

## Celebrating the Rite of Christian Initiation Outside of the Usual Time

Archbishop ListECKI has determined that in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age will take place on **Saturday, August 15, 2020**. This is only for the initiation of the **Elect**.

Both the Rite and the National Statutes for the Catechumenate already tell us that baptized **Candidates** would not ordinarily celebrate their sacraments at the Easter Vigil (RCIA, #487; National Statutes, #32 & #33). Therefore, Reception of Baptized Candidates into Full Communion in the Catholic Church, followed by their Confirmation, should happen at a regular Sunday liturgy in your parish community.

Given that we now have a date for Christian initiation, we have to remember that initiation is not just baptism. Rather, Christian initiation is an entire series of rites that prepare the Elect for sacramental union with Christ and it is our responsibility to ensure the preservation and integrity of the Rite. That is, because each stage of the RCIA progressively moves the Catechumen/Elect closer to the waters of Baptism, it is important to maintain the rhythm of the Rite by observing the periods and rites of the entire process:

*When the time is changed in either way, even though the rite of Christian initiation occurs at a different point in the liturgical year, **the structure of the entire rite**, with its properly spaced intervals, **remains the same**. (Introduction to the RCIA, #26)*

When the pandemic emergency began and public Masses suspended in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, we had just entered the final period prior to the Sacraments of Initiation – the **Period of Purification and Enlightenment**. This period, which begins with the Rite of Election, is a time of “intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the Elect as they search their own consciences and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the Elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior” (RCIA, #139).

The Rites belonging to this period are as follows:

- **Three Scrutinies**
  - Because the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass went into effect prior to the weekend of March 14 & 15, the Third Sunday of Lent, **some of our parishes were able to celebrate one scrutiny while others did not**.
  - Three scrutinies are required, and according to RCIA, #34.3: “It pertains to the bishop for his own diocese to dispense, on the basis of some serious obstacle, from one scrutiny or, in extraordinary circumstances, even from two.”

- We suggest celebrating at least one scrutiny with your Elect.
  
- **Presentation of the Creed**
  - The Presentation of the Creed is ordinarily done during the week following the first scrutiny, that is, sometime during the Third Week of Lent. The Elect are to commit the Creed to memory in order to recite it publicly prior to professing their faith in accordance with that Creed on the day of their baptism.
  - This must be done before the Preparation Rites, which are ordinarily reserved for Holy Saturday during the day.
  
- **Presentation of the Lord's Prayer**
  - The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer is ordinarily done during the week following the third scrutiny, that is, sometime during the Fifth Week of Lent.
  - If it is necessary, this may be deferred for inclusion in the Preparation Rites.
  
- **Preparation Rites**
  - The Preparation Rites may include the Recitation of the Creed.
  - Ordinarily takes place during the day on Holy Saturday.

## **Sacraments of Initiation**

### The Choice of Mass

The Sacraments of Initiation may be celebrated at the usual parish liturgy for Saturday evening or at a Mass later in the evening. Ordinarily, the Saturday evening Mass that week would be Mass for the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time; however, since it is a Sunday in Ordinary Time, you could celebrate the Ritual Mass for the Conferral of Baptism from the *Roman Missal*. Readings would be taken from the *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. #751-755.

Since August 15 is the Solemnity of the Assumption, **any Masses celebrating Christian Initiation prior to 4:00 p.m. is celebrated using the Mass of the Solemnity, including the readings.**

### The Choice of Rite

The normative rite to use would be the same as the one we would have used at the Easter Vigil, “Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Easter Vigil)” starting at RCIA, #218. Even though the circumstances we are experiencing as a result of the global pandemic are “exceptional,” they are not exceptional in the sense intended by the rite (see RCIA #331 & #332).

### Order of Mass

In Celebrating Christian Initiation of Adults this year, we need to be mindful that we are not imitating the Easter Vigil, but rather celebrating a Ritual Mass for Christian Initiation: For the Conferral of Baptism. There is no Service of Light and no extended Liturgy of the Word. The Order of Mass is as follows:

*Ritual Mass for the Conferral of Baptism:*

#### **INTRODUCTORY RITES**

SIGN OF THE CROSS

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

\*\*\*A brief introduction could be made at this point.

GLORY TO GOD

\*\*\*The Penitential Act is **omitted** because the Elect will renounce sin in the moments before their baptism.

COLLECT

\*\*\*Taken from the Ritual Mass.

**LITURGY OF THE WORD** as usual through the homily

\*\*\*Readings are taken from the *Lectionary for Mass*, #751-755.

**LITURGY OF BAPTISM**

PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATES (Elect)

INVITATION TO PRAYER

LITANY OF THE SAINTS

PRAYER OVER THE WATER

PROFESSION OF FAITH (Renunciation of Sin & Profession of Faith)

BAPTISM

EXPLANATORY RITES

\*\*\*Note: The Renewal of Baptismal Promises by the Assembly is omitted.

CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

INVITATION

LAYING ON OF HANDS

ANOINTING WITH CHRISM

UNIVERSAL PRAYER (see RCIA #236)

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

**CONCLUDING RITE**

**Period of Mystagogy** (RCIA #244-251)

Since the distinctive spirit and power of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, its main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season.

Besides being occasions for the newly baptized to gather with the community and share in the mysteries, these celebrations include particularly suitable readings from the Lectionary, especially the readings for Year A.

Even when Christian initiation has been celebrated outside the usual times, the texts for these Sunday Masses of the Easter season may be used. (RCIA #247)