

**Archdiocesan Policy Update
Christian Initiation
August, 2001**

(Please copy and insert in the Handbook for Parish Pastoral Leadership, tab H and tab O).

Q: We have candidates (baptized, non-Catholics) who are ready to be received into the Catholic faith, confirmed and share first Eucharist. Must we wait until the Easter Vigil to fully initiate them into the Catholic faith?

A: No. In fact, the National Statutes for the Catechumenate, approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 11, 1986, state that the ordinary time to receive candidates into full communion in the Catholic Church is at a Sunday Eucharist of the parish community (#32). However, for pastoral reasons, candidates may be received at the Easter Vigil as long as a clear distinction is made between the elect and the candidates.

Q: I have heard that if the parish receives candidates (baptized, non-Catholics) into the Catholic faith outside the Easter Vigil, the receiving priest cannot confirm them. Is this true?

A: No. In fact, the receiving priest must confirm them according to Canon 883:2. No special permission is needed from the Archbishop to do this. The faculty comes from the universal law of the church.

Q: Then these candidates might not take part in the Rite of Election or the Scrutinies. Is that OK?

A: Yes, that is acceptable. Remember that the Rite of Election and Scrutinies are directed primarily at true catechumens (the unbaptized). It is not necessary for candidates to participate in these catechumenal rites.

Q: If this is the case, then can the unbaptized (true catechumens) be fully initiated into the Catholic Church at times other than the Easter Vigil?

A: No, except for serious pastoral need. The Church does not want to deprive the catechumens of the Lenten season, the Rite of Election, the Scrutinies and the Triduum experience.

Q: A catechumen wishes to be married as a Catholic. She has gone through the catechumenate process and has been awaiting an annulment. The annulment has been granted, but it is months til the Easter Vigil. Can we fully initiate her into the Catholic Church now, instead of waiting for the Easter Vigil?

A: As was stated previously, the Church does not want to deny any catechumen the Lenten and Triduum experience. Therefore, she should be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil. However, she does not need to delay her marriage. She can work with her pastor to obtain a disparity of cult, and marry while she is a catechumen. This constitutes a valid marriage in the Catholic Church, provided her husband-to-be is free to marry in the Catholic Church. For more complicated marriage concerns, contact the Archdiocesan Tribunal Office at 831-8177.

Q: Now what about uncatechized Catholics; when can they be confirmed and share in first Eucharist?

A: Archbishop Sheehan has given permission for uncatechized Catholics, after proper formation, to complete their initiation at the Easter Vigil. The presider needs no special permission to confirm and share first Eucharist with them at the Easter Vigil.

However, in this Archdiocese, uncatechized Catholics may not complete their initiation through Confirmation and Eucharist together, except for the Easter Vigil. Outside the Easter Vigil, uncatechized Catholics may share in first Eucharist at any Sunday Eucharistic liturgy with the assembly, but must wait to be confirmed until the Archbishop or his delegate comes to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation at the parish. So the permission to complete the initiation (Confirmation and Eucharist) of uncatechized Catholics is only given when celebrated at the Easter Vigil. Of course, in extreme cases, special delegation may be sought from the Archbishop.

Q: We have an RCIA with adaptations for children in our parish. What sacraments can the children receive and when?

A: According to Canon 852:1 children with the use of reason who are seeking baptism or full communion have the same rights as adults. Therefore, if children are unbaptized, they are to be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil; that is, they are to celebrate Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. This is supported by Canon Law 866 and the National Statutes of the Catechumenate #18 and #35. If children (baptized, non-Catholic) are received into the faith, whether at the Easter Vigil or a Sunday Eucharist, they are to celebrate both Confirmation and Eucharist. No special permission is needed.

However, Archbishop Sheehan wishes to allow pastoral discretion in this regard. If a pastor sees genuine pastoral need to delay Confirmation of children with the use of reason until a later time, he may do so. No special permission is needed.

Questions, contact the Office of Worship and Christian Initiation at 831-8194.