
POLICY OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN JOSÉ PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

BAPTISM

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. These guidelines apply to all seeking Baptism:
- Section I: Adults and Children
 - Section II: Infants
- B. All unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason and unbaptized adults are to be prepared to celebrate all three sacraments of initiation according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.¹ Exceptions regarding the initiation process may be made for serious health reasons (cf. *RCIA* 370ff, “Christian Initiation of a Person in Danger of Death”).
- C. It is imperative that high schools in the Diocese that prepare students for full initiation through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* make contact with the home parish of the student or the parish where the parents are parishioners.²
- D. Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to celebrate the sacrament of Baptism and to participate in the preparation for the sacrament according to this policy, insofar as they are able (cf. *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, NCCB 1995; also found in *The Liturgy Documents*, Vol. 2, Liturgy Training Publications).
- E. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is to be followed for all unbaptized adults and children who have attained the use of reason, that is, have completed the seventh year. The *Rite of Baptism for Children*, with its introduction and notes, the relevant sections of the *Sacramentary*, *Lectiary*, *Code of Canon Law*, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *National Catechetical Directory* are the basis for this policy for the preparation for the baptism of infants.

¹ *RCIA* 305: “At the third step of their Christian initiation, the children will receive the sacrament of baptism, the bishop or priest who baptizes them will also confer confirmation, and the children will for the first time participate in the liturgy of the eucharist.”

² *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* 4: “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 for 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.”

SECTION I: BAPTISM FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

II. PREREQUISITES FOR CANDIDACY

- A. All unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason, that is, who have completed the seventh year, and unbaptized adults are to be prepared for and celebrate the sacraments of initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, according to the norms of Part II, Section 1 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, “Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age.”³
- B. The pastor/director of parish life, parochial vicar, pastoral minister, and/or catechumenate director should meet with those inquiring about becoming a member of the Catholic Church. Special care should be taken to be welcoming. At this meeting, the minister and the adult or child accompanied by his/her parents should discuss:
- the reasons for inquiring;
 - their faith and their relationship with the Church;
 - the parish process according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and/or the *Rite* adapted for children. i.e., *RCIA*, Part II, Section 1;
 - in the case of adults, their current and previous marital status.
- C. Pastors/directors of parish life and ministers should make accommodations in the initial meeting, during the catechumenate process and at the celebrations of the rite for adults and children who speak languages other than English. Cultural expressions of faith are encouraged, provided they are in accord with the basic teachings and the rite of the Church.⁴
- D. Candidates have the privilege and responsibility to have a **sponsor**. The sponsor accompanies the candidate seeking admission into the catechumenate. Sponsors also:
- journey with the candidate and stand as a witness to his/her faith and character;⁵
 - assist the candidate in his/her Christian development and in fulfilling the obligations connected with it.⁶

³ *CCL* 851.1: “[A]n adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and, to the extent possible, be led through the several stages to sacramental initiation, in accord with the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms published by it.”

⁴ See *NCD* and the Bishops’ Pastoral on Hispanic Ministry, “The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment.”

⁵ *RCIA* 10: “A sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates’ moral character, faith, and intention.”

⁶ *CCL* 872: “Insofar as possible one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptized lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it.”

E. Candidates may choose either one or two **godparents**, one of each sex,⁷ to accompany them on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation and during the period of mystagogy.⁸

1. To be admitted to the role of godparent, a person must:
 - be designated by the candidate or, in the case of a child, by the parents or guardian, or in their absence, by the pastor/director of parish life or minister, and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role;
 - have completed the sixteenth year unless the pastor/director of parish life or minister has a just cause for an exception;
 - be a fully initiated (all three sacraments) practicing Catholic who participates in Sunday liturgy and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
 - not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - and not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.⁹
2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial church may be a witness to Baptism. Members of the Eastern Church may be godparents. One Catholic godparent is still required.¹⁰
3. When there is a cultural practice of multiple godparents, pastors/directors of parish life may allow the candidate or, in the case of a child, the family, to involve a number of persons to assist him/her in the ongoing faith journey or in the raising of the child in the Catholic faith. However, only one godparent need be recorded.¹¹

⁷ *CCL* 873: “Only one male or one female sponsor or one of each sex is to be employed.”

⁸ *RCIA* 11: “Their godparents (for each a godmother or godfather, or both) accompany the candidates on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. Godparents are persons chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest. It is the responsibility of godparents:

- to show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life,
- to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety,
- to bear witness, and
- to guide the candidates’ progress in the baptismal life.

Chosen before the candidates’ election, godparents fulfill this office publicly from the day of the rite of election, when they give testimony to the community about the candidates. They continue to be important during the time after reception of the sacraments when the neophytes need to be assisted so that they remain true to their baptismal promises.”

⁹ *CCL* 874 §1.

¹⁰ *CCL* 874 §2: “A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor.”

¹¹ *CCL* 873: “Only one male or one female sponsor or one of each sex is to be employed.”

III. PROCESS OF INITIATION OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

- A. Unbaptized adults and children who have reached the age of reason are to be initiated according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.¹²
- B. The initiation of adults and children is a gradual process lasting from one to three years that takes place within the community of the faithful.¹³ It consists of four periods and three rites.

- **Pre-catechumenate:** The inquirer meets with the catechumenate director or team member and enters a **period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate**. This is a time with no fixed structure or duration in which the inquirer has an opportunity to ask questions and is introduced to Gospel values and the Christian way of life.

The **Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens** concludes the period of the pre-catechumenate and marks the entrance into the period of the catechumenate. This rite gives witness to the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching that have taken root in the lives of the inquirers.¹⁴ Through it the inquirers are joined to the “household of Christ” and become catechumens (*RCIA 47, LG 14, Ad gentes 14*).

- **Catechumenate:** The catechumenate period is an extended period of time during which catechumens’ faith and conversion to God are nurtured. During this time they are given suitable catechesis on living the Christian way of life, the

¹² *RCIA 252*: “This form of the rite of Christian initiation is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age.”

¹³ *RCIA 253*: “The Christian initiation of these children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need. The process of initiation thus must be adapted both to their spiritual progress, that is, to the children’s growth in faith, and to the catechetical instruction they receive. Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years, if need be, before they receive the sacraments.”

RCIA 4: “The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.”

¹⁴ *RCIA 7.2*: “The second period, which begins with the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens and may last for several years, includes catechesis and the rites connected with catechesis. It comes to an end on the day of election.”

RCIA 42: “[T]here must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate and of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ. Consequently, there must also be evidence of the first stirrings of repentance, a start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer, a sense of the Church, and some experience of the company and spirit of Christians through contact with a priest or with members of the community. The candidates should also be instructed about the celebration of the liturgical rite of acceptance.”

celebration of liturgical rites and apostolic works¹⁵ and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community. The length of the catechumenate (at least one year) varies according to the progress of the individual.¹⁶

The **Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names**, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent,¹⁷ is the Church's formal declaration of the readiness of the catechumens for the sacraments of initiation. It testifies to the conversion of heart that they have experienced.¹⁸ At this rite the catechumens (now the elect) express their will to receive the sacraments and the godparent/s give testimony to their readiness.¹⁹ This rite marks the beginning of a final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation.

- The **Period of Purification and Enlightenment**, usually during the Lenten season preceding initiation at the Easter Vigil, is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion for self searching and repentance. This period is marked by the celebration of the scrutinies, presentations of the Creed and the Our Father

¹⁵ *RCIA* 75.4: "Since the Church's life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith."

¹⁶ *RCIA* 76: "The duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances, such as the program of instruction for the catechumenate, the number of catechists, deacons, and priest, the cooperation of the individual catechumens, the means necessary for them to come to the site of the catechumenate and spend time there, the help of the local community. Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough—several years if necessary—for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong. By their formation in the entire Christian life and a sufficiently prolonged probation the catechumens are properly initiated into the mysteries of salvation and the practice of an evangelical way of life. By means of sacred rites celebrated at successive times they are led into the life of faith, worship, and charity belonging to the people of God."

National Statutes for the Catechumenate 6: "The period of catechumenate, beginning at acceptance into the order of catechumens and including both the catechumenate proper and the period of purification and enlightenment after election or enrollment of names, should extend for at least one year of formation, instruction, and probation. Ordinarily this period should go from at least the Easter season of one year until the next; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year."

¹⁷ *RCIA* 118: "The celebration of the rite of election, which usually coincides with the opening of Lent, also marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation, during which the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity."

¹⁸ *RCIA* 120: "Before the rite of election is celebrated, the catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity. With deliberate will and an enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church, a resolve they will express publicly in the actual celebration of the rite."

¹⁹ *RCIA* 119: "At this second step, on the basis of the testimony of godparents and catechists and of the catechumens' reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation. Thus the Church makes its 'election,' that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who have dispositions that make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation."

and the preparation rites on Holy Saturday. (See *RCIA* 141-205 for a more complete description of the rites belonging to this period.)

The **Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation** (See section V below.)

- **The Period of Mystagoga** (See section VI below.)

C. Since unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason share in the same initiation process as unbaptized adults, they should participate fully in the same rites and presentations as the adults.²⁰

IV. DISCERNMENT OF READINESS

- A. The full implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* requires discernment of readiness between each of the periods.
- B. Many persons assist in the discernment process for the individual conversion of catechumens including: pastors/directors of parish life, other clergy, deacons, catechists, team and other parishioners.
- C. The commitment required to move from one period to the next includes but is not limited to *RCIA* 42 for Rite of Acceptance and *RCIA* 120 for Rite of Election.
- D. A holistic approach and variety of methods are recommended for the discernment process throughout the catechumenate journey.

V. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- A. “The third step in the Christian initiation of adults [and children who have reached the age of reason, the completion of their seventh year] is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist” (*RCIA* 206).
- B. “The usual time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil” (*RCIA* 207).
- C. The order for the celebration of the sacrament can be found in the “Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation,” *RCIA* 206-243, and “Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation,” *RCIA* 304-329, for children of catechetical age.

²⁰ *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* 18: “Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (canon 852:1), their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens.”

- D. “Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and, therefore, provision should be made for its more frequent use in the baptism of adults” (NS 17).

VI. PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

- A. This is the time, usually during 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 Eucharistic celebration.²¹
- B. Catechesis toward lifelong conversion should continue after the celebration of initiation through parish catechetical programs for adults, which can provide opportunities for fuller immersion into the faith of the community.²²
- C. Children of catechetical age who have been fully initiated should continue to participate in the faith formation processes in the parish school, the catechetical program, youth ministry program or other on-going faith processes.²³

²¹ RCIA 244: “This [period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy] is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests (pastors) should give them thoughtful and friendly help.”

National Statutes for the Catechumenate 22: “After the completion of their Christian initiation in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, the neophytes should begin the period of mystagogy by participating in the principal Sunday eucharist of the community throughout the Easter season, which ends on Pentecost Sunday. They should do this as a body in company with their godparents and those who have assisted in their Christian formation.”

²² *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* 24: “After the immediate mystagogy or postbaptismal catechesis during the Easter season, the program for the neophytes should extend until the anniversary of Christian initiation, with at least monthly assemblies of the neophytes for their deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community.”

²³ GDC 69: “Continuing or ongoing education in the faith follows upon basic education and presupposes it. Both fulfill two distinct but complementary functions of the ministry of the word while serving the process of continuing conversion. Initiatory catechesis lays the basis for the Christian life of the followers of Jesus. The process of continuing conversion goes beyond what is provided by basic catechesis.”

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us 13: “Such lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church’s catechetical ministry; moreover, it must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it.”

VII. RECORDS

- A. The names of those who are initiated through the sacrament of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, the minister, the godparent/s and the place and date of the ceremony, are to be written in the parish baptismal and confirmation registers.
- B. The names of those who were prepared for the sacraments of initiation in a Catholic high school or college are to be recorded in the parish where the celebration took place.
- C. See Appendix II for information on recording children baptized before or after their adoption is finalized.

SECTION II: BAPTISM FOR INFANTS

I. PREREQUISITES FOR CANDIDACY

- A. Children who have not completed their seventh year are candidates for infant baptism.²⁴ Parents are obliged to seek baptism for their child within the first few weeks after birth.²⁵
- B. The pastor/director of parish life, parochial vicar, or pastoral minister should meet with the parents after they have contacted the parish for the Baptism of their infant child. Special care should be taken to be welcoming. At this meeting the minister and the parents should discuss:
 - the reasons for requesting baptism for their child;
 - their faith and their relationship with the Church;
 - their understanding of the sacrament;
 - their role and responsibility in raising their child in the faith of the Church;
 - the role and requirements for godparents;
 - the parish policy regarding baptismal catechesis.
- C. When parents speak no English, pastors/directors of parish life should make provisions for the initial meeting and for the catechesis and the celebration of the rite to be in their own language whenever possible. Cultural expressions of faith are encouraged, provided they are in accord with the basic teachings and the rite of the church.²⁶
- D. The minister should also obtain the basic information for the parish records and make specific arrangements for the celebration of the sacrament.

²⁴ *CCL* 97 §2: “Before the completion of the seventh year, a minor is called an infant...; with the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason.”

²⁵ *CCL* 867 §1: “Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first few weeks after birth; as soon as possible after the birth or even before it parents are to go the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared for it properly.”

²⁶ See *NCD* and the Bishops’ Pastoral on Hispanic Ministry, “The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment.”

E. Parent responsibilities:

1. Parents/guardians are responsible for giving their infant a name that reflects their Christian faith.²⁷ An awareness of cultural diversity should be considered in choosing a name for the child.
2. Parents/guardians are expected to participate in the weekly Sunday liturgy.
3. Parents/guardians have the privilege and responsibility to choose a person or persons as godparents for the Baptism of their child. Godparents are expected to:
 - accompany the parents during the time of baptismal catechesis;
 - present the infant/child for baptism;
 - be companions on the continuing faith journey of the child;
 - and assist in guiding the child.²⁸

A. Parents may choose either one or two godparents, one of each sex, for their child.²⁹

B. To be admitted to the role of godparent, a person must:

- be designated by the parents or guardians, or in their absence, by the pastor/director of parish life or minister, and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role;
- have completed the sixteenth year unless the pastor/director of parish life or minister has a just cause for an exception;
- be a fully initiated (all three sacraments) practicing Catholic who participates in Sunday liturgy and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
- not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- and not be the father nor mother of the one to be baptized.³⁰

C. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial church may be a witness to baptism. Members of the Eastern Church may be godparents. One Catholic godparent is still required.³¹

D. When there is a cultural practice of multiple godparents, pastors/directors of parish life may allow the family to involve a number of persons to assist them in

²⁷ CCL 855: "Parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to see that a name foreign to a Christian mentality is not given."

²⁸ CCL 872: "Insofar as possible one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian Initiation, or together with the parents, to present an infant at baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it."

²⁹ CCL 873: "Only one male or female sponsor or one of each sex is to be employed."

³⁰ CCL 874 §1.

³¹ CCL 874 §2: "A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor."

raising the child in the Catholic faith. However, only one godparent need be recorded.³²

II. BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS

- A. After the initial meeting and before the celebration of the sacrament, parents are to participate in sessions of baptismal catechesis. Sponsors are invited to participate with parents in the catechesis, if possible, or to participate in baptismal catechesis at their local parish, if distance is a factor.³³
- B. Parents who have been recently catechized in preparation for the Baptism of a previous child are not required to participate in formal sessions of baptismal catechesis. However the parish catechists are asked to encourage the parents to participate as an opportunity to deepen their own faith in preparation for the Baptism of a new baby.
- C. The catechesis is based on the rite itself, with its introduction and notes and on the catechumenate model.³⁴ (See Appendix I below using the Rite of Acceptance model.)
- D. Baptismal catechesis teaches that Baptism:
 - 1. gives them a new birth in which they become children of God, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit;

³² *CCL* 873: “Only one male or one female sponsor or one of each sex is to be employed.”

³³ *CCL* 851.2: “[T]he parents of an infant who is to be baptized and likewise those who are to undertake the office of sponsor are to be properly instructed in the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it; personally or through others the pastor is to see to it that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer, gathering several families together and where possible visiting them.”

³⁴ *GDC* 91: “In view of this substantial difference [between catechumens and those being catechized, between the pre-baptismal catechesis and the post-baptismal catechesis, cf. *GDC* 90], some elements of the baptismal catechumenate are now considered as the source of inspiration for post-baptismal catechesis.

- The baptismal catechumenate constantly reminds the whole church of the fundamental importance of the functions of initiation and the basic factors which constitute it: catechesis and the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The pastoral care of Christian initiation is vital for every particular church.
- The baptismal catechumenate is the responsibility of the entire Christian community....
- The baptismal Catechumenate is also completely permeated by the mystery of Christ's Passover. The Easter Vigil, focal point of the Christian liturgy, and its spirituality of baptism, inspire all catechesis.
- The baptismal Catechumenate is also an initial locus of inculturation....
- Finally, the concept of the baptismal Catechumenate as a process of formation and as a true school of the faith offers post-baptismal catechesis dynamic and particular characteristics: comprehensiveness and integrity of formation; its gradual character expressed in definite stages; its connection with meaningful rites, symbols, biblical and liturgical signs; its constant references to the Christian community.”

GDC 68: “[I]nitiatory catechesis, being comprehensive and systematic, cannot be reduced to the circumstantial or the occasional. As it is formation for the Christian life it comprises but surpasses mere instruction. Being essential, it looks to what is “common” for the Christian, without entering into disputed questions for transforming itself into a form of theological investigation. Finally, being initiatory it incorporates into the community, which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith. It fulfills, at once, initiatory, educational and instructional functions. This inherent richness in the Catechumenate of nonbaptized adults should serve to inspire other forms of catechesis.”

2. cleanses from original sin;
3. incorporates them into the Church;
4. seals them with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of their belonging to Christ;
5. gives them a participation in the paschal mystery, the dying and rising of Jesus;
6. and gives them a share in eternal life.³⁵

III. DISCERNMENT OF READINESS FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS

- A. The parents or at least one of the parents or the person who lawfully takes their place must give consent for the lawful baptism of an infant.³⁶ Consideration must be given to the current California custodial, family law and cultural situations.
- B. Good pastoral practice presumes that parents who petition the sacrament for their child are persons of good will who ask in faith and have a basic understanding of their obligations.³⁷
- C. There must be a well-founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such a hope is altogether lacking, the Baptism is to be delayed according to the prescriptions of particular law, and the parents are to be informed of the reasons.³⁸
- D. It is ultimately the responsibility of the pastor/director of parish life, in collaboration with the catechist entrusted with the task of preparation, the godparents and the parents, to ensure that those presented for the sacrament of Baptism are properly disposed and prepared to celebrate the sacrament.³⁹

³⁵ Cf. CCC 1257-1274 for further information, and Romans 6:3-11 from Easter Vigil.

³⁶ CCL 868 §1: “For the licit baptism of an infant it is necessary that: the parents or at least one of them or the person who lawfully takes their place gives consent.”

³⁷ CCL 843 §1: “The sacred ministers cannot refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them”

³⁸ *Instruction on Infant Baptism* by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 1980, states: “It must be clear that the refusal of baptism is not a means of exercising pressure. Nor can one speak of refusal, still less of discrimination, but rather of educational delay, according to individual cases, aimed at helping the family to grow in faith or to become more aware of its responsibilities.”

³⁹ RCIA 120: “Before the rite of election is celebrated, the catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity. With deliberate will and an enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church, a resolve they will express publicly in the actual celebration of the rite.”

IV. MINISTRIES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

- A. The pastor/director of parish life, parochial vicar, and/or pastoral minister with the assistance of catechists or other qualified laypersons are the ministers for the preparation of the sacrament.⁴⁰ (See *RCIA* 9-16 for further information on ministries and offices.)
- B. The priest or deacon is the minister of the sacrament of Baptism of infants.
- C. The parish community should be an active participant in the celebration of the sacrament.
- D. The following liturgical ministers are needed for the celebration of Baptism:
 - 1. Hospitality ministers welcome the families to the celebration and direct them to their places.
 - 2. Lectors prepare and proclaim the scripture for the Liturgy of the Word and read the intercessions.
 - 3. Music ministers provide music during the rite, encouraging full, conscious, active participation.

V. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT WITH INFANTS

- A. The sacrament is to be celebrated according to the *Rite of Baptism for Children*.
- B. The sacrament of Baptism is a communal, not a private, celebration. Sunday is the recommended day for celebrating Baptism.⁴¹
- C. The place for the celebration of Baptism is the parish church of the parents.⁴² When, for a just cause, an infant is to be baptized in a church other than the parish church of the parents, permission of their parish priest is required.

⁴⁰ *RCIA*, General Introduction 13: "It is the duty of parish priests (pastors) to assist the bishop in the instruction and baptism of the adults entrusted to their care, unless the bishop makes other provisions. Parish priests (pastors), with the assistance of catechists or other qualified laypersons, have the duty of preparing the parents, and godparents of children through appropriate pastoral guidance and of baptizing the children."

⁴¹ *Rite of Baptism for Children* 9: "To bring out the paschal character of baptism it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday, when the church commemorates the Lord's Resurrection. On Sunday, baptism may be celebrated even during Mass, so that the entire community may be present and the necessary relationship between baptism and eucharist may be clearly seen, but this should not be done too often."

CCL 856: "Although baptism may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that ordinarily it is celebrated on a Sunday or if possible at the Easter Vigil."

⁴² *CCL* 857 §1: "Outside a case of necessity, the proper place is a church or oratory."

- D. The rite of infant Baptism should be celebrated in its entirety with the use of lavish symbols:
- Reception
 - Celebration of God's Word
 - Intercessions
 - Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism
 - Blessing and Invocation of God Over Baptismal Waters
 - Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
 - Baptism
 - Anointing After Baptism
 - Clothing With a White Garment
 - Lighted Candle
 - Ephphetha or Prayer Over Ears and Mouth
 - Lord's Prayer
 - Blessing and Dismissal
- E. The sacrament itself consists of the washing in water by way of immersion or pouring the water over the candidate's head⁴³ and saying the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

VI. POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS

- A. Following the celebration of the sacrament, the parish priest and/or delegate from the parish community is encouraged to:
- visit the family home;
 - gather small groups of parents of newly baptized infants to deepen their understanding of the baptismal event, their own faith and their critical role as Christian parents in the faith formation of their children;
 - and urge the parents to participate regularly in the Sunday celebration of Eucharist and in the life of the parish.
- B. Opportunities for adult catechesis toward lifelong conversion should be provided for the parents.

CCL 857 §2: "As a rule, adults are to be baptized in their own parish church and infants in the parish church proper to their parents, unless a just cause suggests otherwise."

CCL 860 §1: "Outside the case of necessity, baptism is not to be conferred in private homes, unless the local ordinary has permitted this for a grave cause."

⁴³ *RCIA*, General Introduction 22: "As the rite for baptizing, either immersion, which is more suitable a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, or pouring may lawfully be used."

VII. RECORDS

- A. The names of those who are initiated through the sacrament of Baptism, the minister, the godparent/s and the place and date of the ceremony, are to be written in the parish baptismal registers.
- B. See Appendix II for information on recording children baptized before or after their adoption is finalized.

APPENDIX I

The sample below shows how the Rite of Baptism can be spread out over several weeks using the Catechumenate Model.

This approach:

- provides an opportunity for the community to welcome and pray for the families over a three-week period. This is especially important when the sacrament of Baptism is celebrated outside of Mass;
- provides an opportunity for the families to meet and be welcomed by the community;
- and encourages the families to full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical life of the parish.

Time-line:

- Two weeks before the baptism:
Rite of Welcome/Reception (*Rite of Baptism for Children* 32-43)
- One week before the baptism:
Rite of Exorcism and Anointing with Oil of Catechumens before Baptism (49-51)
- Celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism (53-71)

APPENDIX II

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in accord with the prescriptions of *CCL 877 §3* hereby decrees that:

For children baptized after their adoption is finalized, the following information shall be entered in the register:

- a) the Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adoptive parent(s);
- b) the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s);
- c) the date and place of birth;
- d) the names of the sponsors selected by the adoptive parent(s);
- e) the place and date of the Baptism;
- f) the name of the minister performing the Baptism;
- g) and the fact of adoption but not the names of the natural parents.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for adopted children will be no different from other baptismal certificates. No mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.

For children baptized before their adoption is finalized, the following notations shall be added to the baptismal register, but only after the adoption has been finalized and with due regard for the civil law of the jurisdiction:

- a) parentheses shall be placed around the names of the natural parents;
- b) the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall then be added;
- c) the child's former surname shall also be parenthesized and the new surname added;
- d) and a notation shall be made that the child was legally adopted.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals shall give only the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s), the child's new legal surname, the date and place of Baptism, and the name of the ministers who conferred the sacrament. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) shall not be given, and no mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.

For future ease in reference, and to afford what may often be the only possibility of reference after the adoptions has been finalized, a baptismal entry for the adopted child can be made in the baptismal register of the adoptive parents' parish, citing the date and location of the original baptismal record, and listing only the name of the adoptive parents and the date and place of birth.

Parish personnel having access to parish registers have an obligation not to disclose to any person any information that would identify or reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted.

Decreed for all Latin Rite dioceses in the United States to take effect on December 1, 2000.