

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God's people. The first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence we are called and are indeed the children of God.

By signing us with the gift of the Spirit, confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord and fills us with the Holy Spirit, so that we may bear witness to him before all the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness as soon as possible.

Finally, coming to the table of the eucharist, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that we may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering ourselves with Christ we share in the universal sacrifice, that is, the entire community of the redeemed offered to God by their High Priest, and we pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family. (Christian Initiation, General Instruction 1, 2)

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

1. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults includes not simply the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist, but also all the rites belonging to the catechumenate. (*RCIA*, Intro. 2) This journey includes not only the periods for making inquiry and maturing, but also the liturgical steps marking the catechumen's progress, as they pass... through another doorway or ascend to the next level. (*RCIA*, Intro. 6)
2. There are four continuous periods: the precatechumenate, the period for hearing the first preaching of the Gospel; the period of the catechumenate, set aside for thorough catechesis and for the rites belonging to this period; the period of purification and enlightenment (Lenten preparation), designed for a more intense spiritual preparation, which is assisted by the celebration of the scrutinizes and presentations; and, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy, marked by the new experience of sacraments and community. (*ibid.* 7)
3. Celebrants should make full and intelligent use of the freedom given to them either in *Christian Initiation*, General Introduction #34 or in the rubrics of the rite itself. In many places the manner of acting or praying is intentionally left undetermined or two alternatives are offered, so that ministers, according to their prudent pastoral judgment, may accommodate the rite to the circumstances of the candidates and others who are present. (*ibid.* 35)
4. The prescripts of the canons on adult baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason. (c. 852, §1)
5. Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and is to participate in the eucharistic celebration also be receiving communion. (c. 866)
6. Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (c. 852, §1), their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens. (*National Statutes for the Catechumenate* 18)
7. The term "catechumen" should be strictly reserved for the unbaptized who have been admitted into the order of catechumens; the term "convert" should be reserved strictly for those converted from unbelief to Christian belief and never used for those baptized Christians who are received into full communion of the Catholic Church. (*National Statutes* 2)