

**Frequently Asked Questions
On the Rite of Christian Initiation
of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age**

Diocese of Salt Lake City

CONFIRMATION

Who is the primary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation?

The primary minister of the sacrament of confirmation is the bishop. However, in a major shift from that tradition, the rite gives to presbyters the faculty to confirm adults whom they baptize or receive into full communion, a faculty which is currently recognized in canon 883, 2^o and RConf7, DOL 2516 (cf. also, Diocesan Guidelines, 2015).

Can a priest administer the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Yes, any priest who baptized someone who is no longer an infant, that is, of catechetical age or older, or receives someone into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church, by law has the responsibility to confirm this person (cf. Diocesan Guidelines, 2015, for specifics).

Can a priest confirm a baptized but uncatechized Catholic?

No, a priest who wishes to confirm a baptized but uncatechized Catholic must explicitly request this faculty from the diocesan bishop according to canon 884, 1 of the current Code of Canon Law. The only exception is in the case of a baptized Catholic who has without fault been instructed in a non-Catholic religion or in the case of the re-admission to communion of a baptized Catholic who has been an apostate from the faith (cf. Diocesan Guidelines, 2011, for specifics).

In which instances a priest cannot validly confirm?

A priest cannot validly administer the Sacrament of Confirmation on the following situations:

- Baptized Catholics who were instructed in or adhered to a non-Catholic religion by their own fault
- Baptized Catholics who were not raised as Catholics but who never belong to any other church
- Baptized Catholics who never left the Church but were never confirmed.

Although the parish priest has no faculty from the law to confirm the people on the above three categories, he could seek from the diocesan bishop the concession of the faculty in writing to confirm them according to Canon 884.

Who can validly administer the Sacrament of Confirmation in danger of death?

In danger-of-death situations, any presbyter has the faculty by law to confirm (cf. RConf7, DOL 2516).

When two catechumens marry, what is required of them?

One must presume the same kind of pastoral care will be provided for catechumens preparing for marriage as for any individuals we would minister to prior to marriage. Although no canonical papers are required by Church law and no dispensation needs to be granted, it is required that the prenuptial questionnaire be completed and carefully filed with other parish marriage records. It should be noted on the questionnaire that the two individuals being married were catechumens at the time of their marriage. Pastoral ministers should consult with the chancery about any particular diocesan legislation on this matter. Only in extreme circumstances can catechumens enter marriage prior to reception into the church.

The marriage should be celebrated at a Liturgy of the Word. Chapter III of the Rite of Marriage is to be used (U.S. Statutes # 10).

The marriage should be properly recorded in the parish marriage record book and in the book of catechumens.

When catechumens marry non-Catholic Christians or unbaptized persons, what is required of them?

The answer is the same as given in above.

When a catechumen marries a Catholic, what is required?

Along with the usual pastoral care offered to all who are preparing for marriage, the Catholic party who marries a catechumen must request a dispensation of disparity of cult.

If a candidate or catechumen is in an irregular marriage that needs to be convalidated, when should this be done?

The convalidation of any irregular marriage should be completed before the sacraments of initiation are celebrated. One cannot enter into the full sacramental life of the Church unless one is completely free to receive the sacraments. It is pastorally advisable to convalidate the marriage as early in the process as possible, if they are free to enter marriage. If either individual has a previous marriage, the proper canonical procedures must be followed before the catechumen is accepted for the Rite of Election.

What can be done pastorally if one party does not want to be subjected to a convalidation ceremony?

As long as both parties intend to be faithful to their marriage bond, it may be possible to obtain a radical sanation from the diocesan tribunal. The sanation declares the marriage as valid from the beginning and needs no further public rite (canons # 1161-1165). Pastoral ministers should consult with the chancery or tribunal officials. Both parties need to be free of any impediment to senate (heal) their marriage.

Should inquirers who need a declaration of nullity be accepted into the RCIA process?

Inquirers who need a declaration of nullity from their previous marriage are free to enter into the catechumenate. However, they cannot be accepted for the Rite of Election or the Call to Continuing Conversion until the declaration of nullity is granted. Pastoral staffs should uncover the need for a

declaration of nullity through personal interviews early in the process. Inquirers in need of a declaration of nullity who are received into the catechumenate must clearly understand at the outset that they may not be initiated at the approaching Easter. A catechumen or a candidate who is not now invalidly remarried nor intends to remarry is not in need of a declaration of nullity to be accepted for the Rite of Election or the Call to Continuing Conversion and consequently, the sacraments of initiation. However, the implication of future attempts to remarry without a declaration of nullity must be carefully explained before the discernment for the rite is completed.

If an inquirer, catechumen or candidate is engaged to be married, should the initiation process be abbreviated to allow for initiation before the marriage is celebrated?

No. The process of formation required for Christian initiation should not be abbreviated simply for the reason of being a fully initialed Roman Catholic in time for the wedding. It may be more appropriate to concentrate on the preparation for Christian marriage and postpone or extend the catechumenate. Christian marriage is a serious vocation and its preparation should not be neglected or weakened because of one's participation in the catechumenate. It is always pastorally prudent and wise to refer the newly married couple to their respective pastor who can then assume responsibility for seeing that the inquirer, catechumen or candidate has the opportunity to complete their initiation.

RICA AND CHILDREN

How are children of catechetical age initiated in to the Church?

Children of catechetical age (seven years or older) are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation to be adults (canon # 852. 1 and U.S. Statutes # 18). Their formation should follow the general pattern of the catechumenate as far as possible. Given their young age a catechumenate for children may need to be longer than one designed for mature adults (RCIA #253).

The permission of the parents, or at least one of them, is required before they are accepted in to the catechumenate and before they are initiated in to the Church. Parents are encouraged to participate in the process of formation to whatever extent they are able and to offer the support and example the children will need (RCIA # 254).

Pastors should be reminded that once a child has reached the age of reason, (seven years or older), the Rite of Baptism for Children is no longer the proper ritual book to use. Part II, Chapter 1 of the RCIA (#252-329) is the appropriate rite (canon 852, 1-2).¹

Are children of catechetical age to be confirmed and receive Eucharist at the time of their baptism?

Yes. In the dioceses of the United States it is clearly expected that, when a child of catechetical age is baptized, the child is to be confirmed and share in the Eucharist at the same celebration (U.S. Statutes #14, 18, 19). It is preferable that the sacraments of initiation are celebrated at the Easter Vigil (RCIA # 8 and # 256; U.S. Statutes #18).

¹ Infant – is the one who has not reached the age of seven (*Non Sui Compos*: not responsible for themselves)
Adult – those who have reached the age of seven (*To be Sui Compos*: to have the use of reason)

While this undoubtedly causes concern for consistency in religious education programs where children baptized in infancy are not confirmed until a later age, this in itself is not a sufficient reason to postpone confirmation. The integrity and unity of the three sacraments of initiation is maintained by not delaying confirmation or Eucharist (RCIA #215; canon #866).

In regard to children, can the diocesan bishop dispense from the RCIA?

Children of catechetical age are the subject of the RCIA and not the Rite of Baptism for Children. Consequently all that is prescribed in the RCIA (#252-330) should be applied to the children with pastoral sensitivity for their particular needs and with the approval and cooperation of the parents or at least one of them or those who lawfully take their place. This also means that when children of catechetical age are baptized they are to be confirmed and offered Eucharist at the same celebration.

The diocesan bishop cannot reserve the confirmation to himself without also reserving the baptism to himself. The priest who baptizes is to confirm the children and does not need special permission to do so (RCIA #305 and #308; canons #885.2 and #866 U.S. Statutes #13, #18 and #19, cf. also, Diocesan Guidelines, 2015).

How are baptized Christian children of catechetical age received into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church?

Because children of catechetical age are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (canon #852.1), the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA #473-504) is used. Their formation may be similar to unbaptized children preparing for the initiation sacraments. Some elements of the ordinary catechetical instruction of baptized children before their reception of the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist may be appropriately shared with catechumens of catechetical age (U.S. Statutes #19).

These children may be confirmed with the newly baptized (RCIA #308). Children of parents being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church are ordinarily received into the Church with their parents. The diocesan bishop will set the criteria for discerning when a delay in confirmation is warranted.

How are children below the age of reason received into the full communion of the Catholic Church?

Presuming the children are being received into the Church at the time one or both parents are being received into the Church, nothing is required of them. Their original baptism, however, ought to be carefully recorded in the baptismal register with a note of their becoming Catholic through their parents' initiation into the Church. It is presumed that they would be confirmed and receive Eucharist along with the other children of the parish at the customary time.

Should children enrolled in the catechumenate be included in the Rite of Election held for adult catechumens?

The Rite of Election for Children is an optional rite (RCIA #277-290) designed specifically for their state. The RCIA seems to presume that the first choice would be to celebrate the Rite of Election separately for the children (RCIA #257). However, the children could be included in a Rite or Election held for adults, especially when their parents are catechumens. In this case the rite for adults is used (RCIA #129-137).

Are children who are completing their initiation through confirmation and Eucharist expected to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation?

Children who were baptized as Roman Catholics are expected to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation before their first reception of the Eucharist (canon #914 and U.S. Statutes #27.) Children who were baptized, but not as Roman Catholics, and are now preparing for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church should be adequately prepared and encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation sometime before their formal reception into the Roman Catholic Church (RCIA #482; U.S. Statutes #36).

Children who are catechumens preparing for baptism obviously do not celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation prior to baptism. Nevertheless they should be invited to participate in non-sacramental penitential rites as outlined in the RCIA #291-303 so that they may come to understand the reality of sin and appreciate the comforting message of God's pardon. Baptized children can be invited to celebrate these penitential rites with children who are catechumens.

GENERAL PASTORAL ISSUES

Is special permission required to use the abbreviated form of the RCIA for catechumens in exceptional circumstances?

Yes. When there are extraordinary circumstances that would prevent the catechumen from completing all the steps of the catechumenate, or when the catechumen has reached a depth of Christian conversion and a degree of religious maturity that would seem not to require the completion of the catechumenate, the diocesan bishop can permit the use of the abbreviated form of the RCIA. Permission should be requested from the diocesan bishop or the appropriate diocesan authority (RCIA #331-369; U.S. Statutes #20-21)

The concern is the spiritual loss for the catechumen should the abbreviated form of the RCIA be used too freely. "Those who have already been baptized in another Church or ecclesial community should not be treated as catechumens or so designated. Their doctrinal and spiritual preparation for reception into full Catholic communion should be determined according to the individual case, that is, it should depend on the extent to which the baptized person has led a Christian life within a community of faith and been appropriately catechized to deepen his or her inner adherence to the Church" (U.S. Statutes #30).

Are baptized but uncatechized candidates for reception into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church obligated to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation prior to their profession of faith?

The requirement for reconciliation would be the same as for all Catholics. They would need to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, if they were guilty of serious sin (RCIA #482).

Candidates should receive a thorough catechesis on the sacrament of reconciliation and be encouraged in the frequent celebration of the sacrament (U.S. Statutes # 27 and #36).

Where do we record the names of catechumens after the “Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens” is celebrated?

Because catechumens are joined to the Church and are part of the household of Christ (RCIA # 47), their status is taken seriously. Their names should be recorded in the parish register of catechumens, along with the names of the sponsors and the minister and the date and place of the celebration (RCIA #46).

Where do we record the names of the elect after the sacraments of initiation are celebrated?

Their names are recorded in the parish baptismal register. Notations are recorded in the confirmation register, and also in the communion register.

Where do we record the names of the baptized Christians who enter into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church?

The name of the person received into full communion with the Catholic Church by means of a profession of faith is to be recorded in the parish register under the date of profession together with the date and place of the baptism of the party; along with the other information required for the baptismal register. If the parish maintains a profession of faith register, the name of the person is also recorded in it. Information is also recorded in the confirmation and communion registers.

Who is the proper minister of the Rite of Election?

The diocesan bishop is the proper minister of the Rite of Election. If for pastoral reasons the parish priest is to preside at a celebration of the Rite of Election he is to obtain specific delegation from the diocesan bishop or the appropriate diocesan authority (RCIA #12 and #34).

Is it possible to dispense from one or two of the scrutinies?

For serious pastoral reasons the diocesan bishop may dispense from one or even two of the scrutinies. The parish priest should request the dispensation from the diocesan bishop or the appropriate diocesan authority (RCIA #34.3).

Is it permissible at one celebration for one priest to baptize and another to confirm?

No. The faculty to confirm is only granted to the one who baptizes. If there are a large number to be confirmed, the presiding minister may invite other priests to assist him in the anointing according to the norms prescribed in RCIA #14 (cf. also Diocesan Directives for Confirmation revised 2015).

Can a non-ordained person baptize when a priest is available?

The ordinary ministers of baptism are bishops, priests and deacons (Christian Initiation: General Introduction #11). When an ordinary minister of baptism is available, a lay person is not authorized to baptize. Nor is it appropriate for anyone except the baptizing minister to question the catechumen for the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith prior to baptism (canon 861, 1-2).