

Rite of Welcoming the Candidates

This Rite is celebrated only with candidates (those already baptized—usually in another Christian denomination—who are uncatechized and seeking reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church).¹

THE STRUCTURE OF THE RITE

The Structure of the Rite of Welcome is similar to the Rite of Acceptance, with the exception that the candidates *do not* gather outside or at the door of the church. Instead, the candidates begin the liturgy inside the Church, with the faithful. There is also more freedom given for personal witness in the opening dialogue.²

The structure of the Rite of Welcoming is:

1. WELCOMING THE CANDIDATES

Greeting

The priest greets the candidates, expressing the joy of the Church.

Opening Dialogue

The candidates are introduced to the assembly.

Candidate's Declaration of Intent

Each candidate gives a brief personal witness as to why they desire to enter more fully into the life of the Church.

Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly

The sponsors and assembly affirm that they are ready to help the candidates complete their Christian initiation or prepare for reception into full communion of the Catholic Church.

Signing of the Candidates with the Cross

As a sign of their desire to share fully in the life of the Catholic Church, the candidates are signed with the cross on the forehead, as well as all the senses, and their hands and feet.

The priest concludes with a prayer.

¹ See footnote # 6 of this document for a discussion about the appropriate subjects for this rite.

² RCIA, 419.

2. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Instruction

The priest gives a brief instruction on the dignity of God's Word.

Readings and Homily

The Liturgy of the Word proceeds as usual.

The scriptures proclaimed and preached are those of the day.

Presentation of a Bible

A book containing the gospels is presented to the candidates.

Profession of Faith (Creed)

The candidates stand with the assembly and make the profession of faith.

Prayers of the Faithful

The usual prayers for the Church and the whole world are prayed, adding specific prayers for the candidates.

Prayer over the Candidates

The priest concludes the prayers of the faithful with a special prayer over the candidates.

1. WELCOMING THE CANDIDATES

Unlike the Rite of Acceptance, the candidates do NOT gather outside the church, but “are seated in a prominent place among the faithful.”³

Be sure a microphone (preferably cordless) is available, so that the responses of the candidates can be heard clearly.

The opening song and procession take place as usual.

As the song ends, the priest greets the assembly:

Presider: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A: Amen.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

A: And with your spirit.

Presider: My brothers and sisters, this truly a day of joy! As we do each Sunday, today we gather in the presence of the Holy Spirit, as we give thanks and praise to God for the gift of Jesus Christ, the anointed one, to whom we offer our love, our honor, our thanks, our entire lives.

Today, we will welcome baptized candidates who seek to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist [or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church].⁴ You are very important in this rite, for it is the entire Church – those in this community as well as the entire Body of Christ that is beyond the walls of

³ RCIA, #416. Consider positioning them in the center aisle, and keeping them there during the rite, giving a sense of the community surrounding them in prayer.

⁴ You'll need to word this according to the circumstances of the candidate(s) present.

this place – that surrounds them with special care and support as they prepare to be sealed with the gift of the Spirit in confirmation, and take their place with us at the banquet of Christ’s sacrifice. Please be seated as we introduce them.

Greeting

The assembly is seated.

Presider: Who seeks to complete their Christian initiation?

A member of the RCIA team introduces each candidate as the candidate stands in the midst of the assembly. Be sure to note her or his baptism, and the circumstances which brought them here. Here’s an example of what that might look like:

T: Molly Smith was baptized at Blue Ridge Assembly of God Church in Pikeville, KY when she was 14. When she married her husband, Bob, a life-long Catholic, the military brought them to this area. Over the years, Molly has been drawn by Bob’s involvement in Church, and has been asking questions about the Catholic Church.

Ryan Rodriguez was baptized as an infant at Centenary United Methodist Church in Bowling Green, KY, but has never really practiced his faith. While he was a student at Western Kentucky University, he was impressed by the witness of some Catholic friends, and attended some events at the Catholic Campus Ministry.

Many of us might recognize Steven Joncas. Steven was baptized at Central Baptist Church in Paducah, KY, and was very active in their youth ministry as a teenager, but fell away from practicing his faith in college. Last Spring, he married Sarah Willett, and they have been attending Mass together.

Another option would be for the RCIA Coordinator to call out the name of each Candidate, with each one responding “present”.

OPENING DIALOGUE AND CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION OF INTENT

As each candidate is introduced, her or his sponsor comes from the assembly and joins the candidate. The priest asks:

Presider: N., What do you ask of God's Church?

Can: To be accepted as a candidate for catechetical instruction leading to confirmation and eucharist (or: reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church).

Presider: Please declare before this community the reasons why you desire to enter more fully in the life of the Church.

Can: *The Candidate responds with a brief personal witness.*⁵

This process is repeated for each candidate.⁶ When all have been questioned, the priest continues with:

AFFIRMATION BY THE SPONSORS AND THE ASSEMBLY

Presider: Sponsors, you now present these candidates to us; Are you, ready to help these candidates complete their Christian initiation (or: prepare for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church)?

S: We are.

Presider: Members of this assembly, these sponsors have spoken in your name, but I ask you as well, for it is your responsibility to journey with these candidates. Are you ready to help them in their preparation?

S: We are.

⁵ As part of the discernment process before this rite, spend some time with each candidate helping them prepare this witness. It makes a powerful statement to the assembly. If there are a large number of candidates, there is an Option "A" (#419), which is a question and answer format. Even if necessity dictates this, consider having at least one representative witness.

⁶ The rite does allow, if there is a large number of candidates, that the questions may be asked only once of all the candidates.

With hands joined, the priest prays/sings⁷:

Presider: God of mercy,
we thank you for these your servants.
You have already consecrated them in baptism,
and now you call them to the fullness of the Church's
sacramental life:
we praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

A: We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

SIGNING OF THE CANDIDATES WITH THE CROSS

Presider: Dear candidates, you have expressed your desire to
share fully in the life of the Catholic Church. I now
mark you with the sign of Christ's cross, and call upon
your catechists and sponsors to do the same.

The sponsors stand in front of the candidates. As the priest says each prayer, the sponsor traces the cross over the candidate as indicated.⁸ First the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over all together, as a cross is traced by a sponsor or catechist on the forehead of each candidate.

Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your forehead, as a
reminder of your baptism into Christ's saving death
and resurrection.

A: Christ will be your strength! Learn to know and follow him!⁹

Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your ears,
that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

A: Christ will be your ...

⁷ This affirmation of the assembly and the following signing of the senses is the central element of this rite. Consider singing it. A good setting of the entire text can be found in *Who Calls You by Name: Music for Christian Initiation*.

⁸ If there are only a few inquirers, the priest may mark each candidate himself as he sings the prayer, but then the sponsor follows with the same.

⁹ Various sung settings will have different responses for the assembly. Even if the prayer is spoken, the rite prefers that the assembly's response is sung.

**Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes,
that you may see the glory of God.**

A: Christ will be your...

**Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your lips,
that you may respond to the word of God.**

A: Christ will be your...

**Presider: Receive the sign of the cross over your heart,
that Christ may dwell there by faith.**

A: Christ will be your...

**Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders,
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.**

A: Christ will be your...

**Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your hands,
that Christ may be known in the work which you do.**

A: Christ will be your...

**Presider: Receive the sign of the cross on your feet,
that you may walk in the way of Christ.**

A: Christ will be your...

Without touching them, the priest makes the sign of the cross over all the candidates at once, as he sings:

**Presider: I sign you with the sign of eternal life, in the name of
the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit.**

A: Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

**Presider: Almighty God,
by the cross and resurrection of your Son,
you have given life to your people.**

**In baptism, these your servants accepted the sign of
the cross:
make them living proof of its saving power,
and help them to persevere in the footsteps of Christ.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

2. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Then the priest addresses the candidates again in these or similar words¹⁰:

Presider: Candidates I ask you now to join this assembly.

They are seated in a place of honor. He continues to address them:

**As is your baptismal right and responsibility during your
period of preparation, you will gather each week with the
Church, and share with us the Liturgy of the Word. Listen
to these scriptures carefully, for when the scriptures are
proclaimed in Church, it is Christ himself who speaks. St.
Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the 4th century, encouraged us
to “drink in” the scriptures we hear like a delicious
beverage. He said,**

¹⁰ What is provided here is an example of what might be said as an instruction to the candidates. RCIA #425 simply says that the priest “speaks to them briefly, helping them to understand the dignity of God’s word proclaimed and heard in the Church.”

**“Drink deeply of both beverages, the first testament and the second,
because in each of them you are drinking Christ.
Drink Christ because he is the vine.
Drink Christ because he is the rock that gushes forth water.
Drink Christ because he is the fountain of life.
Drink Christ because he is the river, whose streams give joy to God’s city.
Drink Christ because he is peace.
Drink Christ because from his belly rivers of living water will flow.
Drink Christ so that you can drink the blood that redeemed you.
Drink Christ so you can drink in his words.**

**Let the luscious syrup of God’s word flood the veins of your mind,
and take possession of your heart.”**

After an appropriate period of silence, the Liturgy of the Word proceeds as usual, using the readings of the day.

First Reading

Psalm Response

Second Reading

Alleluia

Gospel

Homily

Silent Reflection

Presentation of a Bible

Presider: Would our Candidates please come forward?

The candidates come forward, accompanied by their sponsors, and face the assembly. Each sponsor carries a new New American Bible to present to the candidate.

The priest joins the assembly, and addresses the candidate.

As he says the first line, the sponsors present the bible in a way that is clearly seen by the assembly.

Presider: N. and N., you have asked to be accepted as candidates for formation in the Roman Catholic way of following Christ. That way includes a particular relationship with the scriptures, which your baptism committed you to develop. Receive now the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

All stand as they respond in song:

A: All God's children, all Christ's people, all you saints, receive this word!
Claim the gift, the faith, the promise, build the body of the Lord.¹¹

PROFESSION F FAITH

The profession of faith is recited.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

The general intercessions are prayed as usual¹², including one of the special intercessions for the candidates.¹³

¹¹ "Build the Body of the Lord" by Lori True (© 2007, GIA Publications). Of course this is just one of many appropriate sung responses.

¹² Consider singing the intercessions for this special rite.

¹³ See RCIA # 430 for various options.

PRAYER OVER THE CANDIDATES

Presider: Please join me in blessing our candidates [by extending both your hands in prayer over them].

All extend their hands in prayer over the candidates.

Presider: Almighty and eternal, whose love gathers us together as one,
receive the prayers of your people.
Look kindly on these your servants, already consecrated to you in baptism,
and draw them toward your table,
where they will be one with you and with us..
Keep your family one in the bonds of love through Christ our Lord.

The Candidates join the assembly. The Mass continues as usual.

3. THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Liturgy of the Eucharist proceeds as usual.