

RITE FOR ENTRANCE INTO THE CATECHUMENATE

RITE OF INTRODUCTION

48. Those entering the catechumenate together with their sponsors and a group of the faithful gather outside the entrance to the church, or in the vestibule or at the entrance, or even at some other suitable part of the church, or lastly, in another suitable place outside the church. The Priest or Deacon, wearing an alb or a surplice, with a stole, or also a cope of festive color, goes to meet them, while, if circumstances suggest, the faithful sing a psalm or an appropriate hymn.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION

49. The celebrant warmly greets those entering the catechumenate. He speaks to them, their sponsors, and all present, pointing out the joy and happiness of the Church. He may also recall for the sponsors and friends the particular experience and religious response by which they, following their own spiritual path, have come to this step on this day.

Then he invites the sponsors and those entering to come forward. As they are taking their places before the celebrant, a suitable chant may be sung, for example, Psalm 63 (62):2-9:

Psalm 63 (62):2-9

² O God, you are my God; at dawn I seek you;
 for you my soul is thirsting.

For you my flesh is pining,
 like a dry, weary land without water.

³ I have come before you in the sanctuary,
 to behold your strength and your glory.

⁴ Your loving mercy is better than life;
 my lips will speak your praise.

⁵ I will bless you all my life;
 in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁶ My soul shall be filled as with a banquet;
 with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you.

⁷ When I remember you upon my bed,
 I muse on you through the watches of the night.

8 For you have been my strength;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
9 My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

DIALOGUE

50. Then the celebrant first asks or calls out the civil or family name of the individuals, if necessary, unless their names are already known because of their small number. They should always reply individually, even if the celebrant asks the question only once because of their number. This is done in the following or similar way.

A

Celebrant:

What is your name?

The one entering: N.

B

The celebrant, if he wishes, calls out the name of each entrant, who answers:

Present.

The celebrant continues with the following questions. When there is a large number entering, the remaining questions may be answered by all of them as a group. The celebrant may use other words in asking them about their intentions and may permit them to reply in their own words; for example, after the first question: What do you ask of God's Church? or What do you desire? or For what reason have you come? he may receive such answers as: The grace of Christ or Entry into the Church or Eternal life or other suitable replies. The celebrant may then adapt his questions to their replies.

Celebrant:

What do you ask of God's Church?

The one entering: Faith.

Celebrant:

What does faith offer you?

The one entering: Eternal life.

51. At the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop (cf. no. 33.2), the Initial Commitment of those entering the catechumenate (no. 52) may be replaced by the Rite of Exorcism and Renunciation of False Worship (nos. 70-72).

INITIAL COMMITMENT

52. Then the celebrant, adapting his words, as required, to the replies received, addresses those entering again in these or similar words:

A

God enlightens everyone who comes into the world,
and from the created world
he manifests his invisible attributes to each,
that all may learn to give thanks to their Creator.

To you, therefore, who have followed his light,
behold now, the way of the Gospel lies open.
In laying down solid foundations,
may you acknowledge the living God
who truly speaks to human beings.
Walking in the light of Christ,
may you put your trust in his wisdom.
Entrusting your life to him day by day,
may you come to believe in him with your whole heart.

This is the way of faith,
along which Christ will lead you in charity,
that you may have eternal life.
With him to guide you, then,
are you ready to set out on this path today?

Those entering: I am.

B

God, who made the world and all of us
and in whom all living things have their being,
enlightens our minds,
so that we may come to know and worship him.
He has sent Jesus Christ, his faithful witness,
to announce to us what he has seen in heaven and on earth.

Therefore it is now time for you,
who rejoice at Christ's coming,
to listen to his word,
so that, with us, beginning to know God
and to love your neighbor,
you may possess the life of heaven.
Are you ready to lead this life with the help of God?

Those entering: I am.

C

This is eternal life:
to know the true God
and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.
For Christ has been raised from the dead
and established by God
as Prince of life and Lord of all things,
visible and invisible.

If, then, you wish to become his disciples
and members of the Church,
you must be led into the whole truth
that he has revealed to us:
learn to make the mind of Christ Jesus your own,
strive to model your life on the teachings of the Gospel,
and so, love the Lord your God and your neighbor
as Christ commanded and showed us.

Is each of you ready to accept all of this?

Those entering: I am.

AFFIRMATION BY THE SPONSORS AND THE ASSEMBLY

53. Then the celebrant turns to the sponsors and all the faithful and questions them in these or similar words:

You, the sponsors who are now presenting these men and women to us,
and all of you brothers and sisters gathered here,
are you prepared to help them find Christ and follow him?

All: We are.

The celebrant, with hands joined, says:

To you, most merciful Father,
we give thanks for these your servants,
because they have already been searching for you,
who in diverse ways have gone ahead of them and knocked at their door,
and because they have answered your call today in our presence.
Therefore, we all praise and bless you, Lord.

All: We praise and bless you, Lord.

SIGNING OF THE FOREHEAD AND OF THE SENSES

54. Next a Cross is traced on the forehead of those entering (or, at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, in front of the forehead for those in whose culture the act of touching may not seem proper; cf. no. 33.3); at the discretion of the celebrant the signing of one, several, or all of the senses may follow. The celebrant alone says the formulas accompanying each signing.

SIGNING OF THE FOREHEAD

55. One of the following options is used, depending on the number of those entering.

A

The celebrant invites them (if they are few) and their sponsors in these or similar words:

Dear friends, come forward now with your sponsors to receive the sign of your new status as catechumens.

With their sponsors, those entering, one by one, approach the celebrant. With his thumb he makes a Cross on the forehead of each person entering. After the celebrant has signed them, the catechists or sponsors, as circumstances so suggest, do the same, unless they are to sign them later, as in no. 56. The celebrant says:

N., receive the Cross on your forehead.
Christ himself strengthens you
with the sign of his love
(if the renunciation has preceded: with the sign of his victory).
Learn now to know him and follow him.

As circumstances suggest, the signing may be concluded with the singing of an acclamation praising Christ, for example:

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

B

If there are a great many to enter the catechumenate, the celebrant addresses them in these or similar words:

Dear friends,
since you are of one mind with us
(if the renunciation has preceded: and have renounced false worship),
affirming our life and hope in Christ,
together with your catechists and sponsors,
I now sign you with the sign of Christ's Cross,
that you may become catechumens.
The whole community will embrace you with its love
and accompany you with its help.

Then the celebrant makes the Sign of the Cross over them all together, while the catechists or sponsors make it over each individual, as he says:

Receive the Cross on your forehead.
Christ himself strengthens you
with the sign of his love
(if the renunciation has preceded: with the sign of his victory).
Learn now to know him and follow him.

As circumstances suggest, the signing may be concluded with the singing of an acclamation praising Christ, for example:

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

SIGNING OF THE OTHER SENSES

56. Then the signing of the senses takes place (according to the judgment of the celebrant, however, it can partially or even totally be omitted).

The signings are carried out by the catechists or sponsors (and, if required in special circumstances, these may be done by several Priests or Deacons). As circumstances suggest, the signings each time they are made may be concluded with the singing of an acclamation praising Christ, for example: Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ! The formula, however, is always spoken by the celebrant, who says:

While the ears are being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your ears,
that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

While the eyes are being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your eyes,
that you may see the glory of God.

While the lips are being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your lips,
that you may respond to the word of God.

While the chest is being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your chest,
that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith.

While the shoulders are being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your shoulders,
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

[While the hands are being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your hands,
that Christ may be known in the work which you do.

While the feet are being signed:

Receive the sign of the Cross on your feet,
that you may walk in the way of Christ.]

Then, without touching them, the celebrant alone makes the Sign of the Cross over all the catechumens, while he says:

I sign all of you
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, **✠** and of the Holy Spirit,
that you may live for ever and ever.

Catechumens: Amen.

If there are few catechumens, the rite of signing with the Cross may be done over each catechumen by the celebrant, who says the formulas in the singular.

57. Then the celebrant says:

A

Let us pray.
Mercifully hear our prayers, we ask, O Lord,
for these catechumens **N.** and **N.**,

whom we have signed with the Cross of the Lord,
and guard them with its power
so that, treasuring what they have come to know of your glory,
they may, by keeping your commandments,
merit to attain the glory of rebirth.
Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

B

Let us pray.
Almighty God,
who through the Cross and Resurrection of your Son
have given life to your people,
grant, we pray,
that, following in the footsteps of Christ,
your servants, whom we have signed with the Cross,
may possess its saving power in their lives
and show it forth in-their deeds.
Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

58. At the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, the giving of a new name (no. 73) may take place at this time.

59. At the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, the invitation to the Celebration of the Word of God may be preceded or followed by additional rites signifying reception into the community, for example, the presentation of a Cross (no. 74) or some other symbolic act.

INTRODUCTION INTO THE CHURCH

60. When this has been completed, the celebrant invites the catechumens and their sponsors to enter the church or another suitable place, while saying these or similar words:

N. and N., come into the church,
to partake with us at the table of God's word.

Then with a gesture, he invites them to enter.

Meanwhile, the following antiphon is sung with Psalm 34 (33):2-3, 6 and 9, 10-11 and 16 or another suitable chant:

Come, children, and hear me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Psalm 34 (33):2-3, 6 and 9, 10-11 and 16

² I will bless the LORD at all times,
praise of him is always in my mouth.

³ In the LORD my soul shall make its boast;
the humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**

⁶ Look toward him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.

⁹ Taste and see that the LORD is good.
Blessed the man who seeks refuge in him. **R.**

¹⁰ Fear the LORD, you his holy ones.
They lack nothing, those who fear him.

¹¹ The rich suffer want and go hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no blessing.

¹⁶ The LORD turns his eyes to the just one,
and his ears are open to his cry. **R.**

SACRED CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

INSTRUCTION

61. After the catechumens have reached their seats, the celebrant speaks to them briefly, helping them to understand the dignity of God's word, which is proclaimed and heard in the church.

A book of the Sacred Scriptures is carried in procession and set in a place of honor and, as circumstances so suggest, may also be incensed.

The Sacred Celebration of the Word of God follows.

READINGS

62. One or more readings suited to the new catechumens may be chosen from those assigned in the *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 743:

FIRST READING

Gen 12:1-4a: *Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk to a land that I will show you.*

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 33 (32):4-5, 12-13, 18-19, 20 and 22

R. (12b) Blessed the people the Lord has chosen as his heritage.

or:

R. (22) May your merciful love be upon us, as we hope in you, O Lord.

VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Jn 1:41, 17b

We have found the Messiah: Jesus Christ,
through whom came truth and grace.

GOSPEL

Jn 1:35-42: *Behold, the Lamb of God. We have found the Messiah.*

HOMILY

63. The Homily follows.

PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPELS

64. Then, if the celebrant so wishes, books containing the Gospels are distributed with dignity and reverence to the catechumens; Crosses may also be given, unless they were already handed on to them as a sign of their reception (cf. no. 74). The celebrant uses a suitable formula, such as:

Receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It is fitting for the catechumen to respond with appropriate words to the celebrant's gift and words.

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE CATECHUMENS

65. Then the whole congregation of the faithful together with the sponsors prays these Intercessions or other, similar ones for the catechumens. The usual petition for the needs of the Church and of the whole world should be added if, after the catechumens are dismissed, the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) is to be omitted in the Eucharistic Celebration (cf no. 68).

Celebrant:

These catechumens, our brothers and sisters,
have already traveled far.

We rejoice with them in the gentle guidance of God,
which has brought them to this day.

Let us pray for them,
that they may have strength to complete the great journey that lies ahead
toward full participation in our way of life.

Lector:

That the heavenly Father reveal his Christ to them more each day,
let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Lector:

That they embrace with generous heart and willing spirit
the entire will of God,
let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Lector:

That they enjoy our sincere and unfailing support every step of their way,
let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Lector:

That they find in our community
visible signs of unity and generous love,
let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Lector:

That their hearts and ours become
ever more responsive to the needs of others,
let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Lector:

That in due time they be found worthy
of the cleansing waters of rebirth
and of renewal by the Holy Spirit,
let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

66. After the Intercessions, the celebrant, extending his hands toward the catechumens, says one of the following prayers:

A

Let us pray.

(God of our Fathers,)

O God, creator of the whole universe,
we humbly ask you
to look with favor on your servants N. and N.,
that they may be ever fervent in spirit,
joyful in hope,
and always obedient to your name.

Lead them, we pray, O Lord,
to the cleansing waters of rebirth,
so that, leading a fruitful life in the company of your faithful,
they may obtain the eternal rewards you have promised.
Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

B

Let us pray.

Almighty ever-living God,
Father of all creation,
who made man and woman in your own image,
welcome these beloved ones who have taken this step,
and grant that, hearing the word of your Christ among us,
they may be made new by its power,
and by your grace attain at last
complete conformity with him.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

DISMISSAL OF THE CATECHUMENS

67. If the Eucharist is to be celebrated, the catechumens are normally dismissed at this point by use of option A or B; if the catechumens are to stay for the celebration of the Eucharist, option C is used; if the Eucharist is not to be celebrated, the entire assembly is dismissed by use of option D.

A

The celebrant recalls briefly the great joy with which the catechumens have just been received and urges them to strive to live according to the word they have just heard. The group of catechumens leaves but does not immediately disperse, but with the guidance of some of the faithful they remain together to share their joy and their spiritual experience. The Deacon or the celebrant dismisses them in these or similar words:

Catechumens, go in peace,
and may the Lord remain with you.

Catechumens: Thanks be to God.

B

As an optional formula for dismissing the catechumens, the Deacon or the celebrant may use these or similar words:

My dear friends, this community now sends you forth to reflect more deeply upon the word of God which you have shared with us today. Be assured of our loving support and prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully in the Lord's table.

C

If, however, for serious reasons the catechumens do not leave (cf. no. 75.3) and must remain with the faithful, they are to be instructed that, though they are present at the celebration of the Eucharist, they cannot take part as the baptized do. They may be reminded of this by the Deacon or the celebrant in these or similar words:

D

Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord's Eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God's children will eat and drink with the Lord and work with his Holy Spirit to recreate the face of the earth.

If, however, the Eucharist is not celebrated, a suitable chant, as circumstances suggest, may be added, and the faithful and the catechumens may be dismissed, using these or similar words:

Go in peace,
and may the Lord remain with you.

All: Thanks be to God.

CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

68. If the Eucharist is celebrated after the dismissal, the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) for the needs of the Church and the whole world begins at once. Then, if required, the Creed is said and the Preparation of the Gifts follows. But for pastoral reasons it is permissible to omit the Universal Prayer and the Creed.