



Diocese of Fall River RCIA Guidance 2020-2021

This unprecedented year of COVID-19 has presented many challenges to all parish ministries. Implementation of the RCIA process presents unique difficulties especially when celebrating the rituals and rites as prescribed in the diocesan guidelines and RCIA Source Book.

Accordingly, the following adaptations are offered as guidance for the new liturgical year.

The Rite of Acceptance (and Welcome)

Traditionally, these rites have been celebrated in the season of Advent; however, they may be celebrated more than once during the liturgical year depending on the readiness, desire, and disposition of the inquirers (RCIA #18). Due to the pandemic, we ask that Parishes celebrate these rites at any time, up and until January 17, 2021 for those wishing to be initiated/received into the Church this coming Easter Vigil.

These rites may be celebrated in the context of the Sunday Mass, or at some other time when the faithful could gather. If they are not celebrated during the Sunday Mass, which may be preferable this year, at the very least, the catechumen/candidate and their sponsor, and to the extent possible their family and RCIA mentors, should be present with proper social distance and state guidelines followed. (See RCIA #45) These rites are never celebrated virtually (RCIA #41).

The Period of the Catechumenate

“The length of the catechumenate period will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances... Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori [that is, beforehand]. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough – for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong” (RCIA #76).

Abbreviated Catechumenate

Extraordinary circumstances may arise in which the diocesan bishop may allow the use of the abbreviated catechumenate. The extraordinary circumstances in question are either events that prevent the candidate from completing all the steps of the catechumenate or a depth of Christian conversion and a degree of religious maturity that leads the diocesan bishop to decide that the candidate may receive Baptism without delay. Accordingly, for this pandemic year, permission is granted to utilize this option.

Candidates who receive formation in an abbreviated catechumenate should also participate in a period of mystagogy and ongoing faith formation, to the extent possible. (RCIA 331, NSC 20 & 21)

Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion

The Rite of Election, for the unbaptized and the Call to Continuing Conversion, for those who are to be received into the faith, or baptized Catholics who are completing the initiation in the Church, will be held at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption.

We will continue to monitor State and local guidelines for in-person worship. At the present moment, given the numbers of catechumens and candidates, the following will take place:

Call to Continuing Conversion
The Rite of Election

Saturday, February 20, 2021 at 11:00 AM
Sunday, February 21, 2021 at 3:00 PM

If the situation necessitates a change due to the pandemic, additional guidance will be given. The celebration of these rites are not optional and are required. Pastors must contact the Bishop's Office ahead of time if there is a legitimate conflict.

The Scrutinies (for the Elect only)

The Scrutinies are normally celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. At the Masses at which the Scrutinies are celebrated, the Cycle A readings are to be used. (RCIA #146)

They are "rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose (RCIA #141)." The Scrutinies are for the elect only. Candidates join the congregation in heart and mind to pray for the elect, and should reflect with them on the meaning of these rites for themselves.

When, for pastoral reasons, the ritual Masses cannot be celebrated on their proper Sunday, they are celebrated on other Sundays of Lent or even convenient days during the week. (RCIA #159) This may be an appropriate option this year.

COVID-19

Parishes must each discern the best way in which to engage in Faith Formation or similar ministries given their specific realities. Any and all plans must be in accordance with the most updated Massachusetts Safety Standards and applicable local ordinances.

When in doubt on safety stands and ordinances, parishes can contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and their Local Town's Department of Public Health for guidance, especially as State and local ordinances are subject to change.

Diocese of Fall River
Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion
St. Mary's Cathedral



OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION
Adult Evangelization & Spirituality
Catechesis & Formation
Youth & Young Adult Ministry
RCIA

Please Print

Name _____ e-mail _____

From the parish of _____

City _____

Requests that you celebrate (Please check one)

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ February 21, 2021 at 3 p.m. Rite of Election for Catechumens | non-baptized persons (adults or children of catechetical age) seeking full initiation |
| _____ February 20, 2021 at 11 a.m. Call to Continuing Conversion | baptized non-Catholics (adults or children of catechetical age) seeking full communion or baptized Catholics seeking to complete their Initiation- Eucharist and Confirmation |

I testify on behalf of those responsible for his/her preparation that he/she is prepared to continue in their full initiation into the Catholic Church, and that:

_____ is a qualified godparent/sponsor.

Signature of Priest _____ Date _____

- Kindly mail or fax completed forms by **February 8, 2021**, to the Office of Faith Formation, 423 Highland Ave., Fall River, MA 02721 or fax # 508-675-3864.
- Use a separate form for each person
- Catechumens and Candidates with their godparents/sponsors will be directed to assigned places.
- Dress for priests: cassock and surplice
- Dress for deacons: alb and stole

**CELEBRATION OF THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE
INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS AND
OF THE RITE OF WELCOMING BAPTIZED BUT PREVIOUSLY
UNCATECHIZED ADULTS WHO ARE
PREPARING FOR CONFIRMATION AND/OR EUCHARIST
OR RECEPTION INTO THE FULL COMMUNION
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

RECEIVING THE CANDIDATES

Those who are to be accepted into the order of catechumens, along with those who are candidates for the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist, their sponsors, and a group of the faithful gather outside the church (or inside at the entrance or elsewhere) or at some other site suitable for this rite. As the priest or deacon, wearing an alb or surplice, a stole, and, if desired, a cope of festive color, goes to meet them, the assembly of the faithful may sing a psalm or an appropriate song.

GREETING

The celebrant greets the candidates in a friendly manner. 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 the candidates, following their own spiritual path, have come to this celebration. He uses these or similar words.

Presider: Dear friends, the Church joyfully welcomes today those who will be received into the order of catechumens. In the months to come they will prepare for their initiation into the Christian faith by baptism, confirmation, and eucharist.

We also greet those who, already one with us by baptism, now wish to complete their Christian initiation through confirmation and eucharist or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

For all of these, we give thanks and praise to the God who has led them by various paths to oneness in faith. My dear candidates, you are welcomed in the name of Christ.

Then he invites the sponsors and candidates to come forward. As they are taking their places before the celebrant, an appropriate song may be sung, for example, Psalm 63:1-8.

OPENING DIALOGUE WITH CANDIDATES FOR THE CATECHUMENATE AND WITH CANDIDATES FOR POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS

Unless the candidates are already known to all present, the celebrant asks for and calls out their given names. The names of the candidates for the catechumenate are given first, followed by the names of the candidates for post-baptismal catechesis. The candidates answer one by one, even if, because of a large number, the question is asked only once for each group. One of the following formularies or similar words may be used.

A *The celebrant asks:*
Presider: What is your name?
Candidate: **N.**

B *The celebrant calls out the name of each candidate.*
The Candidate answers:

Candidate: *Present.*

The celebrant continues with the following questions for the individual candidates for the catechumenate. When there are a large number the candidates may answer as a group. The celebrant may use other words than those provided in asking the candidates about their intentions and may let them answer in their own words: for example, to the first question, "What do you ask of the Church of God?" or "What do you desire?" or "For what reason have you come?" he may receive such answers as "The grace of Christ" or "Entrance into the Church" or "Eternal life" or other suitable responses. The celebrant then phrases his next question according to the answer received.

Presider: What do you ask of God's Church?
Candidate: *Faith.*

Presider: What does faith offer you?
Candidate: *Eternal life.*

The celebrant then addresses the following questions to the individual candidates for post-baptismal catechesis. Again, when there are a large number the candidates may answer as a group. The celebrant may use other words than those provided in asking the candidates about their intentions and may let them answer in their own words. The celebrant then phrases his next question according to the answers received.

Presider: **What do you ask of God's Church?**
Candidate: *To be accepted as a candidate for catechetical instruction leading to confirmation and eucharist (or: leading to reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church).*

Presider: What does this period of formation offer you?
Candidate: *A fuller sharing in the life of the Church.*

[At the discretion of the diocesan bishop, the catechumens' first acceptance of the Gospel (which follows) may be replaced by the rite of exorcism and renunciation of false worship.]

CATECHUMENS' FIRST ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOSPEL

The celebrant addresses the candidates for the catechumenate, adapting the following formulary to the answers received in the opening dialogue.

Presider: God is our Creator and in him all living things have their existence. He enlightens our minds, so that we may come to know and worship him. He has sent his faithful witness, Jesus Christ, to announce to us what he has seen and heard, the mysteries of heaven and earth.

Since you acknowledge with joy that Christ has come, now is the time to hear his word, so that you may possess eternal life beginning, in our company, to know God and to love your neighbor. Are you ready, with the help of God, to live this life?

Candidates: *I am.*

CANDIDATES' DECLARATION OF INTENT

The celebrant then addresses the candidates for post-baptismal catechesis, adapting the following formulary to the answers received in the opening dialogue.

Presider: Those of you who seek to complete your Christian initiation (*or: be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church,*) are you prepared to listen to the apostles' instruction, gather with us for prayer, and join us in the love and service of others?

Candidates: *I am.*

AFFIRMATION BY THE SPONSORS AND THE ASSEMBLY

Then the celebrant turns to the sponsors and the assembly and asks them in these or similar words:

Presider: Sponsors, you now present these candidates to us; are you, and all who are gathered with us, ready to help these candidates follow Christ?

All: We are.

With hands joined, the celebrant says:

Presider: Father of mercy,
we thank you for these your servants.
You have sought and summoned them
in many ways
and they have turned to seek you.
You have called them today
and they have answered in our
presence:

we praise you, Lord, and we bless you.
All *(sing or say):* We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

SIGNING OF THE CATECHUMENS AND OF THE CANDIDATES WITH THE CROSS

Next, the cross is traced on the forehead of the catechumens (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); at the discretion of the celebrant the signing of one, several, or all of the senses may follow. The celebrant alone says the formularies accompanying each signing.

SIGNING OF THE FOREHEAD OF THE CATECHUMENS

The celebrant speaks to the catechumens and their sponsors in these or similar words.

Presider: Catechumens, come forward now with your sponsors to receive the sign of your new way of life as catechumens.

With their sponsors, the catechumens come one by one to the celebrant; with his thumb he traces a cross on the forehead; then, if there is to be no signing of the sense, the sponsor does the same. The celebrant says:

Presider: **N.**, receive the cross on your forehead.
It is Christ himself who now strengthens
you with this sign of his love.
Learn to know him and follow him.

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation.

All: Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

[SIGNING OF THE OTHER SENSES OF THE CATECHUMENS

The signing is carried out by the catechists or the sponsors. (If required by special circumstances, this may be done by assisting priests or deacons.) The signing of each sense may be followed by an acclamation in praise of Christ, for example, "Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!"

While the ears are being signed, the celebrant says:

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

While the eyes are being signed:

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

While the lips are being signed:

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

While the breast is being signed:

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

While the shoulders are being signed:

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

While the hands are being signed:

Presider: 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:

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

Without touching them, the celebrant alone makes the sign of the cross over all the candidates at once (or, if they are few, over each individually), saying:

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.

Catechumens: *Amen.]*

Next, the cross is traced on the forehead of the candidates for confirmation and eucharist (or reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church); at the discretion of the celebrant the signing of one, several, or all of the senses may follow. The celebrant alone says the formularies accompanying each signing.

SIGNING OF THE FOREHEAD OF THE CANDIDATES

The celebrant speaks to the candidates for confirmation and the eucharist and their sponsors in these or similar words.

Presider: Candidates for confirmation and the eucharist (or: reception into full communion), come forward now with your sponsors to receive the sign of your life in Christ.

With their sponsors, the candidates come one by one to the celebrant; with his thumb he traces a cross on the forehead; then, if there is to be no signing of the senses, the sponsor does the same. The celebrant says:

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

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation:

All: *Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!*

[SIGNING OF THE OTHER SENSES OF THE CANDIDATES

The signing is carried out by the catechists or the sponsors. (If required by special circumstances, this may be done by assisting priests or deacons.) The signing of each sense may be followed by an acclamation in praise of Christ, for example, "Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!"

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that Christ may be known in the work which you do.

While the feet are being signed:

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

Without touching them, the celebrant alone makes the sign of the cross over all the candidates at once (or, if they are few, over each individually), saying:

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.

Candidates: *Amen.]*

CONCLUDING PRAYER

The celebrant concludes the signing of the forehead (and senses) with the following prayer.

Presider: Let us pray.

Almighty God,
by the cross and resurrection of your
Son
you have given life to your people.
Your servants have received the sign of
the cross:
make them living proof of its saving
power
and help them to persevere in the
footsteps of Christ.

All: We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

INVITATION TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

The celebrant next invites the catechumens and candidates and their sponsors to enter the church (or the place where the liturgy of the word will be celebrated). He uses the following or similar words, accompanying them with some gesture of invitation.

Presider: **N.** and **N.**, come into the church, to
share with us at the table of God's word.

The Book of the Gospels or the Bible is carried in procession and placed with honor on the ambo, where it may be incensed.

During the entry, an appropriate song is sung or the following antiphon, with Psalm 34:2,3,6,9,10,11,16.

Come, my children, and listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

INSTRUCTION

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

Celebration of the liturgy of the word follows.

READINGS

The readings are those assigned for the day. According to the norms of the Lectionary, other appropriate readings, such as the following, may be used.

FIRST READING

Genesis 12:1-4a--Leave your country, and come into the land I will show you.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

*Psalm 33:4-5,12-13,18-19, 20 and 22
Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.*

Or:

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

*John 1:41,17b
We have found the Messiah; Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and grace.*

GOSPEL

John 1:35-42--This is the Lamb of God. We have found the Messiah.

HOMILY

A homily follows that explains the readings.

[PRESENTATION OF A BIBLE

A book containing the Gospels may be given to the catechumens and candidates by the celebrant; a cross may also be given, unless this has already been done as one of the additional rites. The celebrant may use words suited to the gift presented, for example, "Receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The catechumens and candidates may respond in an appropriate way.]

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE CATECHUMENS AND CANDIDATES

Then the sponsors and the whole congregation join in the following or a similar formulary of intercession for the catechumens and candidates.

[If it is decided, in accord with no. 529 that after the dismissal of the catechumens the usual general intercessions of the Mass are to be omitted and that the liturgy of the eucharist is to begin immediately, intentions for the Church and the whole world are to be added to the following intentions for the catechumens and candidates.]

Presider: These catechumens and candidates, who are our brothers and sisters, have already traveled a long road. We rejoice with them in the gentle guidance of God who has brought them to this day. Let us pray that they may press onwards, until they come to share fully in our way of life.

Minister: *That God our Father may reveal his Christ to them more and more with every passing day, let us pray to the Lord.*

All: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Minister: *That they may undertake with generous hearts and souls whatever God may ask of them, let us pray to the Lord.*

All: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Minister: *That they may have our sincere and unfailing support every step of the way, let us pray to the Lord.*

All: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Minister: *That they may find in our community compelling signs of unity and generous love, let us pray to the Lord.*

All: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Minister: *That their hearts and ours may become more responsive to the needs of others, let us pray to the Lord.*

All: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Minister: *That in due time the catechumens may be found worthy to receive the baptism of new birth and renewal in the Holy Spirit and the candidates may be found worthy to complete their initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist (or be received into*

the full communion of the Catholic Church), let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

PRAYER OVER THE CATECHUMENS AND CANDIDATES

After the intercessions, the celebrant, with hands outstretched over the catechumens and candidates, says the following prayer.

Presider: Almighty God,
source of all creation,
you have made us in your image.

Receive with love those who come before you.

Lead our catechumens to the baptism of new birth,

and our candidates to a deeper share in the paschal mystery,

so that, living a fruitful life in the company of your faithful,

they may receive the eternal reward that you promise.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

All: Amen.

DISMISSAL OF THE CATECHUMENS

If the eucharist is to be celebrated, the catechumens are normally dismissed at this point by the 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 the use of option D.

A *The celebrant dismisses the catechumens in these or similar words.*
Presider: Catechumens, go in peace, and may the Lord remain with you always.

Catechumens: Amen.

B *As an optional formulary for dismissing the catechumens, the celebrant may use these or similar words.*

Presider: 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 for serious reasons the catechumens cannot leave and must remain with the rest of the liturgical assembly, they, along with the candidates, are to be instructed that though they are present at the eucharist, they cannot take part in it as the Catholic faithful do. They may be reminded of this by the celebrant in these or similar words.*

Presider: 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 Spirit to re-create the face of the earth.

D *The celebrant dismisses those present, using these or similar words.*

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

Catechumens: *Thanks be to God.*

An appropriate song may conclude the celebration.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

When the eucharist is to follow, intercessory prayer is resumed with the usual general intercessions for the needs of the Church and the whole world; then, if required, the profession of faith is said. But for pastoral reasons, these general intercessions and the profession of faith may be omitted. The liturgy of the eucharist then begins as usual with the preparation of the gifts.