

Christian Initiation Process
Frequently Asked Questions
March, 2015

I. Is it permissible for someone over the age of 7 to be baptized and then wait to be confirmed by the Bishop?

1. NO*. Church law is clear that anyone over the age of 7 who seeks Baptism needs to be prepared to celebrate Confirmation at the time of their Baptism, as well as receive the Eucharist. Similarly anyone over the age of 7 who is a baptized non-Catholic seeking to enter the Catholic Church needs to be prepared for Confirmation and reception of Communion along with their Profession of Faith. Such persons should be included, if possible, in the presentation to the Bishop at the Cathedral on the First Sunday of Lent. Those who come into the Church during the year should be invited to come to Mass and be presented to the Bishop when he comes to the parish for Confirmation. (Memo from Faith Formation, March 8, 2005) * In the rare case that a person lacks the use of reason, they may be confirmed even if they are not able to receive the Eucharist.

II. When do the people in RCIA celebrate their First Confession?

2. Confession can only be celebrated by a person who has already been baptized. Baptized candidates seeking Full Communion can approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation when they are ready. They are to be encouraged to monthly celebrate the Sacrament as part of their journey towards Confirmation and Eucharist. Those who will be baptized at the Eater Vigil will have all their sins removed by their Baptism. They should be prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation a few weeks later, but certainly at some point during the Easter season. Both groups should celebrate monthly for at least 10-12 months as part of their spiritual journey. All are free to choose the priest they confess to and to choose a suitable opportunity at either a regular scheduled time, or a special Reconciliation service, or even by appointment with a priest.

Bishop Strickland has issued a statement to all the faithful in the Diocese of Tyler regarding the Sacrament of Confession March 2015. "As part of our encouraging our youth to become committed lifelong Catholics, I want to establish the practice of beginning confession for all Catholic children before their 8th birthday. Generally this would be at the age of 7, but if the parents feel they are ready before they may begin at 6 years of age. I encourage monthly confessions for children as part of laying a foundation for a lifelong living Faith."

III. How do we reply to concerns about the RCIA rituals extending Mass?

3. Appropriate catechesis is necessary for the community to experience their role in the process of Christian Initiation. Also the rites can help parishioners reflect upon their experience of the Sacraments. If there is no catechesis it can be hard for people to fully, consciously, actively enter into the rituals.

IV. What are the Sacramental Records for RCIA?

4. A sacramental record has to be entered for anyone who is received into Full Communion with the Church. This must be recorded either in the parish's Profession of Faith Register (if the parish has one) or in the parish Baptismal Register (every parish must have an official registry book for Baptisms). When the date of the Profession of Faith is recorded, the Sacraments celebrated need to be clearly noted, i.e.: First Communion and Confirmation. Also, if they are married, a notation must also be made in the registry. The Profession of Faith record serves the place of a Baptismal record for the new Catholic as the place of official record. The parish will be notified of any future sacraments to be noted in the registry. If the parish does not have "Profession of Faith certificates" one can simply use a Baptismal Certificate, by clearly noting on it Profession of Faith. (Canon 877; Diocesan Pastoral Manual see Flc3, page F-12. Also Baptismal records FIIG, page F-39).

V. When can an individual who is validly baptized celebrate the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist?

5. When they are received into Full Communion with the Church. Generally this is done at a Mass, if they are received outside of Mass, they are confirmed at that time, then receive the Eucharist at the next Mass they attend. The RCIA rites point out that this is generally at a Sunday liturgy. This should not generally be done at the Easter Vigil. (see National Statutes 32,33). If the Baptized person is part of a household of faith with unbaptized who are being baptized at the Easter Vigil, then it is appropriate that they be received into Full Communion at the Easter Vigil as well.

VI. When should marriages be validated during the process for Christian Initiation?

6. Marriage is sacred by nature and it does not require the parties to be Christians. Proper preparation and permissions are necessary as for all marriages in the Church. The reason to address the marriage as soon as reasonably possible is that if the couple is engaged in marital relations outside of marriage this is a serious sin and stands in the way of their being Baptized. Non-Catholic couples with no prior marriages do not need to have their marriages validated. Prior marriages must each be addressed before a person who is civilly married can be Baptized or received into Full Communion with the Church. As soon as the couple is ready, and the prior marriages have been addressed, the marriage should be validated. If both parties are non-Catholic it is sufficient to address the prior marriages, and not necessary to validate their civil marriage.

VII. What procedure can a priest in the Diocese of Tyler confirm an individual who is validly baptized either Catholic or non Catholic?

7. To Confirm a Baptized Catholic, the priest needs specific delegation from the Bishop (or Vicar General). Bishop will generally grant this for Catholics that are part of a household of faith coming thru "RCIA". Generally, if they are not involved with RCIA, they should be confirmed when the Bishop comes to the parish for Confirmation Mass.

For Baptized, Non-Catholics, if the priest has faculties to receive adults into the Church (which priests in the Diocese of Tyler are given) when they receive the person into Full Communion, the law gives them the permission and the obligation of confirming them. This Confirmation has to be done at the time of the Reception into Full Communion.

For unbaptized, if the person is over the age of 7, they should be prepared for all the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) and receive them at the same Mass.