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INTRODUCTION

To The

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION



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RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

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General Introduction to the RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

1. Through the sacraments of Christian initiation men and women are freed from the power of darkness. With Christ they die, are buried and rise again. They receive the Spirit of adoption which makes them God's sons and daughters and, with the entire people of God, they celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.¹

2. Through baptism men and women are incorporated into Christ. They are formed into God's people, and they obtain forgiveness of all their sins. They are raised from their natural human condition to the dignity of adopted children.² They become a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence they are called, and are indeed, the children of God.³

Signed with the gift of the Spirit in confirmation, Christians more perfectly become the image of their Lord and are filled with the Holy Spirit. They bear witness to him before all the world and eagerly work for the building up of the body of Christ.⁴

Finally they come to the table of the eucharist, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that they may have eternal life⁵ and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering themselves with Christ, they share in his universal sacrifice: the entire community of the redeemed is offered to God by their high priest.⁶ They 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.⁷

Thus the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.⁸

I. DIGNITY OF BAPTISM

3. Baptism is the door to life and to the kingdom of God. Christ offered this first sacrament of the new law to all men that they might have eternal life.⁹ He entrusted this sacrament and the gospel to his Church when he told his apostles: "Go, make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰ Therefore baptism is, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which men

and women, enlightened by the Spirit's grace, respond to the gospel of Christ. That is why the Church believes it is her most basic and necessary duty to inspire all, catechumens, parents of children still to be baptized, and godparents, to that true and living faith by which they adhere to Christ and enter into or confirm their commitment to the new covenant. To accomplish this, the Church prescribes the pastoral instruction of catechumens, the preparation of the children's parents, the celebration of God's word, and the profession of baptismal faith.

4. Further, baptism is the sacrament by which men and women are incorporated into the Church, built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit,¹¹ into a holy nation and a royal priesthood.¹² It is a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been signed by it.¹³ Because of that unchangeable effect (signified in the Latin liturgy by the anointing of the baptized person with chrism in the presence of God's people), the rite of baptism is held in highest honor by all Christians. It may never lawfully be repeated once it has been validly celebrated, even if by fellow Christians from whom we are separated.

5. Baptism, the cleansing with water by the power of the living Word,¹⁴ makes us sharers in God's own life¹⁵ and his adopted children.¹⁶ As proclaimed in the prayers for the blessing of the water, baptism is a cleansing water of rebirth,¹⁷ which makes us God's children. The blessed Trinity is invoked over those who are to be baptized. Signed in this name, they are consecrated to the Trinity and enter into fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are prepared for this high dignity and led to it by the scriptural readings, the prayer of the community, and the threefold profession of faith.

6. Far superior to the purifications of the old law, baptism produces all these effects by the power of the mystery of the Lord's passion and resurrection. Those who are baptized are engrafted in the likeness of Christ's death.¹⁸ They are buried with him, they are given life again with him, and with him they rise again.¹⁹ For baptism recalls and effects the paschal mystery itself, because by means of it men and women pass from the death of sin into life. Its celebration, therefore, should reflect the joy of the resurrection, especially when it takes place during the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday.

II. OFFICES AND MINISTRIES OF BAPTISM

7. Christian instruction and the preparation for baptism are a vital concern of God's people, the Church, which hands on and nourishes the faith it has received from the Apostles. Through the ministry of the Church, adults are called by the Holy Spirit to the gospel, and infants are baptized and brought up in this faith. Therefore it is most important that catechists and other

lay people should work with priests and deacons in making preparations for baptism. In the actual celebration, the people of God (represented not only by the parents, godparents and relatives, but also, as far as possible, by friends, neighbors, and some members of the local church) should take an active part. Thus they will show their common faith and express their joy as the newly baptized are received into the community of the Church.

8. It is a very ancient custom of the Church that an adult is not admitted to baptism without a godparent, a member of the Christian community who will assist him at least in the final preparation for baptism and after baptism will help him persevere in the faith and in his life as a Christian.

In the baptism of children too, the godparent should be present to be added spiritually to the immediate family of the one to be baptized and to represent Mother Church. As occasion offers, he will be ready to help the parents bring up their child to profess the faith and to show this by living it.

9. At least in the final rites of the catechumenate and in the actual celebration of baptism, the godparent is present to testify to the faith of the adult candidate or, together with the parents, to profess the Church's faith, in which the child is being baptized.

10. Pastors of souls should therefore see to it that the godparent, chosen by the catechumen or by the family, is qualified to carry out his proper liturgical functions as specified in no. 9 above. The godparent should:

- 1) be mature enough to undertake this responsibility;
- 2) have received the three sacraments of initiation, baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist;
- 3) be a member of the Catholic Church, canonically free to carry out this office. A baptized and believing Christian from a separated church or community may act as a godparent or Christian witness along with a Catholic godparent, at the request of the parents and in accordance with the norms for various ecumenical cases.

11. The ordinary ministers of baptism are bishops, presbyters, and deacons. At every celebration of this sacrament they should remember that they act in the Church in the name of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. They should therefore be diligent in the ministry of the word of God and in the celebration of the sacraments. They must avoid any

action which the faithful can rightly condemn as favoritism.²⁰

12. Bishops are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God and leaders of the entire liturgical life in the church committed to them.²¹ They thus direct the conferring of baptism, by which a sharing in the kingly priesthood of Christ is granted.²² Therefore they should personally celebrate baptism, especially at the Easter Vigil. The preparation and baptism of adults is commended to them in a special way.

13. It is the duty of parish priests to assist the bishop in the instruction and baptism of the adults entrusted to his care, unless the bishop makes other provisions. It is also their duty, with the assistance of catechists or other qualified lay people, to prepare the parents and godparents of children with appropriate pastoral guidance and to administer baptism to the children.

14. Other priests and deacons, since they are cooperators in the ministry of bishops and parish priests, also prepare candidates for baptism and, with the invitation or consent of the bishop or parish priest, confer the sacrament.

15. The celebrant may be assisted by other priests and deacons and also by the laity in those parts which pertain to them, especially if there are many persons to be baptized. This provision is made in various parts of the rite.

16. In imminent danger of death and especially at the moment of death, when no priest or deacon is available, any member of the faithful, indeed anyone with the right intention, may and sometimes must administer baptism. If it is a question only of danger of death, then the sacrament should be administered by a member of the faithful if possible, according to the shorter rite (nos. 157-164). Even in this case a small community should be formed to assist at the rite, or at least one or two witnesses should be present if possible.

17. All lay persons, since they belong to the priestly people, and especially parents and, by reason of their work, catechists, obstetricians, women who are employed as family or social workers or as nurses of the sick, as well as physicians and surgeons, should know the proper method of baptizing in cases of necessity. They should be taught by parish priests, deacons, and catechists. Bishops should provide appropriate means within their diocese for such instruction.

III. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

18. The water used in baptism should be true water, for the sake of the

authentic sacramental symbolism. It should be clean, for reasons of health.

19. The baptismal font, or the vessel in which on occasion the water is prepared for the celebration of the sacrament in the sanctuary, should be very clean and attractive.

20. If the climate requires, provision should be made for the water to be heated beforehand.

21. Except in the case of necessity, the priest or deacon should use only water that has been blessed for the rite. The water consecrated at the Easter Vigil should, if possible, be kept and used throughout the Easter season to signify more clearly the relationship between the sacrament of baptism and the paschal mystery. Outside the Easter season, it is desirable that the water be blessed for each occasion, in order that the words of blessing may clearly express the mystery of salvation which the Church recalls and proclaims. If the baptistry is supplied with flowing water, the blessing will be given to the water as it flows.

22. Either the rite of immersion, which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, or the rite of infusion may lawfully be used in the celebration of baptism.

23. The words for baptism in the Latin Church are: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

24. A suitable place for celebrating the liturgy of the word of God should be provided in the baptistry or in the church.

25. The baptistry is the area where the baptismal font flows or has been placed. It should be reserved for the sacrament of baptism, and should be a worthy place for Christians to be reborn in water and the Holy Spirit. It may be situated in a chapel either inside or outside the church, or in some other part of the church easily seen by the faithful; it should be large enough to accommodate a good number of people. After the Easter season, the Easter candle should be given a place of honor in the baptistry, so that when it is lighted for the celebration of baptism, the candles of the newly baptized may easily be lighted from it.

26. In the celebration, the parts of the rite which are to be performed outside the baptistry should be celebrated in different areas of the church which most conveniently suit the size of the congregation and the several stages of the baptismal liturgy. When the baptistry cannot accommodate all the catechumens and the congregation, the parts of the rite which are customarily performed in the baptistry may be transferred to some other suitable area of the church.

27. As far as possible, all recently born babies should be baptized at a common celebration on the same day. Except for a good reason, baptism should not be celebrated more than once on the same day in the same church.

28. Further details concerning the time of baptism of adults and children will be found in the respective rites. The celebration of the sacrament should always suggest its paschal character.

29. Parish priests should carefully and without delay record in the baptismal register the names of those baptized, the minister, parents and godparents, and the place and date of baptism.

IV. ADAPTATIONS BY CONFERENCES OF BISHOPS

30. According to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (no. 63b), it is within the competence of conferences of bishops to compose for their local rituals a section corresponding to this one in the Roman Ritual, adapted to the needs of their respective regions. When this has been reviewed by the Apostolic See, it should be used in the regions for which it was prepared.

In this connection, it is the responsibility of the conferences of bishops:

- 1) to determine the adaptations, according to no. 39 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy;
- 2) carefully and prudently to consider what elements of a country's distinctive culture may suitably be admitted into divine worship. Adaptations considered useful or necessary should then be submitted to the Apostolic See, with whose consent they may be introduced;
- 3) to retain distinctive elements of existing local rituals as long as they conform with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and correspond to contemporary needs; or to modify these elements;
- 4) to prepare translations of the texts that genuinely reflect the characteristics of various languages and cultures and to add music for the texts when appropriate;
- 5) to adapt and augment the introduction contained in the Roman Ritual, so that the ministers may fully understand the meaning of the rites and express this effectively in action;
- 6) to arrange the material in the various editions of the liturgical

books prepared under the guidance of the conferences of bishops so that these books may be best suited for pastoral use.

31. As stated in nos. 37-40 and 65 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, it is the responsibility of the conferences of bishops in mission countries to judge whether certain initiation ceremonies in use among some peoples can be adapted for the rite of Christian baptism and to decide whether these rites are to be incorporated into it.

32. When the Roman Ritual for baptism provides a choice of several formulas, local rituals may add other formulas of the same kind.

33. The celebration of baptism is greatly enhanced by the use of song. It stimulates a sense of unity among those present, it gives warmth to their common prayer, and it expresses the joy of Easter. Conferences of bishops should encourage and help musical specialists to compose settings for texts suitable for congregational singing at baptism.

V. ADAPTATIONS BY THE MINISTER OF BAPTISM

34. The minister, taking into account existing circumstances and needs, as well as the wishes of the faithful, should freely use the various choices allowed in the rite.

35. In addition to the adaptations which are provided in the Roman Ritual for the dialogue and blessings, the minister may make other adaptations for special circumstances. These adaptations will be indicated more fully in the introduction to the rites of baptism for adults and for children.

NOTES

1. II Vatican Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*, 14.
2. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Council of Trent, 6th Session, Decree on Justification, Chapter 4, Denz. 796 (1524).
3. 1 John 3:1.
4. II Vatican Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*, 36.
5. John 6:55.
6. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, X, 6: PL 41, 284; II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 11; Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.
7. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 28.
8. *Ibid.*, 31.
9. John 3:5.
10. Matthew 28:19.
11. Ephesians 2:22.
12. 1 Peter 2:9.
13. II Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22.
14. Ephesians 5:26.
15. 2 Peter 1:4.
16. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5.
17. Titus 3:5.
18. Romans 6:4-5.

19. Ephesians 2:6.
20. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 32; Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 29.
21. II Vatican Council, Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office, *Christus Dominus*, 15.
22. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 26.

Introduction to the RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS*

1. The rite of Christian initiation described below is intended for adults. They hear the preaching of the mystery of Christ, the Holy Spirit opens their hearts, and they freely and knowingly seek the living God and enter the path of faith and conversion. By God's help, they will be strengthened spiritually in their preparation and at the proper time they will receive the sacraments fruitfully.
2. This order includes not only the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist, but also all the rites of the catechumenate. Approved by the ancient practice of the Church and adapted to contemporary missionary work throughout the world, this catechumenate was so widely requested that the Second Vatican Council decreed its restoration, revision, and accommodation to local traditions.¹
3. In order to be better suited to the work of the Church and to the circumstances of individuals, parishes, and missions, the rite of initiation first gives the complete or common form, intended for the preparation of a large number of people (see nos. 68-239). By simple changes, pastors may adapt this form for one person. Then, for special cases, there is a simple form, which may be celebrated on a single occasion (see nos. 240-273) or in several parts (see nos. 274-277), as well as a brief form for those in danger of death (see nos. 278-292).

I. STRUCTURE OF THE INITIATION OF ADULTS

4. The initiation of catechumens takes place step by step in the midst of the community of the faithful. Together with the catechumens, the faithful reflect upon the value of the paschal mystery, renew their own conversion, and by their example lead the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.
5. The rite of initiation is suited to the spiritual journey of adults, which varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.
6. On this journey, besides the period for making inquiry and maturing (see no. 7, below), there are stages or steps by which the catechumen moves forward, as it were, through a gateway or up another step.

a) First stage: at the point of initial conversion, he wishes to become a Christian and is accepted as a catechumen by the Church.

* Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph reference numbers beyond no. 67 refer to texts found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

b) Second stage: when his faith has grown and the catechumenate is almost completed, he is admitted to a more profound preparation for the sacraments.

c) Third stage: after the spiritual preparation is completed, he receives the sacraments by which a Christian is initiated.

These three stages, steps, or gateways are to be considered as major, more serious moments of initiation and are marked by liturgical rites: the first by the rite of becoming a catechumen, the second by the election or choice, and the third by the celebration of the sacraments.

7. These stages lead to periods of investigation and maturation, or the latter prepare for the stages.

a) The first period consists of inquiry by the candidate and evangelization and the precatechumenate on the part of the Church. It ends with entrance into the order of catechumens.

b) The second period, which begins with this entrance into the order of catechumens and may last for several years, includes catechesis and the rites connected with catechesis. It is completed on the day of election.

c) The third period, shorter in length, ordinarily occupies the Lenten preparation for the Easter celebration and the sacraments. It is a time of purification and enlightenment or "illumination."

d) The final period goes through the whole Easter season and is called the postbaptismal catechesis or "mystagogia." It is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for gaining spiritual fruit, and for entering more closely into the life and unity of the community of the faithful.

Thus there are four continuous periods:

—the precatechumenate, a time for hearing the first preaching of the Gospel;

—the catechumenate, set aside for a complete catechesis;

—the period of purification and enlightenment or illumination (Lent) for a more profound spiritual preparation; and

—the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia (Easter season), marked with the new experience of the sacraments and of the Christian community.

8. The whole initiation has a paschal character, since the initiation of Christians is the first sacramental sharing in the death and rising of Christ and since, moreover, the time of purification and enlightenment or illumination ordinarily takes place during Lent,² with the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia during the Easter season. In this way Lent achieves its full force as a profound preparation of the elect, and the Easter Vigil is considered the proper time for the sacraments of initiation.³ Because of pastoral needs, however, the sacraments of initiation may be celebrated outside these seasons.

A. EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

9. Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the preceding period or precatechumenate is of great importance and ordinarily should not be omitted. It is a time of evangelization: in faith and constancy the living God is proclaimed, as is Jesus Christ, whom he sent for the salvation of all men. Thus those who are not yet Christians, their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord. They sincerely adhere to him who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who fulfills all their spiritual expectations, indeed goes far beyond them.⁴

10. From evangelization, conducted with the help of God, come faith and initial conversion, by which each one feels himself called away from sin and drawn toward the mystery of God's love. The whole period of the precatechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the true desire of following Christ and seeking baptism may mature.

11. During this time, catechists, deacons and priests, as well as lay persons, suitably explain the Gospel to the candidates. They receive the help they are looking for, so that they may cooperate with God's grace with a pure and certain intention and may meet with the families and communities of Christians with greater ease.

12. In addition to the evangelization that is proper to this period, the episcopal conferences may provide, if necessary and according to local circumstances, a method to receive interested inquirers ("sympathizers"), those who, even if they do not fully believe, show an inclination toward the Christian faith.

1) Such a reception, which is optional and will be carried out without any rite, expresses the inquirers' sound intention rather than faith.

2) The reception will be adapted to local conditions and opportunities. Some candidates need to know and experience the spirit of Christians in a special way. For others, whose catechumenate has been delayed for various reasons, this first external act by them and the community is appropriate.

3) The reception should be carried out at meetings and gatherings of the local community, on a suitable occasion of friendly exchange. The inquirer or sympathizer is presented by a friend, and then he is welcomed and received by the priest or by some other appropriate and worthy member of the community.

13. During the period of the precatechumenate, pastors should help the inquirers with suitable prayers.

B. CATECHUMENATE

14. The rite of becoming a catechumen is of very great importance. Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates make their intention known to the Church; the Church, carrying out its apostolic mission, admits those who intend to become members. God showers his grace

on them, since this celebration manifests their desire publicly and the Church expresses their reception and first consecration.

15. Before this step is taken, the candidates are required to be grounded in the basic fundamentals of the spiritual life and Christian teaching;⁵ the faith first conceived at the time of the pre-catechumenate; the initial conversion and desire to change one's life and to enter into contact with God in Christ; thus the first sense of repentance and the practice of calling on God and praying; and the first experience of the society and spirit of Christians.

16. With the help of the sponsors (see no. 42, below), catechists, and deacons, it is the responsibility of pastors to judge the external indications of these dispositions.⁶ It is also their duty, in view of the power of sacraments already validly received (see General Introduction, no. 4), to see that a baptized person is not baptized again for any reason whatever.

17. After the celebration of the rite, the names are written at once in the register of catechumens, along with the names of the minister and sponsors and the date and place of admission.

18. From this time on the catechumens, who have been welcomed by the Church with a mother's love and concern, are joined to the Church and are part of the household of Christ.⁷ They are nourished by the Church on the word of God and helped by liturgical celebrations. They should be eager, then, to take part in the liturgy of the word and to receive blessings and sacramentals. When two catechumens marry or when a catechumen marries an unbaptized person, the appropriate rite is celebrated.⁸ One who dies during the catechumenate receives a Christian burial.

19. The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given pastoral formation and are trained by suitable discipline.⁹ In this way, the dispositions manifested at the entrance rite into the catechumenate are brought to maturity. This is achieved in four ways:

1) A fitting formation by priests, deacons, or catechists and other lay persons, given in stages and presented integrally, accommodated to the liturgical year and enriched by celebrations of the word, leads the catechumens to a suitable knowledge of dogmas and precepts and also to an intimate understanding of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to share.

2) Familiar with living the Christian way of life and helped by the example and support of sponsors and godparents and the whole community of the faithful, the catechumens will learn to pray to God more easily, to witness to the faith, to be constant in the expectation of Christ in all things, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to exercise charity toward neighbors to the point of self-renunciation. Thus formed, "new converts set out on a spiritual journey. Already sharing through faith in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, they pass from the old man to the new one made perfect in Christ.

This transition, which brings with it a progressive change of outlook and morals, should become evident together with its social consequences and should be gradually developed during the time of the catechumenate. Since the Lord in whom he believes is a sign of contradiction, the convert often experiences human divisions and separations, but he also tastes the joy which God gives without measure.”¹⁰

3) By suitable liturgical rites, Mother Church helps the catechumens on their journey, cleanses them little by little, and strengthens them with God’s blessing. Celebrations of the word are encouraged for their benefit, and they may also attend the liturgy of the word with the faithful, thus better preparing themselves for participation in the eucharist in time to come. Ordinarily, however, when they are present in the assembly of the faithful, they should be dismissed in a friendly manner before the eucharistic celebration begins, unless there are difficulties; they must await their baptism which will bring them into the priestly people and allow them to participate in the Christian worship of the new covenant.

4) Since the Church’s life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the testimony of their lives and the profession of their faith.¹¹

20. The period of time suitable for the catechumenate depends on the grace of God and on various circumstances, such as the plan of instruction to be given, the number of catechists, deacons, and priests, the cooperation of the individual catechumens, the means necessary to reach the place of the catechumenate and to live there, and the help of the local community. Nothing can be determined a priori. The bishop has the responsibility of setting the period of time and directing the discipline of the catechumenate. After considering the conditions of their people and region,¹² episcopal conferences should regulate this matter more specifically.

C. PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

21. The time of purification and enlightenment or illumination of the catechumens customarily coincides with Lent; both in its liturgy and in its liturgical catechesis, Lent is a memorial or a preparation for baptism and a time of penance.¹³ It renews the community of the faithful together with the catechumens and makes them ready to celebrate the paschal mystery which the sacraments of initiation apply to each individual.¹⁴

22. The second stage of initiation begins the period of purification and enlightenment or illumination, marked by a more intense preparation of heart and spirit. At this stage the Church makes the “election,” that is, the choice and admission of the catechumens who because of their dispositions are worthy to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation. This stage is called election because the admission made by the Church is founded in the election by God, in whose name the Church acts. It is also called the enrollment or inscription of names because the candidates, as a pledge of fidelity, write their names in the book of the elect.

23. Before the election is celebrated, the candidates are expected to have a conversion of mind and morals, a sufficient knowledge of Christian teaching, and a sense of faith and charity; a consideration of their worthiness is also required. Later, in the actual celebration of the rite, the manifestation of their intention and the decision of the bishop or his délégué should take place in the presence of the community. It is thus clear that the election, which enjoys such great solemnity, is the turning point in the whole catechumenate.

24. From the day of their election and admission, catechumens are called the "elect." They are also called "competentes," mature catechumens who strive together or contend to receive the sacraments of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are also called the enlightened or illumined, because baptism itself is called enlightenment or illumination and by baptism the neophytes are illumined in the light of faith. In our day, other terms may be used which are better adapted to common understanding according to the nature of the languages and civil cultures of various regions.

25. During this period, a more intense preparation of the mind, which involves spiritual recollection more than catechesis, is intended to purify minds and hearts by the examination of conscience and by repentance and also to enlighten those minds and hearts by a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior. This is accomplished in various rites, especially in the scrutinies and presentations.

1) The scrutinies, which are celebrated solemnly on Sundays, have a twofold purpose: revealing anything that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect, so that it may be healed, and revealing what is upright, strong, and holy, so that it may be strengthened. The scrutinies are intended to free them from sin and the devil and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life for his chosen ones.

2) The presentations, by which the Church hands on to the elect its ancient documents of faith and prayer (the profession of faith or the creed and the Lord's Prayer), lead them to enlightenment or illumination. The profession of faith recalls the wonderful work of God for the salvation of man; it deepens the faith and joy of the elect. In the Lord's Prayer, they acknowledge more firmly the new spirit of sonship by which they will call God their Father, especially in the midst of the congregation assembled for the eucharist.

26. In the immediate preparation of the sacraments:

1) The elect should be instructed that on Holy Saturday they should rest from their ordinary work as far as possible, spend the time in prayer and recollection of mind, and fast according to their ability.¹⁵

2) That same day, if there is a meeting of the elect, some of the immediately preparatory rites may be celebrated, such as the recitation of the profession of faith, the ephpheta or opening of ears and mouth, the choosing of a Christian name, and, if it is to be done, the anointing with the oil of catechumens.

D. SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

27. The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist are the final stage in which the elect come forward and, with their sins forgiven, are admitted into the people of God, receive the adoption of the sons of God, and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time and, in the eucharistic sacrifice and meal, to the banquet of the Kingdom of God.

a) Celebration of the Baptism of Adults

28. The celebration of baptism, which reaches its high point at the washing with water in the name of the Holy Trinity, is prepared for by the blessing of water and the profession of faith, which are closely connected with the rite of washing with water.

29. The blessing of water recalls the dispensation of the paschal mystery and the choice of water for the sacramental operation of the mystery. The Holy Trinity is called upon for the first time, water is given a religious meaning, and the working of the divine mystery is shown before all.

30. The rites of the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith also recall, in the active faith of those to be baptized, the same paschal mystery which has been recalled in the blessing of water and briefly professed by the celebrant in the words of baptism. Adults are not saved unless they come forward of their own accord and are willing to accept the gift of God by faith. Baptism is the sacrament of faith, not only the faith of the Church, but also the candidates' own faith, and it is expected that it will be an active faith in them. When they are baptized, they should not receive such a sacrament passively, for of their own will they enter into a covenant with Christ, rejecting their errors and adhering to the true God.

31. As soon as they have professed their living faith in the paschal mystery of Christ, they come forward to receive that mystery expressed in the washing with water. After they have professed faith in the Holy Trinity, the Trinity, called on by the celebrant, brings about the numbering of the elect among the adopted children of God and unites them to his people.

32. Since the washing with water is a sign of mystical sharing in the death and rising of Christ, by which believers in his name die to sin and rise to eternal life, it achieves its full importance in the celebration of baptism. The rite of immersion or of infusion or of pouring is chosen according to what is more suitable in individual cases, so that, according to various traditions and circumstances, it may be understood that the washing is not merely a rite of purification but a sacrament of union with Christ.

33. The anointing with chrism after baptism is a sign of the royal priesthood of the baptized and their enrollment in the fellowship of the people of God. The white robe is a symbol of their new dignity, and the lighted candle shows their vocation of living as befits the children of light.

b) Celebration of the Confirmation of Adults

34. According to the ancient practice maintained in the Roman liturgy, an adult is not to be baptized unless he receives confirmation immediately afterward (see no. 44), provided no serious obstacles exist. This connection signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close relationship between the mission of the Son and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the joint celebration of the sacraments by which the Son and the Spirit come with the Father upon those who are baptized.

35. Confirmation is celebrated after the complementary rites of baptism; the postbaptismal anointing is omitted (no. 224).

c) First Sharing in the Eucharist by the Newly Baptized

36. Finally the eucharist is celebrated and for the first time the neophytes have the full right to take part. This is the culminating point of their initiation. In the eucharist, the neophytes who have received the dignity of the royal priesthood have an active part in the general intercessions (prayer of the faithful) and, as far as possible, in the rite of bringing the offerings to the altar. With the whole community they take part in the action of the sacrifice and they say the Lord's Prayer, thus showing the spirit of adoption as God's children which they have received in baptism. Then, by receiving the body that was handed over and the blood that was shed, they confirm the gifts they have received and acquire a foretaste of eternal things.

E. PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGIA

37. After this last stage has been completed, the community and the neophytes move forward together, meditating on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and performing works of charity. In this way they understand the paschal mystery more fully and bring it into their lives more and more. The period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia is the final period of initiation of the newly baptized.

38. A fuller, more fruitful understanding of the "mysteries" is acquired by the newness of the account given to the neophytes and especially by the experience of receiving the sacraments. They have been renewed in mind, have tasted more intimately the good word of God, have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have come to discover the goodness of the Lord. From this experience, which is proper to the Christian and is increased by the way he lives, they draw a new sense of the faith, the Church, and the world.

39. This new frequenting of the sacraments enlightens the neophytes' understanding of the holy scriptures and also increases their knowledge of men and develops the experience in the community itself. As a result, the relationship of the neophyte with the rest of the faithful becomes easier and more beneficial. The time of postbaptismal catechesis is of great importance so that the neophytes, helped by their sponsors, may enter into a closer relationship with the faithful and bring them renewed vision and a new impetus.

40. Since the nature and force proper to this period came from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, the main place for the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia will be the Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season. In these celebrations, besides meeting with the community and sharing in the mysteries, the newly baptized will find the readings of the Lectionary appropriate for them, especially the readings of Year A. For this reason, the whole local community should be invited to these Masses along with the neophytes and their sponsors. The texts for the Masses may be used even when the initiation is celebrated outside the usual time.

II. MINISTRIES AND OFFICES

41. Besides what is explained in the General Introduction (no. 7), the people of God, represented by the local church, should always understand and show that the initiation of adults is its concern and the business of all the baptized.¹⁶

Therefore the community must always be ready to fulfill its apostolic vocation by giving help to those who need Christ. In the various circumstances of daily life, as in the apostolate, each disciple of Christ has the obligation of spreading the faith according to his capability.¹⁷ Hence, the community must help the candidates and catechumens throughout their whole period of initiation, during the precatechumenate, the catechumenate, and the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia. In particular:

1) During the time of evangelization and the precatechumenate, the faithful should remember that the apostolate of the Church and all its members is directed first to making known to the world the message of Christ through their words and deeds and to communicating his grace.¹⁸ Therefore they will be ready to open up the spirit of the Christian community to the candidates, to invite them into their families, to engage them in private conversation, and to invite them to some community gatherings.

2) The faithful should be present at the celebration of the catechumenate whenever possible and share actively in the responses, prayer, singing, and acclamations.

3) On the day of election, when the community is to be enlarged, the faithful should be sure to give honest and prudent testimony about the catechumens.

4) During Lent, the time of purification and enlightenment or illumination, the faithful should be present and attentive to the rites of the scrutinies and presentations and give the catechumens the example of their own renewal in the spirit of penance, faith, and charity. At the Easter Vigil, they should renew their own baptismal promises in their hearts.

5) The faithful should take part in the Masses for the newly baptized during the period immediately after baptism, welcome them with charity, and help them to sense the joy of belonging to the community of the baptized.

42. The candidate should be accompanied by a sponsor when he asks to be admitted as a catechumen. This sponsor is to be a man or woman who knows the candidate, helps him, and witnesses to his morals, faith, and intention. It may happen that this sponsor is not to fulfill the function of godparent in the period of purification and enlightenment or illumination and in the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia. In this case, another person takes on this responsibility.

43. The godparent,¹⁹ however, who is close to the candidate because of his example, character, and friendship, is delegated by the local Christian community and approved by the priest. He accompanies the candidate on the day of election, in the celebration of the sacraments, and during the period of postbaptismal catechesis. It is his responsibility to show the catechumen in a friendly way the place of the Gospel in his own life and in society, to help him in doubts and anxieties, to give public testimony for him, and to watch over the progress of his baptismal life. Already a friend before the election, this person exercises his office publicly from the day of election when he gives his testimony about the catechumen before the community. His responsibility remains important when the neophyte has received the sacraments and needs to be helped to remain faithful to his baptismal promises.

44. It is for the bishop,²⁰ in person or through his delegate, to set up, regulate, and promote the pastoral formation of catechumens and to admit the candidates to their election and to the sacraments. It is to be hoped that, if possible, presiding at the Lenten liturgy, he will himself celebrate the rite of election and, at the Easter Vigil, the sacraments of initiation. Finally, as a part of his pastoral care, the bishop should appoint catechists who are truly worthy and properly prepared to celebrate the minor exorcisms.²¹

45. Besides the usual ministry exercised in any celebration of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist,²² presbyters have the responsibility of attending to the pastoral and personal care of the catechumens,²³ especially those who seem hesitant and weak, in order to provide for their catechesis with the help of deacons and catechists. They also are to approve the choice of godparents and gladly listen to them and help them. Finally, presbyters should be diligent in the correct celebration and adaptation of the rites throughout the entire rite of Christian initiation (see no. 67, below).

46. When the bishop is absent, the presbyter who baptizes an adult or a child of catechetical age should also confer confirmation, unless this sacrament is to be given at another time (see no. 56).²⁴

When there are very many to be confirmed, the minister of the sacrament of confirmation may associate other presbyters with himself in its administration.

It is necessary that these presbyters:

a) have a particular function or office in the diocese, namely, that of vicars general, episcopal vicars or delegates, district or regional vicars, or those who by mandate of the ordinary hold equivalent offices;

b) be the parish pastors of the places where confirmation is celebrated or pastors of the places where the candidates belong, or presbyters who did special work in this catechetical preparation.²⁵

47. Deacons who are available should be ready to help. If the episcopal conference judges it opportune to have permanent deacons, it should make provision that their number is adequate to permit the stages, periods, and exercises of the catechuminate to take place everywhere when required by pastoral needs.²⁶

48. The office of catechists is important for the progress of the catechumens and for the growth of the community. As often as possible, they should have an active part in the rites. When they are teaching, they should see that their instruction is filled with the spirit of the Gospel, adapted to the liturgical signs and the course of the Church year, and enriched by local traditions as far as possible. When so delegated by the bishop, they may perform minor exorcisms (no. 44) and blessings,²⁷ as mentioned in the Ritual nos. 113-124.

III. TIME AND PLACE OF INITIATION

49. Ordinarily pastors should make use of the rite of initiation in such a way that the sacraments will be celebrated at the Easter Vigil and the election will take place on the First Sunday of Lent. The other rites should be arranged as explained above (nos. 6-8, 14-40). For serious pastoral needs, however, the plan of the entire rite of initiation may be differently arranged, as indicated below (nos. 58-62).

A. LAWFUL OR CUSTOMARY TIME

50. The following should be noted about the time of celebrating the rite of becoming catechumens:

1) It should not be too early, but should be delayed until the candidates, according to their own dispositions and situation, have had sufficient time to conceive an elementary faith and to show the first signs of conversion (no. 20, above).

2) When the number of candidates is unusually large, the rite should be postponed until the group is large enough for catechesis and the liturgical rites.

3) Two days or, if necessary, three days or period of the year should be set aside for the usual celebration of this rite.

51. The rite of election or enrollment of names should usually be celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent. It may be anticipated somewhat or even celebrated during the week.

52. The scrutinies should take place on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent or, if necessary, on the other Sundays of Lent or even on more suitable weekdays. Three scrutinies should be celebrated, but for serious reasons the bishop may dispense from one of them or even from two in extraordinary circumstances. When time is lacking and the election is anticipated, the first scrutiny may also be held earlier. But in this case, the time of purification and enlightenment or illumination must not be extended beyond eight weeks.

53. By ancient usage, the presentations, since they take place after the scrutinies, belong to the same period of purification and enlightenment or illumination. They are celebrated during the week. The profession of faith is given during the week after the first scrutiny, and the Lord's Prayer after the third scrutiny. For pastoral reasons, however, to enrich the liturgy of the period of the catechumenate, the presentations may be transferred and celebrated during the catechumenate as rites of transition (see nos. 125-126).

54. On Holy Saturday, when the elect refrain from work (see no. 26) and spend their time in recollection, the various immediately preparatory rites may be performed: The recitation of the creed, the ephpheta or opening of ears and mouth, the choosing of a Christian name, and even the anointing with the oil of catechumens (see nos. 193-207).

55. The sacraments of the initiation of adults should be celebrated at the Easter Vigil (see nos. 8, 49). If there are very many catechumens, the majority receive the sacraments that night, and the rest may be postponed to the days within the octave of Easter, when they receive the sacraments either in the principal churches or in secondary stations. In this case, either the Mass of the day or the ritual Mass for Christian initiation should be used, with readings from the Easter Vigil.

56. In certain cases, confirmation may be postponed until near the end of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia, for example, Pentecost Sunday (see no. 237).

57. The Masses for neophytes are celebrated on all the Sundays after the First Sunday of Easter. The community, the newly baptized and their godparents are urgently invited to participate (see no. 40).

B. OUTSIDE THE CUSTOMARY TIMES

58. The rite of initiation is normally arranged so that the sacraments will be celebrated during the Easter Vigil. Because of unusual circumstances and pastoral needs, however, the rite of election and the period of purification and enlightenment or illumination may be held outside Lent and the sacraments may be celebrated outside the Vigil or Easter Sunday. Even in ordinary circumstances, but only for serious pastoral needs (for example, if there is a very large number of persons to be baptized), apart from the plan of initiation carried on as usual during Lent, another time for celebrating the sacraments of initiation may be chosen, particularly in the Easter season. In these cases, although the times of the liturgical year are changed, the arrangement of the whole rite with its appropriate intervals remains the same. Adaptations should be made as follows:

59. As far as possible, the sacraments of initiation are celebrated on Sunday, using the Sunday Mass or the proper ritual Mass (see no. 55).

60. The rite of becoming catechumens takes place at a suitable time, as explained in no. 50.

61. The election is celebrated almost six weeks before the sacraments of initiation so that there is sufficient time for the scrutinies and the presentations. Care should be taken that the celebration of the election does not fall on a solemnity of the liturgical year. The readings given in the ritual should be used, and the Mass of the day or the ritual Mass will be celebrated.

62. The scrutinies should not be celebrated on solemnities, but on Sundays or even on weekdays, observing the usual intervals and using the readings given in the ritual. The Mass of the day or the ritual Mass will be celebrated (see no. 374a).

C. PLACES FOR THE RITE OF INITIATION

63. The rites should take place in suitable locations, as indicated in the ritual. Consideration should be given to special needs which arise in secondary stations of missionary regions.

IV. ADAPTATIONS BY EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES WHICH USE THE ROMAN RITUAL

64. Besides the adaptations mentioned in the General Introduction (nos. 30-33), episcopal conferences may make other changes in the rite of initiation of adults.

65. Episcopal conferences may freely choose:

1) To provide, where it seems suitable, some method of receiving interested inquirers (or sympathizers) prior to the catechumenate (see no. 12).

2) Wherever false worship flourishes, to insert the first exorcism and the first renunciation in the rite of becoming catechumens (nos. 79-80).

3) To decree that the gesture of signing the forehead be done in front of the forehead in places where the act of touching may not seem proper (no. 83).

4) Where it is the practice of non-Christian religions to give a new name to the initiated at once, to decree that the new name be given in the rite for becoming catechumens (no. 88).

5) According to local custom, to add auxiliary rites to show that the catechumens have been received into the community (no. 89).

6) Besides the usual rites during the period of the catechumenate (nos. 106-124), to restore the rites of transition by anticipating the presentations (nos. 125-126), the ephpheta or opening of ears and

mouth, the recitation of the profession of faith, or even the anointing with the oil of catechumens (nos. 127-129).

7) To decide to omit the anointing with the oil of catechumens (no. 218), to transfer it to the immediately preparatory rites (nos. 206-207), or to use it during the period of the catechumenate as a rite of transition (nos. 127-132).

8) To make the formulas of renunciation more detailed and richer (see nos. 80, 217)

V. COMPETENCE OF THE BISHOP

66. For his diocese, the bishop has the responsibility:

1) To set up the formation program of the catechumenate and give suitable norms as needed (see no. 44).

2) As circumstances suggest, to decree whether and when the rite of initiation may be celebrated outside the ordinary times (see no. 58).

3) Because of serious obstacles, to dispense from one scrutiny or even from two scrutines in extraordinary circumstances (see no. 240).

5) To assign catechists who are truly worthy and properly prepared to give the exorcisms and blessings (see nos. 44, 47).

6) To preside at the rite of election and to ratify personally, or through a delegate, the admission of the elect (see no. 44).

VI. ADAPTATIONS BY THE MINISTER

67. It is for the celebrant to use fully and intelligently the freedom which is given to him either in the General Introduction (no. 34) or in the rubrics of the rite. In many places the manner of acting or praying is intentionally left undetermined or two possibilities are offered, so that the celebrant may accommodate the rite, according to his prudent pastoral judgment, to the circumstances of the candidates and others who are present. The greatest freedom is left in the introductions and intercessions, which may always be shortened, changed, or even increased with new intentions in order to correspond with the circumstances or special situation of the candidates (for example, a sad or joyful event occurring in a family) or of the others present (for example, joy or sorrow common to the parish or town).

The celebrant will also adapt the text by changing the gender and number as needed.

NOTES

- ¹ See Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [=L], nos. 64-66; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes* [=M], no. 14; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus* [=Ep], no. 14.
- ² See L 109.
- ³ This derogates from canon 790 of the Code of Canon Law.
- ⁴ M 13.
- ⁵ See M 14.
- ⁶ M 13.
- ⁷ See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* [=E], no. 14; M. 14.
- ⁸ *Rite of Marriage*, nos. 55-56.
- ⁹ See M 14.
- ¹⁰ See M. 13.
- ¹¹ See M 14.
- ¹² See L 64.
- ¹³ L 109.
- ¹⁴ See M 14.
- ¹⁵ See L 110.
- ¹⁶ See M 14.
- ¹⁷ See E 17.
- ¹⁸ See Second Vatican Council, decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 6.
- ¹⁹ See General Introduction, no. 8.
- ²⁰ See L 64.
- ²¹ This abrogates Canon 1153 of the Code of Canon Law.
- ²² See General Introduction, nos. 13-15.
- ²³ See Second Vatican Council, decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 6.
- ²⁴ See *Rite of Confirmation*, Introduction, no. 76.
- ²⁵ See *Rite of Marriage*, nos. 55-56.
- ²⁶ See E 26; M 16.
- ²⁷ See L 79.

Introduction to the RITE OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN*

I. IMPORTANCE OF BAPTIZING CHILDREN

1. Children or infants are those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore cannot have or profess personal faith.

2. From the earliest times, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized children as well as adults. Our Lord said: "Unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."¹ The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church. This faith is proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers: "The Church is at once the mother of all and the mother of each."²

3. To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptized. The foundation of this formation will be the sacrament itself, which they have already received. Christian formation, which is their due, seeks to lead them gradually to learn God's plan in Christ, so that they may ultimately accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptized.

II. MINISTRIES AND ROLES IN THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

4. The people of God, that is the Church, made present in the local community, has an important part to play in the baptism of both children and adults.

Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community. During the rite, in addition to the ways of congregational participation mentioned in no. 7 of the general introduction, the community exercises its duty when it expresses its assent together with the celebrant after the profession of faith by the parents and godparents. In this way it is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family, but is the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ.

5. Because of the natural relationships, parents have a more important

* Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph reference numbers beyond 31 refer to the text found in the Rite of Baptism of Children.

ministry and role in the baptism of infants than the godparents.

- 1) Before the celebration of the sacrament, it is of great importance that parents, moved by their own faith or with the help of friends or other members of the community, should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding. They should be provided with suitable means such as books, instructions, and catechisms written for families. The parish priest should make it his duty to visit them, or see that they are visited, as a family or as a group of families, and prepare them for the coming celebration by pastoral counsel and common prayer.
 - 2) It is very important that the parents should be present in the celebration in which their child is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit.
 - 3) In the celebration of baptism, the father and mother have special parts to play. They listen to the words addressed to them by the celebrant, they join in prayer along with the congregation, and they exercise a special function when: a) they publicly ask that the child be baptized; b) they sign their child with the sign of the cross after the celebrant; c) they renounce Satan and make their profession of faith; d) they (and especially the mother) carry the child to the font; e) they hold the lighted candle; f) they are blessed with the special prayers for the mothers and fathers.
 - 4) If one of the parents cannot make the profession of faith (if, for example, he is not a Catholic), he may keep silent. All that is asked of him, when he requests baptism for the child, is that he should make arrangements, or at least give permission, for the child to be instructed in the faith of its baptism.
 - 5) After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, to enable the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive confirmation, and to participate in the holy eucharist. In this duty they are again to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means.
6. Each child may have a godfather and a godmother; the word "godparents" is used in the rite to describe both.
7. In addition to what is said about the ordinary minister of baptism in the general introduction (nos. 11-15), the following should be noted:
- 1) It is the duty of the priest to prepare families for the baptism of their children and to help them in the task of Christian formation which they have undertaken. It is the duty of the bishop to

coordinate such pastoral efforts in the diocese, with the help also of deacons and lay people.

- 2) It is also the duty of the priest to arrange that baptism is always celebrated with proper dignity and, as far as possible, adapted to the circumstances and wishes of the families concerned. Everyone who performs the rite of baptism should do so with care and devotion; he must also try to be understanding and friendly to all.

III. TIME AND PLACE FOR THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

8. As for the time of baptism, the first consideration is the welfare of the child, that it may not be deprived of the benefit of the sacrament; then the health of the mother must be considered, so that, as far as possible she too may be present. Then, as long as they do not interfere with the greater good of the child, there are pastoral considerations such as allowing sufficient time to prepare the parents and for planning the actual celebration to bring out its paschal character:

- 1) If the child is in danger of death, it is to be baptized without delay, as is laid down in no. 21.
- 2) In other cases, as soon as possible and even before the child is born, the parents should be in touch with the parish priest concerning the baptism, so that proper preparation may be made for the celebration.
- 3) An infant should be baptized within the first weeks after birth. The conference of bishops may, for sufficiently serious pastoral reasons, determine a longer interval of time between birth and baptism.
- 4) When the parents are not yet prepared to profess the faith or to undertake the duty of bringing up their children as Christians, it is for the parish priest, keeping in mind whatever regulations may have been laid down by the conference of bishops, to determine the time for the baptism of infants.

9. To bring out the paschal character of baptism, it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday, when the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection. On Sunday, baptism may be celebrated even during Mass, so that the entire community may be present and the necessary relationship between baptism and eucharist may be clearly seen, but this should not be done too often. Regulations for the celebration of baptism during the Easter Vigil or at Mass on Sunday are set out below.

10. So that baptism may clearly appear as the sacrament of the Church's

faith and of admittance into the people of God, it should normally be celebrated in the parish church, which must have a baptismal font.

11. The bishop, after consulting the local parish priest, may permit or direct that a baptismal font be placed in another church or public oratory within the parish boundaries. In these places, too, it is the normal right of the parish priest to celebrate baptism.

12. Except in case of danger of death, baptism should not be celebrated in private houses.

13. Unless the bishop decides otherwise (see no. 11), baptism should not be celebrated in hospitals, except in cases of emergency or for some other pastoral reason of a pressing kind. Care should always be taken that the parish priest is notified and that the parents are suitably prepared beforehand.

14. While the liturgy of the word is being celebrated, it is desirable that the children should be taken to some other place. Provision should be made for the mothers or godmothers to attend the liturgy of the word; the children should therefore be entrusted to the care of other women.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THE RITE OF BAPTIZING CHILDREN

A. ORDER OF BAPTISM CELEBRATED BY THE ORDINARY MINISTER

15. Baptism, whether for one child, or for several, or even for a larger number, should be celebrated by the ordinary minister and with the full rite when there is no immediate danger of death.

16. The rite begins with the reception of the children. This is to indicate the desire of the parents and godparents, as well as the intention of the Church, concerning the celebration of the sacrament of baptism. These purposes are expressed in action when the parents and the celebrant trace the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the children.

17. Then the liturgy of the word is directed toward stirring up the faith of the parents, godparents, and congregation, and praying in common for the fruits of baptism before the sacrament itself. This part of the celebration consists of the reading of one or more passages from holy scripture; a homily, followed by a period of silence; the prayer of the faithful; and finally a prayer, drawn up in the style of an exorcism, to introduce either the anointing with the oil of catechumens or the laying on of hands.

18. 1) The celebration of the sacrament is immediately preceded by:

- a) the solemn prayer of the celebrant, who, by invoking God and recalling his plan of salvation, blesses the water of baptism or commemorates its previous blessing;
 - b) the renunciation of Satan on the part of parents and godparents, and their profession of faith, to which is added the assent of the celebrant and the community; and the final interrogation of the parents and godparents.
- 2) The celebration of the sacrament is performed by washing in water, by way of immersion or infusion, according to local custom, and by the invocation of the blessed Trinity.
 - 3) The celebration of the sacrament is completed, first by the anointing with chrism, which signifies the royal priesthood of the baptized and enrollment in the fellowship of God's people; then by the ceremonies of the white garment, lighted candle, and *Ephphetha* (the last of which is optional).
19. After the celebrant speaks of the future reception of the eucharist by the baptized children, the Lord's Prayer, in which God's children pray to their Father in heaven, is recited before the altar. Finally, a prayer of blessing is said over the mothers, fathers, and all present, to ask God's grace in abundance for all.

B. SHORTER RITE OF BAPTISM

20. In the shorter rite of baptism designed for the use of catechists,³ the reception of the children, the celebration of the word of God, or the instruction by the minister, and the prayer of the faithful are retained. Before the font, the minister offers a prayer invoking God and recalling the history of salvation as it relates to baptism. After the baptismal washing, an adapted formula is recited in place of the anointing with chrism, and the whole rite concludes in the customary way. The omissions, therefore, are the exorcism, the anointing with oil of catechumens and with chrism, and the *Ephphetha*.
21. The shorter rite for baptizing a child in danger of death and in the absence of the ordinary minister has a twofold structure:
- 1) At the moment of death or when there is urgency because of imminent danger of death, the minister,⁴ omitting all other ceremonies, pours water (not necessarily blessed but real and natural water), on the head of the child, and pronounces the customary formula.⁵
 - 2) If it is prudently judged that there is sufficient time, several of the faithful may be gathered together, and, if one of them is able to lead the others in a short prayer, the following rite may be used:

an explanation by the minister of the sacrament, a short common prayer, the profession of faith by the parents or one godparent, and the pouring of the water with the customary words. But if those present are uneducated, the minister of the sacrament should recite the profession of faith aloud and baptize according to the rite for use at the moment of death.

22. In danger of death, the priest or deacon may also use this shorter form if necessary. If there is time and he has the sacred chrism, the parish priest or other priest enjoying the same faculty should not fail to confer confirmation after baptism. In this case he omits the postbaptismal anointing with chrism.

V. ADAPTATIONS BY CONFERENCES OF BISHOPS OR BY BISHOPS

23. In addition to the adaptations provided for in the general introduction (nos. 30-33), the baptismal rite for infants admits other variations, to be determined by the conferences of bishops.

24. As is indicated in the Roman Ritual, the following matters are left to the discretion of the conferences:

- 1) As local customs may dictate, the questioning about the name of the child may be arranged in different ways: the name may have been given already or may be given during the rite of baptism.
- 2) The anointing with oil of catechumens may be omitted (nos. 50, 87).
- 3) The formula of renunciation may be shortened or extended (nos. 57, 94, 121).
- 4) If the number to be baptized is very great, the anointing with chrism may be omitted (no. 125).
- 5) The rite of *Ephphetha* may be retained (nos. 65, 101).

25. In many countries parents are sometimes not ready for the celebration of baptism or they ask for their children to be baptized, although the latter will not afterwards receive a Christian education and will even lose the faith. Since it is not enough to instruct the parents and to inquire about their faith in the course of the rite itself, conferences of bishops may issue pastoral directives, for the guidance of parish priests, to determine a longer interval between birth and baptism.

26. It is for the bishop to judge whether in his diocese catechists may give an improvised homily or speak only from a written text.

VI. ADAPTATIONS BY THE MINISTER

27. During meetings to prepare the parents for the baptism of their children, it is important that the instruction should be supported by prayer and religious rites. The various elements provided in the rite of baptism for the celebration of the word of God will prove helpful.

28. When the baptism of children is celebrated as part of the Easter Vigil, the ritual should be arranged as follows:

- 1) At a convenient time and place before the Easter Vigil, the rite of receiving the children is celebrated. The liturgy of the word may be omitted at the end, according to circumstances, and the prayer of exorcism is said, followed by the anointing with oil of catechumens.
- 2) The celebration of the sacrament (nos. 56-58, 60-63) takes place after the blessing of the water, as is indicated in the Rite of the Easter Vigil.
- 3) The assent of the celebrant and community (no. 59) is omitted, as are the presentation of the lighted candle (no. 64) and the rite of *Ephphetha* (no. 65).
- 4) The conclusion of the rite (nos. 67-71) is omitted.

29. If baptism takes place during Sunday Mass, the Mass for that Sunday is used, and the celebration takes place as follows:

- 1) The rite of receiving the children (nos. 33-43) takes place at the beginning of Mass, and the greeting and penitential rite are omitted.
- 2) In the liturgy of the word:
 - a) The readings are taken from the Mass of the Sunday or, for special reasons, from those provided in the baptismal rite.
 - b) The homily is based on the sacred texts, but should take account of the baptism which is to take place.
 - c) The creed is not said, since the profession of faith by the entire community before baptism takes its place.
 - d) The general intercessions are taken from those used in the rite of baptism (nos. 47-48, 217-220). At the end, however,

before the invocation of the saints, petitions are added for the universal Church and the needs of the world.

- 3) The celebration of baptism continues with the prayer of exorcism, anointing, and other ceremonies described in the rite (nos. 49-66).
- 4) After the celebration of baptism, the Mass continues in the usual way with the offertory.
- 5) For the blessing at the end of Mass, the priest may use one of the formulas provided in the rite of baptism (nos. 70, 247-249).

30. If baptism is celebrated during Mass on weekdays, it is arranged in the same way as on Sundays; the readings for the liturgy of the word may be taken from those that are provided in the rite of baptism (nos. 44, 186-194, 204-215).

31. In accordance with no. 34 of the general introduction, the minister may make some adaptations in the rite, as circumstances require, such as:

- 1) If the child's mother died in childbirth, this should be taken into account in the opening instruction (no. 36), general intercessions (nos. 47, 217-220), and final blessing (nos. 70, 247-248).
- 2) In the dialogue with the parents (nos. 37-38, 76-77), their answers should be taken into account: if they have not answered "baptism," but "faith," or "the grace of Christ," or "entrance into the Church," or "everlasting life," then the minister does not begin by saying "baptism," but uses "faith," or "the grace of Christ," and so forth.
- 3) The rite of bringing a baptized child to the church (nos. 165-185), which has been drawn up for use only when the child has been baptized in danger of death, should be adapted to cover other contingencies, for example, when children have been baptized during a time of religious persecution or temporary disagreement between the parents.

NOTES

1. John 3:5.
2. Saint Augustine, Epistle 98, 5: PL 33, 362.
3. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 68.
4. General Introduction, 16.
5. *Ibid.*, 23.

Introduction to the RITE OF CONFIRMATION

I. DIGNITY OF CONFIRMATION

1. Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of confirmation. In this sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord sent upon the apostles at Pentecost.
2. This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or seal of the Lord that the sacrament of confirmation cannot be repeated.

II. OFFICES AND MINISTRIES IN THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

3. It is the responsibility of the people of God to prepare the baptized for confirmation. It is the responsibility of the pastors to see that all the baptized come to the fullness of Christian initiation and are carefully prepared for confirmation.

Adult catechumens, who are to be confirmed immediately after baptism, have the help of the Christian community and, in particular, the formation which is given to them during the catechumenate, catechesis, and common liturgical celebrations. Catechists, sponsors, and members of the local church have a part in the catechumenate. The steps of the catechumenate will be appropriately adapted to those who, baptized in infancy, are confirmed only as adults.

The initiation of children into the sacramental life is for the most part the responsibility and concern of Christian parents. They are to form and gradually develop a spirit of faith in the children and, with the help of catechetical institutions, prepare them for the fruitful reception of the sacraments of confirmation and the eucharist. This responsibility of the parents is also shown by their active participation in the celebration of the sacraments.

4. Attention should be paid to the festive and solemn character of the liturgical service, and its significance for the local church, especially if all the candidates are assembled for a common celebration. The whole people of God, represented by the families and friends of the candidates and by members of the local community, will be invited to take part in the celebration and will express its faith in the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

5. Ordinarily there should be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed. The sponsor brings the candidate to receive the sacrament, presents him to the minister for the anointing, and will later help him to fulfill his baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

In view of contemporary pastoral circumstances, it is desirable that the godparent at baptism, if present, also be the sponsor at confirmation; canon 796, no. 1, is abrogated. This change expresses more clearly the relationship between baptism and confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective.

Nonetheless the choice of a special sponsor for confirmation is not excluded. Even the parents themselves may present their children for confirmation. It is for the local Ordinary to determine diocesan practice after considering local circumstances.

6. Pastors will see that the sponsor, chosen by the candidate or his family, is spiritually qualified for the office and satisfies these requirements:

- a) that he be sufficiently mature for this responsibility;
- b) that he belong to the Catholic Church and have been initiated in the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist;
- c) that he be not prohibited by law from exercising the office of sponsor.

7. The original minister of confirmation is the bishop. Ordinarily the sacrament is administered by the bishop so that there will be a more evident relationship to the first pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. After the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, they themselves gave the Spirit to the faithful through the laying on of their hands. Thus the reception of the Spirit through the ministry of the bishop shows the close bond which joins the confirmed to the Church and the mandate to be witnesses of Christ among men.

In addition to the bishop, the law gives the faculty to confirm to the following:

- a) apostolic administrators who are not bishops, prelates or abbots *nullius*, vicars and prefects apostolic, vicars capitular, within the limits of their territory and while they hold office;
- b) priests who, in virtue of an office which they lawfully hold, baptize an adult or a child old enough for catechesis or receive a validly baptized adult into full communion with the Church;
- c) in danger of death, provided the bishop is not easily available or is lawfully impeded: pastors and parochial vicars; in their absence, their parochial associates; priests who are in charge of special parishes lawfully established; administrators; substitutes; and assistants; ¹in the absence of all of the preceding, any priest who is not subject to censure or canonical penalty.

8. In case of true necessity and special reason, for example, the large number of persons to be confirmed, the minister of confirmation mentioned

in no 7 or the special minister designated by indult of the Apostolic See or by law may associate other priests with himself in the administration of this sacrament.

It is required that these priests:

- a) have a particular function or office in the diocese, namely, vicars general, episcopal vicars or delegates, district or regional vicars,² or those who by mandate of the Ordinary hold equivalent offices; or
- b) be the pastors of the places where confirmation is conferred, pastors of the places where the candidates belong, or priests who have had a special part in the catechetical preparation of the candidates.

III. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

9. The sacrament of confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: *Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Even though the laying of hands on the candidates with the prayer *All-powerful God* does not pertain to the valid giving of the sacrament, it is to be strongly emphasized for the integrity of the rite and the fuller understanding of the sacrament.

Priests who are sometimes associated with the principal minister in giving the sacrament join him in laying their hands on all the candidates together, but they do not say the prayer.

The whole rite has a twofold meaning. The laying of hands on the candidates by the bishop and the concelebrating priests is the biblical gesture by which the giving of the Holy Spirit is invoked. This is well adapted to the understanding of the Christian people. The anointing with chrism and the accompanying words express clearly the effects of the giving of the Holy Spirit. Signed with the perfumed oil, the baptized person receives the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Spirit, which conforms him more closely to Christ and gives him the grace of spreading the Lord's presence among men.

10. The chrism is consecrated by the bishop in the Mass which is ordinarily celebrated on Holy Thursday for this purpose.

11. Adult catechumens and children who are baptized at an age when they are old enough for catechesis should ordinarily be admitted to confirmation and the eucharist at the same time they receive baptism. If this is impossible, they should receive confirmation in a common celebration (see no. 4). Similarly, adults who were baptized in infancy should, after suitable preparation, receive confirmation and the eucharist in a common celebration.

With regard to children, in the Latin Church the administration of confirmation is generally postponed until about the seventh year. For pastoral reasons, however, especially to strengthen the faithful in complete obedience to Christ the Lord and in loyal testimony to him, episcopal conferences may choose an age which seems more appropriate, so that the sacrament is given at a more mature age after appropriate formation.

In this case the necessary precautions should be taken so that children will be confirmed at the proper time, even before the use of reason, when there is danger of death or other serious difficulty. They should not be deprived of the benefit of this sacrament.

12. One must be baptized to receive the sacrament of confirmation. In addition, if the baptized person has the use of reason, it is required that he be in a state of grace, properly instructed, and able to renew his baptismal promises.

It is the responsibility of the episcopal conferences to determine more precisely the pastoral methods for the proper preparation of children for confirmation.

With regard to adults, the same principles should be followed, with suitable adaptations, which are in effect in individual dioceses for the admission of catechumens to baptism and the eucharist. In particular, suitable catechesis should precede confirmation, and there should be sufficient effective relationship of the candidates with the Christian community and with individual members of the faithful to assist in their formation. This formation should be directed toward their giving the witness of a Christian life and exercising the Christian apostolate, while developing a genuine desire to participate in the eucharist (see *Introduction to Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 19).

Sometimes the preparation of a baptized adult for confirmation is part of his preparation for marriage. In such cases, if it is foreseen that the conditions for a fruitful reception of confirmation cannot be satisfied, the local Ordinary will judge whether it is better to defer confirmation until after the marriage.

If one who has the use of reason is confirmed in danger of death, he should be prepared spiritually, so far as possible, depending upon the circumstances of the individual case.

13. Ordinarily confirmation takes place within Mass in order to express more clearly the fundamental connection of this sacrament with the entirety of Christian initiation. The latter reaches its culmination in the communion of the body and blood of Christ. The newly confirmed should therefore participate in the eucharist which completes their Christian initiation.

If the candidates for confirmation are children who have not received the eucharist and are not admitted to their first communion at this liturgical celebration or if there are other special circumstances, confirmation should be

celebrated outside Mass. When this occurs, there should first be a celebration of the word of God.

It is fitting that the minister of confirmation celebrate the Mass or, better, concelebrate the Mass, especially with the priests who may join him in the administration of the sacrament.

If the Mass is celebrated by someone else, it is proper that the bishop preside over the liturgy of the word and that he give the blessing at the end of Mass.

Emphasis should be given to the celebration of the word of God which begins the rite of confirmation. It is from the hearing of the word of God that the many-sided power of the Holy Spirit flows upon the Church and upon each one of the baptized and confirmed, and it is by this word that God's will is manifest in the life of Christians.

The saying of the Lord's Prayer by the newly confirmed with the rest of the people is also of very great importance, whether during Mass before communion or outside Mass before the blessing, because it is the Spirit who prays in us, and in the Spirit the Christian says "*Abba, Father.*"

14. The pastor should record the names of the minister, those confirmed, parents and sponsors, and the date and place of confirmation in a special book. The notation in the baptismal register should also be made according to law.

15. If the pastor of the newly confirmed person is not present, the minister should promptly inform him of the confirmation, either personally or through a representative.

IV. ADAPTATIONS IN THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

16. In virtue of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (art. 63b), episcopal conferences have the right to prepare a title in particular rituals corresponding to this title of the Roman Pontifical on confirmation. This is to be adapted to the needs of individual regions so that, after confirmation of their action by the Apostolic See, the ritual may be used in the territory.³

17. The episcopal conference will consider whether, in view of local circumstances and the culture and traditions of the people, it is opportune:

- a) to make suitable adaptations of the formulas for the renewal of baptismal promises and professions, either following the text in the rite of baptism or accommodating these formulas to the circumstances of the candidates for confirmation;
- b) to introduce a different manner for the minister to give the sign of peace after the anointing, either to each individual or to all the newly confirmed together.

18. The minister of confirmation may introduce some explanations into the rite in individual cases, in view of the capacity of the candidates for confirmation. He may also make appropriate accommodations in the existing texts, for example, by expressing these in a kind of dialogue, especially with children.

When confirmation is given by a minister who is not a bishop, whether by concession of the general law or by special indult of the Apostolic See, it is fitting for him to mention in the homily that the bishop is the original minister of the sacrament and the reason why priests receive the faculty to confirm from the law or by an indult of the Apostolic See.

V. PREPARATIONS

19. The following should be prepared for confirmation:

- a) vestments for the celebration of Mass, for the bishop and for the priests who concelebrate with him; if the bishop does not celebrate the Mass, he and the priests who may administer confirmation with him should participate in the Mass wearing the vestments for confirmation: alb, stole, and, for the minister of confirmation, cope; these vestments are also worn for confirmation outside Mass;
- b) chairs for the bishop and the priests who assist him;
- c) vessel or vessels of chrism;
- d) Roman Pontifical or Ritual;
- e) preparations for Mass and for communion under both kinds, if it is given in this way;
- f) preparations for the washing of the ministers' hands after the anointing.

NOTES

1. See canons 451, 471, 476, 216, §4, 472, 474, 475.
2. See canon 217, §1.
3. See *Rite of Baptism for Children* (1969), General Instruction on Christian Initiation, nos. 30-33.

