

Note:

The following is the Power Point used at TeamRCIA's Community Chat for Rite of Acceptance during the pandemic. Some suggestions are adaptations to the Rite of Acceptance as found in the RCIA text, and not necessarily an official part of the ritual itself (for example, proxy sponsors). More information and resources can be found from TeamRCIA at www.teamrcia.com.

Please contact Lauren Johnson (lauren.johnson@pastoral.org) if you have any questions about what you see here or the Rite of Acceptance in general. Further, you can find the recorded Diocese of Owensboro RCIA Coordinator meeting on Rite of Acceptance on the Office of Worship webpage under "RCIA Coordinator Resources" here: www.owensborodiocese.org/worship.

Community Chat

Celebrating the Rite of Acceptance while six feet apart



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Why is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens important?

*“The rite of Christian initiation... is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and **enter the way of faith** and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts.”*

RCIA 1





Why is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens important?

Even in pandemic, we continue to proclaim the first proclamation:

*“Jesus Christ loves you;
he gave his life to save you;
and now he is living at your side every day
to enlighten,
strengthen,
and free you.”*

Directory for Catechesis 58





Why is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens important?

Even in quarantine—
perhaps because of quarantine—
people are responding to this good news.
If the Holy Spirit has opened their heart
and they now want to say “yes”
to God’s loving invitation,
we cannot turn them away.





Why is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens important?

The act of doing **the rite itself manifests** in a real and public way this dynamic:

- God calls
- We respond

But how do we embody this revelation of what God is doing when our ability to gather in person is so restricted because of pandemic?





What is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens?

First, let's remember what it is the church intends for this rite:

- “**Assembling publicly** for the first time,
- the candidates...**declare** their intention to the Church
- and the Church...carrying out its apostolic mission, **accepts** them as persons who intend to become members.” (RCIA 41)





What is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens?

Three implications:

1. For the Rite of Acceptance, there must be a public assembly. **We cannot celebrate this rite completely virtually, online.**
2. There must be **proper discernment** before the rite takes place, even if our parish buildings are closed.
3. The rite **changes the seeker** and our relationship with them.





Discerning readiness

Prerequisites for making this first step:

“**the beginnings** of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates. Thus there must be:

- evidence of the **first faith** that was conceived during the period of evangelization and precatechumenate
- and of an **initial conversion**
- and **intention to change** their lives
- and to enter into a **relationship with God in Christ.**” (RCIA 42)





Discerning readiness

“...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 candidate should also be instructed about the celebration of the liturgical rite of acceptance.” (RCIA 42)





Discerning readiness...in pandemic

For seekers **completely quarantined**, we will want to see these signs of conversion:

- in their life at home,
- with their families or housemates,
- and in their interactions online.

For seekers **who are able to go out**, we will want to see signs of conversion also:

- in their workplaces,
- their schools,
- and their social interactions.





Discerning readiness...in pandemic

Even in pandemic, we should look for:

- evidence of an initial conversion,
- the start of a prayer life,
- and a sense of the church.

This will require us to be even more proactive and creative in our efforts to “welcome them into [our] homes, into personal conversation, and into community gatherings” (RCIA 9.1).





General practices...in pandemic

- Separate the rites for the unbaptized and the baptized (avoid the combined rite)
- Schedule several rites as needed (RCIA 18.3)
- Does not need to be a Mass or on Sunday
- Sponsors are given as a gift long before rite
- Adaptations for exceptional circumstances and for those in danger of death
- **Consider a virtual celebration for the baptized if necessary for safety**
- **Follow local public health and diocesan guidelines for in-person gatherings**
- **Be creative; be flexible; be patient**



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- Affirmation by sponsors and assembly
- Signing with the Cross
- Concluding prayer
- Invitation to the celebration of the Word of God

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Instruction
- Readings
- Homily
- [Presentation of a Bible]
- Intercessions for the catechumens
- Prayer over the catechumens
- Dismissal of the catechumens



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Takes place “outside the church... or some other site” (RCIA 48)
- **If the given sponsor from the parish cannot be in close contact with candidate, use a sponsor proxy from the candidate’s household who can stand and be in contact with the candidate throughout the rite**
- **The given sponsor should still be present even if a proxy sponsor is used**



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- **Greeting** (RCIA 49)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Friendly and joyful; informal
- Shows that a relationship with the candidate has already been established during the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- **Opening dialogue** (RCIA 50)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Invite sponsors to present the candidates to the assembly
- Responses are not scripted but prepared based on reflection and discernment before rite
- Presider phrases questions according to answers received
- Presider [and sponsor] remember candidate's responses for later in the rite



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- **First acceptance of the gospel**
(RCIA 52)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Gently confront the candidate with the Cross through some visible/tangible gesture, e.g.:
 - Sponsor **or household proxy sponsor** places candidate's hands on Cross
 - **Or a member of candidate's household shows the Cross**
- Presider adapts text to the answers received in the opening dialogue



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- **Affirmation by sponsors and assembly (RCIA 53)**

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Presider can adapt question asked of sponsors and assembly
- **Assembly viewing online may be invited to respond in chat box**
- Concluding acclamation should feel like an acclamation, even if spoken **or received in chat box from members viewing online**



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- Affirmation by sponsors and assembly
- **Signing with the Cross** (RCIA 54-56)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Signing the forehead by presider is required, either through touch or made in front of candidate's forehead (RCIA 54 rubric)
 - Sponsor **or household proxy sponsor** can trace Cross touching candidate's forehead as presider signs Cross over the candidate (RCIA 54B rubric)
- Acclamation after signing should feel like an acclamation, even if spoken **or texted**



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- Affirmation by sponsors and assembly
- **Signing with the Cross** (RCIA 54-56)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Signing of the other senses is optional and may be done by sponsor **or household proxy sponsor**
 - These are physical contact signings (no air crosses or thumbs!)
- Optional acclamation after each signing should feel like an acclamation, even if spoken **or texted**

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Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- Affirmation by sponsors and assembly
- **Signing with the Cross** (RCIA 54-56)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- It is the signing with the Cross that “consecrates” the candidate and changes their status into catechumens (see RCIA 56 concluding rubric)

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Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- Affirmation by sponsors and assembly
- Signing with the Cross
- **Concluding prayer** (RCIA 57)

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- This serves as the collect (opening prayer) for the liturgy



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

RECEIVING THE [UNBAPTIZED] CANDIDATES

- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- First acceptance of the gospel
- Affirmation by sponsors and assembly
- Signing with the Cross
- Concluding prayer
- **Invitation to the celebration of the Word of God (RCIA 60)**

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- When we bring the former candidates—“now part of the household of Christ” (RCIA 47)—across the threshold of the worship space, they literally change from outsiders to insiders
- A song accompanies this procession **sung by cantor alone or as an instrumental**



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Again, there is unscripted, but prepared, text spoken by presider to the catechumen
 - This is their first liturgical hearing of God's Word now as an official member of the household of Christ

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- **Instruction** (RCIA 61)

Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Readings are from the Lectionary for the day or for Ritual Masses for Christian Initiation
- The homily should address both the catechumen and the rest of the assembly

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Instruction
- **Readings** (RCIA 62)
- **Homily** (RCIA 63)



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- A personal Bible and cross are more suitably given as gifts before or after the rite
- Present the “community’s Bible,” which is the Lectionary or Book of Gospels, in a similar way as you did the Cross at the first acceptance of the gospel
- The presider or sponsor can adapt the words spoken from the answers given during the opening dialogue

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Instruction
- Readings
- Homily
- **[Presentation of a Bible (RCIA 64)]**



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- These are prayers for the catechumens different from the usual general intercessions
- If the Eucharist will follow, intentions for the Church and the world may be added after the intercessions for the catechumens

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Instruction
- Readings
- Homily
- [Presentation of a Bible]
- **Intercessions for the Catechumens (RCIA 65)**

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Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- The sponsor **or household proxy sponsor** should always have their hand on the catechumen's shoulder throughout the rite and especially during this prayer
 - The assembly might be invited to place their hands on or extend them over the catechumen during this prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Instruction
- Readings
- Homily
- [Presentation of a Bible]
- Intercessions for the Catechumens
- **Prayer over the Catechumens**
(RCIA 66)



Elements of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Some guidelines...in pandemic

- Catechumens are dismissed not for catechesis but “to share their joy and spiritual experiences” (RCIA 67 rubric)
 - What happens after they are dismissed is faith sharing
- Ritual dismissal of catechumens is normative until their baptism; for serious reasons, they can be invited to stay
- Baptized candidates are never dismissed with catechumens

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Instruction
- Readings
- Homily
- [Presentation of a Bible]
- Intercessions for the Catechumens
- Prayer over the Catechumens
- **Dismissal of the Catechumens**
(RCIA 67)





A new relationship

- “Joined to the Church, the catechumens are now part of the household of Christ” (RCIA 47) with rights and responsibilities
- Their names are “duly inscribed in the register of catechumens” (RCIA 46)
- They are nourished by God’s word and sustained by the Church’s liturgies
- They take part in celebrations of the word, blessings, and sacramentals
- When needed, there are marriage and funeral rites for catechumens





Some cautions in and out of pandemic

Don't schedule the Rite of Acceptance on the First Sunday of Advent or only once a year

Do schedule several possible dates throughout the year on days with appropriate Lectionary readings

Don't celebrate the rite with inquirers who are not ready

Do involve the community and the candidate's household in reflection, discernment, and spiritual preparation





Some cautions in and out of pandemic

Don't combine the Rite of Acceptance with the Rite of Welcoming

Do involve the baptized candidates in their rightful role of affirming and praying for the catechumens

Don't make candidates knock on the door

Do make full use of the primary symbols of outside, inside, and threshold





Some cautions in and out of pandemic

Don't encourage pre-set answers like "faith" and "eternal life"

Do help candidates, presiders, and sponsors to speak from their hearts in their own words and to listen attentively

Don't dismiss baptized candidates (or sponsors) with the catechumens

Do help catechumens share their joy and spiritual experiences through faith-sharing and witness





Some cautions in and out of pandemic

Don't shortchange children by skipping the Rite of Acceptance for children of catechetical age or dismissing children for their own Liturgy of the Word

Do make as full use as possible of all the symbols of the adult rite, even with children, and include them in mystagogical reflection on the ritual



What would happen if we celebrated the Rite of Acceptance as fully as possible even at six feet apart?



Recording



Webinar recording is a benefit just for TeamRCIA Members

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