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## **INITIATION MINISTRY (OCIA) UPDATES & NEW NORMS**

In June, the Offices of Worship, Evangelization & Catechesis, and Chancery met with Archbishop Grob to discuss initiatives and norms related to the OCIA and Adult Confirmation. The newly translated *Order* provides an opportunity for our archdiocese to examine our current practices and conform more closely to the vision of the catechumenate. With that in mind, we share the updates below. Please make sure you share these with any pastoral staff and volunteers who coordinate these ministry areas so that they are prepared as well.

## **RITE OF ELECTION & CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION IN 2026**

We have been blessed in the last few years with an ever-growing number of adults and children asking to enter into full communion with the Church. We have outgrown the two celebrations we have had in recent years.

**CHANGE:** In 2026, we will celebrate one Rite of Election at the Cathedral on the First Sunday of Lent, Sunday, February 22, at 3:30pm. Adult and child catechumens (the unbaptized) will be invited to attend and be greeted and encouraged by the Archbishop. This liturgy will include elements in Spanish.

To support Candidates for Full Communion (those already baptized), we encourage parishes to celebrate the Call to Continuing Conversion with the parish community on the same day. Ideally, this will be done in conjunction with the Rite of Sending Catechumens to the Rite of Election.

We have decided on this path because of the integral nature of the Rite of Election for the catechumens, which should not be omitted without serious reason or need. We are approaching this decision as a “pilot” year and will continue to evaluate for future years. Please add this to your calendar for catechumens now, and look for registration in early January from the Office of Worship.

## **INITIATION OF CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE**

In recent years, it has become more common for families to approach parishes for the baptism of their child after they have reached the age of reason (about 7); this happens in parish schools as well, where unbaptized 2nd graders express interest in receiving First Communion with their classmates. Parish and school practice varies widely for these circumstances across the archdiocese. To give clarity to this pastoral issue, the Archbishop is establishing the following norms:

- **For unbaptized children asking for baptism before the first day of Second Grade (September 1):**
  - Baptize as soon as possible according to the Rite of Infant Baptism
  - No questions of readiness need be directed to the child, only to the parents.
  - The child may prepare for First Reconciliation and First Communion according to the normal parish process, provided they have experienced at least one year of remote preparation before beginning immediate preparation.

- **For unbaptized children asking for baptism after the first day of Second Grade (September 1):**
  - Initiate the child according to the OCIA adapted for children (Part II, Chapter II), which includes Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.
  - This formation must include at least one year of formation before receiving the sacraments (i.e. a child may not begin formation in September and be initiated at the Easter Vigil later that school year).
- **For baptized, non-Catholic children asking to become Catholic:**
  - Record their original baptismal information in the baptismal register with the annotation: “Received into Full Communion at the will of the parents.” The children are then prepared for First Reconciliation and First Communion according to the normal parish process. This process includes at least one year of remote preparation before beginning immediate preparation.

Please share these norms with your Principal and Director of Religious Education. A good way of “avoiding” the full initiation route would be to ask parents of all First Grade students about their baptismal status and interest in preparing for the sacraments in Second Grade.

## **CONFIRMATION OF BAPTIZED, ADULT CATHOLICS**

A related population seeking initiation are baptized, Catholic adults who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Even though it is common and appropriate for them to receive catechetical formation with catechumens and candidates, they are not included in the norms of the OCIA and therefore should be initiated separately. To give appropriate pastoral and sacramental care to this population, the Archbishop is establishing the following norms:

- **Delegation at the Easter Vigil will not be granted to confirm baptized, adult Catholics who have already received the Eucharist.** Instead, we encourage the following options:
  - Adult Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday at the Cathedral with the Archbishop
  - A parish celebration of Confirmation with delegation on Divine Mercy Sunday.
    - This allows the candidates to be catechetically formed with the OCIA cohort and receive the sacraments at a similar time.
  - Once the candidate is ready, request delegation to confirm on any appropriate Sunday or Feast Day.
- **For adults who have been baptized Catholic but have not received First Communion nor Confirmation:**
  - Initiate adults according to OCIA for “Preparing Adults for Confirmation and the Eucharist Who Were Baptized as Infants and Did Not Receive Catechesis” (Part II, Chapter V). These adults should be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.

These norms maintain the focus of the Easter Vigil on catechumens and candidates for full communion. The Archbishop has also requested a more formal process to prepare adult Catholics for Confirmation, with perhaps celebrations with a bishop offered throughout the year. We plan to communicate more about this in the Fall.

## **CONTINUED FORMATION AND SUPPORT SURROUNDING INITIATION**

The Offices of Worship, Evangelization and Catechesis, and the Chancery will be offering several formation and support opportunities this coming year for leaders in Initiation Ministry. These opportunities will allow for discussion, sharing of best practices, and deeper understanding of the OCIA and related rites. Please mark your calendars and share with your staff and volunteers these dates:

- **Saturday, August 23** – Adult Conversion Track at the annual Catechetical Conference.
  - This track will focus on building an effective Inquiry and Pre-Catechumenate process at your parish.
- **September 30-October 1** – Initiation Summit at MMCPCC
  - This two-day event will launch our focus on Initiation for the coming years. The first day will focus on the OCIA in general, and the second will focus on various adaptations for the rites for children. Both days will include times of sharing between parish leaders, breakouts, and keynote presentations.
  - During the afternoon of September 30, a special breakout will be offered for clergy.
- **January 20 & April 6, 2026** – Initiation Workshop Days
- **Third Tuesday of Every Month** – Initiation Webinars on Zoom, 1-2:30pm

It is important that these norms are followed by all parishes for unity and common practice. You do one another and your people no good service by introducing alternate forms, possibly causing confusion among the faithful and risking “parish shopping.”