness, etc., of the one being baptized. The analogy of naturalization of citizens may be helpful. Just as American citizens are not eligible for naturalization, baptized Christians are not eligible for baptism. Perhaps a person born of American parents in another country, when coming to the United States as an adult, would like to swear allegiance to the flag in front of a judge to become a citizen. This cannot be done. Being born of American parents insures citizenship; though in itself it does not enable one to speak English, appreciate American culture, etc. Similarly, the church decided centuries ago that persons, once baptized, would always remain members of the church. (See Mark Searle, "The Effects of Baptism," *Catechumenate*. July, 1990, p. 15-22).

## **APPENDIX II**

### **DOING THE FIRST MEETING: THE INTERVIEW**

The goals for this first meeting or interview with someone inquiring about the Catholic Church are:

- to extend the welcome and hospitality of Catholic Christians to a faith seeker;
- to provide a face to face meeting with an “official” of the parish Church;
- to help the inquirer decide if exploring possible membership in the Catholic Church is desirable at this time;
- to explain what this parish can offer to help the inquirer’s search; and to begin to deal with a fundamental question: “To what may God be calling you?”

To accomplish these goals, the following steps outline a structure for that first meeting. As the interviewer becomes not only more comfortable with doing these interviews, but also more attuned to the distinctive needs of each inquirer, some steps can be added or rearranged or deleted as needs require. Questions, too.

Here are some possible steps and questions.

| <b>STEPS</b>            | <b>QUESTIONS AND TOPICS</b>   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. WELCOME              | Go to meet inquirer at waiting room and bring to place for meeting<br>Offer coffee, water, pop, etc.<br>Sit away from desk or table   |
| 2. INTRODUCE MYSELF     | My name<br>What I do for a living<br>How I am connected to this parish Church<br>Why I am meeting with you  |
| 3. THIS CATHOLIC PARISH | Here to help you deal with a fundamental question:<br>“To what may God be calling you?”<br>Catholics live out Christianity in ways similar to and different from other Christian Churches and religions<br>Here to help your search, whatever that may be |
| 4. FIRST QUESTION       | What brought you here?<br>or Why did you call/come by?<br>or What or you looking for?   |

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- |     |                              |  |
|-----|------------------------------|--|
| 5.  | SOMETHING ABOUT THE INQUIRER | What do you do for a living?<br>What about your family?<br>What interests do you have?   |
| 6.  | ABOUT GOD AND CHRIST         | Who is God for you?<br>What words/pictures/symbols would you use to express who God is?<br>What about Jesus Christ?  |
| 7.  | ABOUT YOUR FAITH LIFE        | How have you grown in faith in your life time?<br>What have you found valuable in assisting you?<br>How do you pray?<br>Talk about your religious/Christian formation<br>What has been your religious membership?  |
| 8.  | ABOUT SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE     | Who are some significant people in your life?<br>Are any of them Catholic? in this parish?<br>If it is possible, would you want any of them to walk with you on this journey of faith? (Possible sponsor)  |
| 9.  | ABOUT THE FUTURE             | What are your hopes, expectations?<br>What do you want to happen for you, for your spouse, for your family?<br>Where do you see yourself in 5 (3) years?   |
| 10. | WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER        | Briefly explain what this parish can do to help your search<br>Outline the whole initiation process, but focus on the first two periods of precatechumenate and catechumenate.<br>You may want to give something to take home.<br>Cannot promise when initiation will be<br>Can promise we will take whatever time it takes<br>If you are also preparing for marriage to a Catholic, consider the great importance of both steps you might take, namely marriage and initiation. Best to work on them one at a time, and we are prepared to do that with you.<br>Interested about more, about going further? |
| 11. | FILL OUT FORM                | Use your parish form now. Inquirer write.<br>Some questions will already have been discussed and will make filling out the form easier   |
| 12. | REVIEW FORM                  | Be sure status of baptism is clear<br>Be sure status of marriage, previous marriages are clear.<br>Roman Catholic implications<br>Form can prompt more discussion and conversation   |
| 13. | NEXT STEPS                   | Invite to next precatechumenate session<br>Visit with spouse or fiance/e. Then with both.<br>Send a follow-up letter   |

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## WHO DOES THE FIRST INTERVIEW?

Who does the first interview when someone comes knocking on the parish door seeking information about the Catholic Church? Is there someone who, because of a parish office or responsibility, should do this initial interview?

There is no one answer that is suitable for every parish. Perhaps the first answer is, "The one who can best do the task." That is, someone who clearly knows the purpose of this first face to face meeting, and has the ability to ask open-ended questions, to listen, and to help the inquirer be at ease and feel welcomed.

Here are some possibilities. Each has both merits and drawbacks.

- A. The parish Christian initiation coordinator does all the interviews.
- This is feasible when the number of inquirers is small.
  - This does provide consistency. This does provide one person with the questions, issues, and concerns of the current inquirers.
  - However, no one else has first hand exposure to the inquirers and to their questions.
  - However, no one else may know how to do an initial interview.
- B. Two or more members of the Christian initiation team do the interviews.
- This shares the responsibility, spreads out the task.
  - This gives each interviewer a firsthand picture of at least some inquirers initial needs and concerns.
  - This is desirable when the number of inquirers is large.
  - This does require team work and team meetings to share information, discuss implications, and then communicate that to whomever is responsible for the precatechumenate sessions.
- C. The Christian initiation team members in charge of the precatechumenate sessions do the interviews.
- This gives immediate information to those responsible for facilitating the precatechumenate sessions.
  - This assures the inquirer of already knowing at least one person at his/her first precatechumenate session.
  - However, this does require good first interview notes being passed on with the information form to whomever does the discernment prior to Acceptance/Welcome and entry into the catechumenate sessions.
  - However, each time of discernment may mean a new interviewer for the inquirer/ catechumen/candidate.

## CATECHUMEN/CANDIDATE DATA

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Children? (Names and Ages)

\_\_\_\_\_

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>INTERVIEW DATES:</b> |
|-------------------------|

|                |
|----------------|
| Initial: _____ |
|----------------|

|                |
|----------------|
| Inquiry: _____ |
|----------------|

|                |
|----------------|
| Catechumenate: |
|----------------|

Religious Denomination \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been baptized?      yes   no    Church \_\_\_\_\_      Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you are Catholic:    Confirmation    yes   no  
                                 Reconciliation    yes   no  
                                 Eucharist        yes   no

Describe your religious training and/or education:

Why are you interested in the Catholic Church at this time?

Catholic acquaintances?

Familiarity with the Catholic Church?

Any other information that might be helpful...  
Including questions you might have...

|                 |
|-----------------|
| <b>SPONSOR:</b> |
|-----------------|

|                |
|----------------|
| Catechumenate: |
|----------------|

|           |
|-----------|
| Election: |
|-----------|

(OVER)

**MARRIAGE INFORMATION:**

Are you presently married? \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If not, do you have plans for marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

Date of present/(anticipated) marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

Place (Church): \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your present spouse/fiance(e) ever been baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, in what faith tradition? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your spouse/finance(e) presently practicing the religion into which s/he was baptized?

\_\_\_\_\_

Has your present spouse/fiance(e) ever been married before? \_\_\_\_\_

Date of this marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

Place (Church): \_\_\_\_\_

How did the marriage end? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Excluding your present marriage (or anticipated marriage) have you ever been married before?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of this marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

Place (Church): \_\_\_\_\_

How did the marriage end? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## GLOSSARY

**ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS, RITE OF:** The first liturgical rite of the rite of Christian initiation of adults; the bridge between the precatechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.

**CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION, RITE OF:** The rite for candidates, the already baptized, that affirms their baptism and inaugurates the final period of preparation before reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church and the reception of confirmation and/or eucharist. The bishop presides at this rite (combined with election) on the First Sunday of Lent.

**CANDIDATE:**

1. A baptized Catholic who wishes to complete his/her initiation through the reception of confirmation and/or eucharist.
2. A baptized non-Catholic who wishes to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church. (In the text of the rite, candidate is also used for those participating in the precatechumenate - baptized and unbaptized - and also in reference to a catechumen.)

**CATECHUMEN:** An unbaptized man, woman or child of catechetical age who has requested baptism and whose request has been affirmed by the Church by welcoming him/her into the order of catechumens. A catechumen is recognized as a member of the Church and may be married by the Church and receive Christian burial.

**CATECHUMENATE:** There are two uses for this word:

1. A term used for the whole process of initiation.
2. A specific period of formation into the Catholic Christian community.  
This period of conversion is marked by catechesis and the lived experience of faith.

**CONVERT:** One who has made the transition from unbelief to belief. This is NOT a person from another Christian denomination seeking full communion with the Catholic Church.

**DISMISSAL:** Part of the rite of Christian initiation of adults when the catechumens/candidates/elect are dismissed from the liturgical space to continue to share the word of God since they are not yet fully initiated to share at the table of the eucharist.

**ELECT:** Proper name and title for the catechumens once they have been chosen or elected on the First Sunday of Lent to receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter vigil.

**ELECTION, RITE OF:** On the First Sunday of Lent, the Church chooses or elects catechumens for initiation at the Easter Vigil. With the bishop presiding, this rite inaugurates the final period of preparation. It is the bridge between the catechumenate period and the period of purification and enlightenment.

**ENLIGHTENMENT/PURIFICATION:** A period of intense spiritual preparation for initiation into the Church. Usually this period begins with the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent and concludes with the sacraments of initiation at the Easter vigil.

**EVANGELIZATION:** Whatever leads a person in hearing the Word of God to respond by conversion to this call.

**EXORCISM:** A liturgical rite during which a priest, deacon or catechist prays over the catechumen/s petitioning that they be freed and protected from any evil which would draw the person away from God.

**INQUIRER:** Applied to the baptized and non-baptized, this person is still questioning and seeking God. In this first stage of precatechumenate or of inquiry, there is no commitment to or by the Church.

**MYSTAGOGY:** The final period of the rite of Christian initiation beginning with the sacraments of initiation at Easter and ending formally at Pentecost. During this period, the newly baptized reflect on the significance of their experience of initiation and continue integration and active participating in the apostolic work of the Church.

**NEOPHYTE:** One who has just been baptized. The word is derived from the Greek, meaning “newly planted.”

**PENITENTIAL RITE:** Rite similar to the scrutinies celebrated on the second Sunday of Lent for the already baptized.

**PRECATECHUMENATE/PERIOD OF INQUIRY:** An informal introduction to the Catholic community, its beliefs, its lifestyle, its traditions. This period is marked by discussion, prayer and discernment to help an individual choose whether to enter the catechumenate.

**PRESBYTER:** Another word for priest, taken from the Greek for “elder.”

**PRESENTATIONS:** During the Catechumenate period or during the week following the Third and Fifth Sundays of Lent respectively, there are two liturgical rites of formal presentation: 1) of the Creed and 2) of the Lord's Prayer.

**SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION:** Baptism, confirmation and eucharist. With these three sacraments, one is initiated into full membership in the Catholic communion.

**SCRUTINY, RITE OF:** Celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent for the elect who are about to be baptized. The focus of the scrutiny is that the elect will be guided by the Spirit to uncover sinfulness and experience the healing power of God.

**SPONSOR:** An adult, assigned by the parish team, to journey with an inquirer or catechumen or candidate in the process of conversion or of being received into full communion. This person should be mature and responsible in their faith. The sponsor may, and preferably would, serve as public witness in the liturgical rites.

**WELCOMING THE CANDIDATES, RITE OF:** Celebrated with the baptized but uncatechized, this is the bridge between the inquiry period and the pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate.

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# INFORMATION ON MARRIAGE AND ANNULMENTS

## for CHRISTIAN INITIATION MINISTERS

As people enter into the Christian initiation process, they begin examining many aspects of their lives including their marriage relationship. In forming people in the Christian way of life, the Church is concerned about bringing all of life into relationship and discipleship with Christ, including marriage. Specific qualities of marriage are proclaimed by the scriptures including permanence and indissolubility. St. Paul proclaimed marriage a mystery that manifests the love of Christ for each of us (Eph. 5:32).

Marriage is one of the foundational experiences of human life. The marriage relationship brings to life the ordinary social unit of humanity - the family. Usually, children are born into a family and are raised in the marital community of life and love. Tragically, a large number of these relationships end in divorce.

All marriages whether Catholic, Christian or non-Christian, which have been a part of an individual's experience need to be examined in the Christian initiation journey. For those which have ended in divorce, a tribunal process will be necessary before the individual would be free to enter into another marriage. For those who have entered another marriage, this process will be needed before they can participate in the sacramental life of the church.

The following information is provided to assist Christian initiation ministers in working with inquirers, catechumens, candidates and their spouses. It is designed to help you understand the tribunal procedures in general so that you can describe to the various individuals the steps that are necessary in beginning an investigation of a marriage case. Usually a priest, deacon or pastoral minister "handles the marriage cases." It is important, however, that Christian initiation ministers be able to respond to inquirers' questions with good information and give understanding and support to catechumens and candidates involved in the annulment process.

In the initial conversations with an inquirer, questions concerning marital status and previous marriages should be raised. Some persons may be totally unaware of the Church's requirements concerning marriage and remarriage, others may have specific questions, others may need misunderstandings clarified. Whatever the case, correct information given in a pastorally sensitive manner will be helpful or may even be a significant part of the discernment to enter into the initiation process.

Normally, the process for the examination of a marriage is begun only after the inquirer has made a firm decision to be baptized or enter into full communion. Inquirers awaiting a decision regarding a previous marriage/remarriage are free to enter into the catechumenate: the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens or Welcoming the Baptized can be celebrated. A pastoral decision needs to be made with each inquirer to determine the appropriate time to celebrate the rite. Consideration should be given to the complexity of the case, the amount of time, energy and pain that may be involved in the annulment process. Persons need to understand that no guarantee of a favorable decision can be given and that their journey in the catechumenate could be a lengthy one. In accepting and welcoming a person, the parish is accepting responsibility to support and journey with a person throughout the process.

A candidate or catechumen who is remarried or intending to remarry cannot be accepted for the Rite of Election or Call to Continuing Conversion until an annulment (a declaration of nullity) is received. A divorced catechumen or candidate who is not remarried nor immediately intending to remarry, can be accepted for the Rite of Election or Call to Continuing Conversion and consequently, to the sacraments of initiation. However, the implication of future attempts to remarry without an annulment should be carefully explained.

Christian initiation ministers and the whole catechumenate community can be supportive of those involved in the annulment process. There is usually much pain involved in examining a failed relationship: a former spouse may offer resistance, witnesses may be difficult to contact, unresolved issues and emotions may surface, etc. An individual may or may not choose to share the pain of their experience, including that of waiting for a decision, with the catechumenate community. While respecting the confidentiality of a person's life situation, the Christian initiation minister can be sensitive to bring appropriate pastoral care to that person.

**1. What is an annulment?**

An annulment is a declaration by the Church that the marriage in question was not binding in the eyes of the Church--that a required intention or capability was not present. An annulment (declaration of nullity) does not deny that a real relationship existed or imply that the relationship was entered with ill will or moral fault. It is a statement which says that the Church has judged that the relationship lacked at least one of the elements considered essential for a binding union.

**2. What is the difference between an annulment and a divorce?**

A divorce is a dissolution by a civil court of an existing union. An annulment (declaration of nullity) is a procedure which determines a person's marital status in the Catholic church.

**3. If I am legally divorced, why do I need an annulment?**

While a divorce declares a marriage dissolved, an annulment (declaration of nullity) declares that a valid bond never existed. In order to be free to enter into a valid marriage, a person must know their marital status in the eyes of the church.

**4. Isn't this just semantics - isn't an annulment like getting a divorce under another name?**

Civil law views marriage as a contract that can be broken or dissolved. The Church understands marriage to be a covenant relationship that is indissoluble. A covenant relationship demands more than the establishment of a contract. Only when certain intentions and capabilities are brought to the relationship by the parties involved is the covenant bond real and genuine.

**5. What does the Church consider necessary elements for a binding union?**

Essential elements are:

- 1) free and intentional commitment between a man and woman of marriage age
- 2) the intention to form a community of life and love for the well being of each other
- 3) that the commitment is life long and indissoluble
- 4) that the partners pledge themselves exclusively to one another
- 5) that there is an openness to children
- 6) and for Catholics, that the Catholic form of marriage is observed

**6. When or why would a catechumen/candidate present a case to the Marriage Tribunal?**

If a catechumen/candidate has had a previous marriage that ended in divorce, presenting a case to the Tribunal is appropriate. For those who have entered into a second marriage, it is necessary to complete the annulment process before celebrating the Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion so that they are free to enter into the sacramental life of the Church. For those who have not remarried, this can be an appropriate time to present their case so they can know of their freedom to enter into a future marriage within the church.

**7. What if the spouse of a catechumen/candidate has been previously married?**

That spouse must enter into the annulment process and receive a decision before the catechumen/candidate can celebrate the Rite of Election or Call to Continuing Conversion.

**8. What is the status of a Catholic who has remarried without an annulment (declaration of nullity)?**

A Catholic in a second marriage without an annulment for their first marriage, can attend Mass, be part of the Church community, but cannot receive the sacraments.

**9. Do ALL marriages need to be annulled before a second marriage within the Catholic Church can take place?**

Yes. The Roman Catholic Church considers all marriages binding whether persons are unbaptized or baptized. All marriages between baptized Christians are viewed as potentially sacramental. So, from the Church's perspective, a decision about all first marriages must be reached by a Marriage Tribunal before a second marriage can take place.

**10. If someone receives an annulment, does that automatically free his or her partner?**

Yes, since it is the marriage relationship which is being examined, the decision applies to both parties in a marriage.

**11. There seem to be many more annulments being given today than in the past. What is the reason?**

In the past, couples may have stayed together in a very difficult relationship because of the children or the unacceptability of divorce. With the increase in the number of divorces, the church is willing to examine broken marriages to determine if a true marriage bond existed. With compassion and an openness to ongoing truth, the church utilizes developments in psychology in its determination of a valid marriage.

**12. Describe the process of seeking an annulment (declaration of nullity).**

A person meets with the parish priest, deacon or designated pastoral minister who assists in completing an initial questionnaire concerning a previous marriage. The completed questionnaire is sent to the Marriage Tribunal. The Marriage Tribunal examines the data indicating acceptance of the case. A detailed questionnaire is sent to the person requesting that the marriage be examined (the petitioner). The former spouse (respondent) is invited to complete the same questionnaire. Names of at least two witnesses who are aware of the relationship are requested. When the questionnaires are returned or the allotted time is expired, written testimony from witnesses is gathered. The Tribunal may collect other data that could be helpful in preparing a case, e.g., statements from doctors, psychologists, counselors, etc. When all data is collected, the Tribunal considers the evidence and renders a decision. If a decision is affirmative, it is submitted to a second court for its ratification. If a decision is negative, it can be appealed. More evidence or testimony can be presented.

**13. What are some possible reasons for an annulment?**

Some possible reasons for an annulment are:

- 1) lack of ability or intention to enter into a life long commitment
- 2) lack of ability or intention to be faithful to one's spouse
- 3) lack of freedom in entering into the marriage
- 4) intention against having children
- 5) lack of complete commitment - placing conditions or restrictions on the commitment
- 6) lack of ability or intention to form a relationship based on love and respect for the good of one another
- 7) psychological, mental, emotional illness or personality disorders

**14. Does an annulment affect the legitimacy of the children?**

No. An annulment in no way affects the legitimacy of the children.

**15. How long does it take to get an annulment?**

Much depends upon cooperation and how quickly testimony is given and collected, but twelve to eighteen months can be expected.

**16. Is the process expensive?**

In St. Louis the usual fee is \$500.00. Inability to pay does not influence decisions. This amount does not cover all the expenses of the Marriage Tribunal; the Archdiocese subsidizes the office.

**17. What is the Marriage Tribunal?**

The Marriage Tribunal is a church office that examines broken marriages according to canon (church) law to make judgments about the marriage bond.

**18. Who makes up the marriage tribunal?**

Tribunal Officials are:

JUDGES - canon lawyers who hear the cases and make the decisions.

DEFENDER OF THE BOND - one who acts in the name of the church to present a defense of the validity of the bond; they examine and question the evidence presented.

AUDITORS - one who gathers the documents and testimony and presents the case to the judges.

PROCURATOR/ADVOCATE - a representative who works directly with the petitioner.

**19. Are there any special guidelines/requirements for cases brought to the tribunal within this archdiocese?**

1. A civil divorce has been obtained.
2. The marriage took place within the Archdiocese of St. Louis.
3. That one of the parties resides in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

**20. When should the convalidation of a marriage occur after an annulment from a previous marriage has been received?**

Convalidation can take place anytime after the judge's decision has been confirmed by the appeal court. However, it should not take place until the couple has had appropriate marriage preparation according to Archdiocesan policy. Once the preparation has been completed, it is better to celebrate the marriage in the Catholic church after the non-Catholic has been received into full communion.

