

Norms for Implementing the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*
in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

OCIA: Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (2024)

NSCIA: [National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults](#) (2024)

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I. CATECHUMENS AND THE ELECT

(OCIA Part I, Chapter I)

1. Catechumens are unbaptized individuals seeking full initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist) in the Catholic Church. Any unbaptized person over the age of reason (presumed at age 7) who wishes to enter the Catholic Church must go through the entirety of the OCIA and receive all the Sacraments at the Easter Vigil. Children going through OCIA may require a distinct program of preparation from adults (see Part X, no. 74 below).
2. **Entering and Recording the Catechumenate:** Inquirers become members of the catechumenate via the Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate (OCIA 41), which can be done at the parish multiple times during the year. An official register of catechumens is to be maintained at each parish (NSCIA 14, §1). Per OCIA 46 and NSCIA 14, §2, after the celebration of the Rite of Entrance, the following information should be recorded in the parish register:
 1. The names of the catechumens
 2. Date and place of birth of the catechumens
 3. Name of the minister
 4. Names of the sponsors (godparents)
 5. Day and place of their entrance into the catechumenate
3. **Privileges of the Catechumenate:** Being a catechumen is a canonical state, and it carries the privilege of Catholic funeral rites and burial in a Catholic cemetery (Canon 1183, §1), the reception of blessing (Canon 1170), as well as the same opportunities as Catholic parents concerning enrollment of children in Catholic schools (see NSCIA 9, §1, 2°).
4. However, “[b]ecause liturgical ministries arise from Christian Baptism, it is inappropriate for catechumens to proclaim the Word of God or serve at the altar during the liturgy” (NSCIA 11).
5. **Length of the Catechumenate:** The catechumenate ideally lasts “from at least the Easter Time of one year until the beginning of the Easter Time of the next year; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year” (NSCIA 4). At a minimum, however, it should begin no later than September, if a catechumen is to be initiated the following spring at the Easter Vigil. Permission of the local Ordinary is needed to approve a significantly abbreviated version of the OCIA for individuals (see Part II, no. 17 below).
6. In the Period of the Catechumenate, catechumens undergo a number of rites during the year before Lent (OCIA 75): celebrations of the Word of God, minor exorcisms, and the blessing and anointing rites of catechumens.
7. Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens (administered by a priest or deacon) should ideally be done during this catechumenate period (see OCIA 98-100), or else during the Lenten Period of Purification and Enlightenment. It should not be done during the Easter Vigil.

8. **Diocesan Rite of Election:** The catechumens then must participate in the diocesan Rite of Election at the beginning of Lent, thereby becoming members of the “elect.” All parishes are expected to bring their catechumens to the Rite of Election, whereby they are deemed ready to proceed to the Easter sacraments that year.

A parish Rite of Sending Catechumens for Election (OCIA 106) beforehand is optional.

9. **Book of the Elect:** Only catechumens sign the Book of the Elect that is presented to the bishop at the Rite of Election. Every parish must maintain and keep a Book of the Elect (NSCIA 15).
10. During Lent, the elect should participate in the Scrutinies and other rites as prescribed in the **Period of Purification and Enlightenment** (OCIA Part I, Chapter 1, starting with OCIA 138). In particular, the First, Second, and Third Scrutinies are designed to be celebrated with the elect on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent respectively, utilizing the three ritual Masses found in the *Roman Missal* under “For the Celebration of the Scrutinies.”

As noted in the *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. 745-747, the Year A readings are always prescribed to accompany the Scrutinies on those Sundays (the *Lectionary* further allows for the other Sunday Masses at a parish also to utilize the Year A readings on those Sundays, if such uniformity would prove helpful during Years B and C).

The Handing on of the Creed and the Handing on of the Lord’s Prayer can take place either at weekday Masses or as a Liturgy of the Word outside Mass.

The Rites of Immediate Preparation take place on Holy Saturday, before the Vigil.

11. **Sacraments of Initiation** - The preparation of the elect will normally culminate in receiving Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.
12. It is not appropriate to withhold or delay Confirmation for any members of the elect (including children over the age of reason) who have gone through OCIA and are baptized. As per Canon 883, 2°, the priest who baptizes a person at the Easter Vigil or any other time also confirms him or her immediately, during that same liturgical celebration.
13. Only for a grave reason would Confirmation and the Eucharist not be conferred immediately after Baptism (Canon 866). If Confirmation is delayed until a later time, the priest loses the faculty to confirm.
14. **Mystagogy:** Catechesis in the form of Mystagogy continues after initiation (OCIA Part I, Chapter I, Period of Mystagogy), as the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation enables deeper entry into the community of believers and greater understanding of the mysteries of faith. It is of special importance that neophytes form relationships with the parish community and are accompanied in the Christian life.

As noted in OCIA 247, the Sundays of Easter Time are a key opportunity for mystagogical catechesis and for fostering the integration of the neophytes with the parish community.

The formal Easter Period of Mystagogy closes at Pentecost, and it is appropriate to host a celebration for the neophytes around this time.

The formation and supporting of neophytes should continue well into the future.

II. THE SIMPLER ORDER OF ADULT INITIATION (OCIA Part II, Chapter III)

15. For the elect who miss the Easter Vigil:

If individual unbaptized members of the elect were on track to be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil but had to miss the Vigil for some reason (e.g., illness or unavoidable travel), then the parish can arrange for them to complete their initiation using either **a.)** the regular “Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation” from OCIA Part I, Chapter I, Third Step (being attentive to rubrics that direct what to do outside the Easter Vigil), or **b.)** elements of the “Abbreviated Form” from the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation.

Presuming the individual completed the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the use of the Simpler Order may begin with the Celebration of Baptism (OCIA 353) after the homily and intercessions, thereby omitting the Rite of Reception, the Prayer of Exorcism, and the Laying on of Hands in OCIA 340-352.

In either case, this should be celebrated within the Ritual Mass for the Conferral of Baptism, with readings chosen from the *Lectionary for Mass*, Christian Initiation Apart from the Easter Vigil (nos. 751-755). If it takes place on a day when ritual Masses are not permitted (e.g., a Sunday of Easter), then the Mass and readings of the day are used.

16. For those who miss extended portions of the Order of the Catechumenate:

If – on account of illness, advanced age, change of residence, or another serious reason – a catechumen is unable to complete not only the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil but also entire key stretches of the Order of the Catechumenate (such as the Period of Purification and Enlightenment), then the “Abbreviated Form” from the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation should be utilized (see OCIA 336). It is celebrated within the context of Mass as described in no. 15 above.

In addition, according to the pastor’s discretion, some of the potential adaptations for an “Expanded Form” listed in OCIA 334 may be incorporated into the celebration of the Simpler Order, depending on which elements of the Order of the Catechumenate the catechumen missed. Likewise, individual elements of the Simpler Order’s Rite of Reception may be omitted if the catechumen has already undergone similar rites.

17. **For those seeking an accelerated Order of the Catechumenate:**

In extraordinary circumstances, when an individual's Christian conversion and religious maturity recommend that he or she may receive Baptism without delay – or on a timeline significantly shorter than that normally prescribed for the catechumenate – appeal can be made to the local Ordinary for permission to use the “Abbreviated Form” from the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation (see OCIA 331 and OCIA 336). It is celebrated within the context of Mass as described in no. 15 above, and particular elements from OCIA 334 may be added according to the pastor's discretion.

If the individual given this permission is not yet a catechumen, and if there will be some time before he or she undergoes the Simpler Order, then the Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate (OCIA 48) should be celebrated as soon as possible since the catechumenate is an important canonical state.

18. **For catechumens whose irregular marriages are resolved after Easter:**

As previously noted, no catechumens in an unresolved irregular marriage can be admitted to the Rite of Election nor proceed to Baptism until they are free to enter into a canonical marriage (NSCIA norm 7). If such an irregular marriage is resolved in the course of the calendar year sometime after the Easter Vigil – and presuming the individuals in question are fully catechized and would have been initiated at Easter if not for the irregular marriage – then pastors may arrange for such catechumens to be initiated as soon as possible, using the “Abbreviated Form” of the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation (see no. 16 above).

See Part VII below for more on irregular marriages and OCIA.

19. **For those in danger of death or at the point of death:**

Anyone in near danger of death who requests Baptism, whether or not already a catechumen, may be initiated with the “Shorter Order of Adult Initiation to be Used in Near Danger of Death or at the Point of Death” (OCIA Part II, Chapter IV), while being attentive to the stipulations in OCIA 371. This order may be used by priests, deacons, or laypersons; but of course only priests would also confer Confirmation as noted in the order itself. (This same rite is also found in Appendix II of *The Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care*.)

If “at the point of death, or if death is threatening, when time is pressing, the minister, omitting everything else, pours water, even if it has not been blessed, but is natural, onto the head of the sick person, saying the usual formula” (OCIA 373).

If someone initiated while in danger of death returns to health, the prescriptions in OCIA 374 for completing catechesis or sacraments are to be followed.

III. CANDIDATES FOR FULL COMMUNION

(OCIA Part II, Chapter VI)

20. Candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church are non-Catholics who have been validly baptized, and are now seeking to enter the Church and complete their initiation by receiving Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist.
21. To clarify, in the OCIA text, the word “candidate” can refer either to candidates for full communion (OCIA Part II, Chapter VI) or adult candidates who were baptized Catholic as infants and did not receive any catechesis (OCIA Part II, Chapter V – treated further in Part IV of these norms below). As noted in nos. 25 and 29 below, some of the rites intended for baptized Catholics in Chapter V may occasionally be appropriate for candidates for full communion.
22. “The term ‘convert’ is reserved strictly for those converted to Christian belief and never used of those baptized Christians who are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church” (NSCIA 18).
23. **Duration of Preparation:** There is no set duration for the OCIA when it comes to candidates for full communion. It simply depends on the situation. Some may require the same amount of catechesis as catechumens, and so could follow that catechetical track. Others may require very little additional catechesis, and so their time in the OCIA would be shorter. Per OCIA 473: for those already well-catechized, “the rite by which a person born and baptized in a separated ecclesial Community is received into the full communion of the Catholic Church according to the Latin Rite is so arranged that no further burden is imposed than what is necessary to restore communion and unity (cf. Acts 15:28).” Those baptized persons who have lived as Christians and need only instruction in the Catholic tradition and a degree of probation within the Catholic community should not be asked to undergo a full program parallel to the catechumenate.
24. Baptized non-Catholics who are undergoing preparation as candidates for full communion are entitled to a funeral Mass. (Note: according to the Church’s tradition, the name of the baptized non-Catholic cannot be included in the Canon of the Mass, although it certainly could be used in the Prayer of the Faithful).
25. As noted in OCIA 478, candidates for full communion may participate in the optional Rite of Welcoming (OCIA Part II, Chapter V, A), as well as the optional Penitential Rite (OCIA Part II, Chapter V, D) that takes place during Lent.
26. **Diocesan Calling to Continuing Conversion:** If their catechetical formation timeline tracks or coincides with that of catechumens in the parish, these candidates for full communion should be asked to participate in the Calling to Continuing Conversion, which is combined with the Rite of Election in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend at the beginning of Lent.

Candidates whose preparation and reception into full communion are completed entirely at a different time of year need not participate in the Calling to Continuing Conversion (see no. 31 below).

A parish Rite of Sending the Candidates for the Calling to Continuing Conversion (OCIA 434) beforehand is optional.

27. Candidates do not sign the Book of Elect.
28. Candidates are not dismissed during parish Masses like catechumens (OCIA 545 & 560). Candidates also do not receive anointing with the Oil of Catechumens.
29. **Optional rites depending on formation:** Beyond the rites noted in no. 25 above, per OCIA 407, candidates can potentially participate in appropriately adapted versions of the catechumenal Rites of Handing On of the Creed or the Lord's Prayer, or even the Presentation of the Gospels. But these should only be done with baptized individuals who have effectively received no Christian instruction and formation.
30. **Confession:** All candidates must receive the Sacrament of Penance before completing initiation. An opportunity for this should be provided in the weeks beforehand.
31. **Reception into Full Communion:** A candidate for full communion who has been properly catechized and is deemed ready may be brought into the Catholic Church by a priest anytime during the year via the Profession of Faith, celebration of Confirmation, and reception of Holy Communion (see OCIA 487 for these rites).
32. For candidates for full communion whose catechetical formation tracks with catechumens of the parish, their admission into the Church can be done as part of the Easter Vigil (using the combined rite of OCIA 562), but it is also appropriate to select another suitable time, such as at Mass on a Sunday of Lent (though receptions into full communion should not be done in the same Mass as Scrutinies for the elect). It should not be done during Holy Week or during the Triduum before the Easter Vigil.
33. **Confirmation:** As per OCIA 493, the priest who administers the Profession of Faith should then confirm the candidate during the same liturgical celebration. If Confirmation is delayed until a later time, the priest loses the faculty to confirm (cf. Canon 883, 2°).
34. **Recording Reception into Full Communion:** A register specifically for those received into the full communion of the Catholic Church is to be kept at every parish. Per NSCIA 16, the following information should be included for each reception into full communion:
 1. Name of the candidate
 2. Names of parents
 3. Date and place of birth
 4. Place and date of the (non-Catholic) Baptism, per OCIA 486
 5. Date and place of reception into full communion
 6. Names of minister and sponsors for reception into full communion
 7. "If married, a notation of the spouse, date, and place of marriage should be noted in the register. Any future marriage is also to be noted in the register." (NSCIA 16, §3)
 8. (The Confirmation would also be recorded in the parish Confirmation register)

If records of receptions into full communion were previously kept with the parish's baptismal records, it should be noted at the beginning of the full communion register that those prior records are found in the baptismal record book.

IV. THOSE WHO WERE BAPTIZED CATHOLIC BUT NEVER CATECHIZED

(OCIA Part II, Chapter V)

35. These individuals were baptized Catholics as infants, but for whatever reason were uncatechized and have not received Confirmation or the Eucharist.
36. They will often be able to participate in OCIA catechetical programs alongside catechumens and candidates for full communion. They may participate in the optional Rite of Welcoming (OCIA Part II, Chapter V, A) and the optional Penitential Rite (OCIA Part II, Chapter V, D) during Lent. In addition, they can participate in appropriately adapted versions of the catechumenal Rites of Handing On of the Creed or the Lord's Prayer, or even the Presentation of the Gospels (see OCIA 407).
37. **Diocesan Calling to Continuing Conversion:** Uncatechized Catholic candidates whose catechetical formation timeline coincides with that of catechumens or candidates for full communion in the parish (culminating in Lent and Easter) should be invited to participate in the diocesan Calling to Continuing Conversion.

They could also take part in the optional parish Rite of Sending the Candidates for the Calling to Continuing Conversion (OCIA 434) beforehand, along with candidates for full communion.

38. They must receive the Sacrament of Penance before completing initiation.
39. They do not make the same Profession of Faith made by candidates for full communion (the one found in OCIA 491 is intended only for those who are baptized but not yet Catholic). Rather, the "profession" for those who were baptized Catholic but never catechized consists of renewing their baptismal promises. This renewal can occur either at the Easter Vigil, or immediately before receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.
40. **Confirmation:** They may receive first Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil (or another appropriate Mass), but they may not be confirmed by a priest. Only the bishop may confirm those who were baptized Catholic but never catechized. The only exception would be if the bishop officially delegates a priest to confirm on a case-by-case basis (Canon 884, §1).

As such, these individuals will usually be confirmed by the bishop at one of the diocesan "Adult Confirmations" in May or June. (It would be best for their first Holy Communion to be received prior to the Adult Confirmation Mass). Please ensure that the individuals' names are submitted when registration materials for the Adult Confirmations are sent to pastors in the spring. These Adult Confirmations are recorded in the register of the hosting cathedral.

V. CONFIRMATIONS – WHO MAY CONFIRM WHOM

41. By Church law, the priest who baptizes an adult member of the elect at the Easter Vigil must then confirm that same individual during that Mass (Canons 883, 2° and 885, §2). Especially for this reason, deacons should not baptize individuals over the age of reason, as the priest would not then have the faculty to confirm.
42. Similarly, a priest who accepts a baptized non-Catholic candidate into the full communion of the Catholic Church via the Profession of Faith should then confirm that individual (Canons 883, 2° and 885, §2).
43. Both the situations described above also apply to children of catechetical age (7 or older) who participate in OCIA. Even though it may seem preferable for a child to be confirmed with his or her peers, Confirmation should not be delayed for a child who is a member of the elect or a candidate for full communion.
44. A priest may not confirm anyone who was baptized Catholic but never catechized, or who was baptized Catholic and received First Communion but never received Confirmation. Only a bishop may confirm these individuals (typically at the Adult Confirmations) unless specific delegation is given to the priest by the diocesan bishop. See no. 40 above.
45. Children who were baptized Catholic and are over the age of reason need to be confirmed by the bishop at the normal age of 8th grade or older. Older teenagers could attend the diocesan Adult Confirmation (see Part IV, no. 40 above), but other children who are at least in 8th grade should join a regularly scheduled parish Confirmation. In the case of a child who begins late in the catechetical cycle, if additional time is needed to ensure he or she is adequately prepared, it may be better to join the next parish Confirmation class.
46. Any priest can confirm a baptized Catholic who is in danger of death (Canon 883, 3°).
47. **Exceptions – A couple additional, specific categories exist whereby a priest can confirm an adult who was baptized Catholic:**
 1. - Individuals who were baptized Catholic but then formally apostatized from the Church through a total repudiation of Christianity. (Note: If the individual was aware at the time of apostasy that the act carries with it *latae sententiae* excommunication [cf. Canon 1364], then the individual must have the excommunication lifted by the competent authority.)
 2. - Individuals who were baptized Catholic but who then (through no fault of their own) were instructed in or adhered to a non-Catholic religion (including Protestantism, etc.).

In either case, a priest bringing such a person back into the Church via Confession and a Profession of Faith has the faculty to confirm that individual at the same time. Since these situations can be complex, it would often be preferable to send the individual to be confirmed by the bishop at the Adult Confirmation. If any doubt or question exists about a particular scenario, please contact the Office of the Vicar General for clarification.

VI. GODPARENTS AND SPONSORS

48. Catechumens have godparents, while candidates have a sponsor (one sponsor per candidate). The requirements for both roles (outlined in Canon 893, §1 and Canon 874, §1) are the same:
1. have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function
 2. normally be at least 16 years old
 3. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith as a practicing Catholic (including being validly married according to Church law, if the person is married)
 4. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared
 5. not be the father or mother of the one being baptized or confirmed
49. In the case of Baptism, there may be one male godparent, one female godparent, or one of each (OCIA 10). Thus there may be two godparents, but never both male or both female.
50. There is a preference (though not a necessity) that a baptismal godparent also serve as a Confirmation sponsor. Anyone being confirmed only has a single sponsor.
51. Please note that at the diocesan Rite of Election and the Calling to Continuing Conversion, only one godparent or sponsor may formally accompany the catechumen or candidate. (The same is true at diocesan Confirmation Masses.)
52. A baptized non-Catholic can function only as a “witness” of Baptism – not as a godparent. A Catholic may do the same for a person being baptized in another ecclesial Community. (See *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, no. 98)
53. An Eastern Orthodox may for a just cause act as godparent—only if together with a Catholic godparent—at the Baptism of a Catholic infant or adult, so long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person being baptized, and it is clear that the godparent is a suitable one. A Catholic may be godparent in an Eastern Orthodox Church, if he or she is so invited. In this case, the duty of providing for the Christian education binds in the first place the godparent who belongs to the Church in which the child is baptized (*ibid.*, no. 98).

VII. IRREGULAR MARRIAGES AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED TO MARRIAGE

54. By law, any individual who is in an irregular marriage situation (e.g., invalid marriages, etc.) may be admitted into the order of the catechumenate. However, per NSCIA 7, no catechumens in an unresolved irregular marriage can be admitted to the Rite of Election nor proceed to Baptism until they are free to enter into a canonical marriage. (See also Part II, no. 18 of this document for how to resume OCIA if an irregular marriage is resolved.)

55. Likewise, baptized non-Catholic candidates for full communion cannot complete their entrance into full communion if they are in an irregular marriage.
56. Baptized adult Catholics seeking Confirmation cannot be confirmed if they are in an irregular marriage.
57. **Convalidations:** When a marriage convalidation is needed so that individuals can complete OCIA, the convalidation should take place first, and then the completion of the Sacraments of Initiation and/or Profession of Faith afterwards. Trying to combine convalidation and OCIA rites in a single liturgy is discouraged.
58. Please note that non-Catholic couples who were validly married either civilly or in a non-Catholic church do not require another marriage ceremony of any kind upon entering the Church. If a spouse is unbaptized, the marriage automatically becomes sacramental when that spouse receives Baptism.
59. Likewise, if one of the spouses in the previous example received a declaration of nullity for a previous marriage, their current marriage would not need to be convalidated (since the previous “marriage” never actually occurred).
60. If there are any marriage situations involving an Eastern Orthodox or Eastern Catholic, please consult with the diocesan chancery, since those situations can be complex.
61. Please consult with the Diocesan Tribunal with any additional specific questions regarding irregular marriages, validity, annulments, etc.

VIII. BAPTISMAL RECORDS

62. For catechumens, as prescribed in Canon 877, §1, the official recording of Baptism should include the name of the baptized, along with the names of the minister, parents, and sponsors (godparents), as well as the place and date of the conferral of the Baptism, and the date and place of the individual’s birth.

For candidates for full communion, whatever baptismal records might exist should be obtained from the non-Catholic ecclesial community in which they were baptized. Upon reception into the Church, the baptismal information is entered into the parish register of those received into full communion (see Part III, no. 34 above).

63. When a baptismal certificate cannot be obtained, an affidavit can be completed by at least one witness or by the one who was baptized, if that person was an adult (age 18) at the time of his/her Baptism (see Canon 876). The Office of Worship can provide an affidavit form for such situations upon request.
64. **In the case of adopted children**, there is particular law for the United States regarding recording and disclosing such Baptisms, provided here by the USCCB: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/canon-law/complementary->

[norms/canon-877-3-recording-the-baptism-of-adopted-children.cfm](#). As noted below in Part X, no. 76, Baptism should not be conferred until an adoption is legally finalized.

IX. CONDITIONAL BAPTISMS

65. Situations may arise in which a prudent doubt exists concerning the validity of the Baptism of a candidate for full communion (see OCIA 480). This may involve questions of water, the Trinitarian formula, or proper intent. A list of non-Catholic ecclesial communities and whether each generally practices valid Baptisms can be obtained from the Office of Worship. However, note that independent investigation may be required to ascertain validity when inquirers were baptized at local, nondenominational churches.
66. As specified in Canon 869, if after thorough investigation a reason to doubt a Baptism's validity remains, then a conditional Baptism should be conferred – but only after carefully explaining the rationale to the person (and the parents, if applicable). **Recognizing that it is often difficult to verify details of non-Catholic Baptisms (especially those in independent and nondenominational communities), parishes are encouraged to administer conditional Baptisms whenever valid Baptism cannot be positively verified.**
67. Liturgically speaking, a non-Catholic candidate requiring conditional Baptism should not be treated as a catechumen. A conditional Baptism should also not be done at the Easter Vigil. Ideally, it should be resolved before the Rite of Election/Calling to Continuing Conversion, so that the individual is not treated as a catechumen.
68. However, if someone's Baptism was clearly invalid (e.g., there is no doubt it was done wrong, or if it was done in a community that, for instance, does not believe in the Trinity), then the individual should simply be treated as unbaptized, and therefore a catechumen.
69. **Conducting a Conditional Baptism:** When conditional Baptism is found necessary, it should be celebrated privately rather than at a public liturgical assembly of the community. The candidate's profession and reception into full communion should then take place later at a separate liturgy with the other candidates for full communion. Someone who has received conditional Baptism should still receive the Sacrament of Confession afterwards, confessing all the sins of his or her life, as any candidate would.
70. **Rites for a Conditional Baptism:** A conditional Baptism can be conducted simply by asking the questions before Baptism (OCIA 224 & 225) and then performing the Baptism itself (OCIA 226), without any change in the prescribed wording.
71. **Recording:** Both the original (questionably valid) Baptism and the conditional Baptism should be recorded alongside the person's Profession of Faith in the parish full communion register.
72. **Someone with a dubious Catholic Baptism who is then conditionally baptized must be confirmed by the bishop.**

X. CHILDREN AND INITIATION

73. **Unbaptized children under the age of reason are simply baptized as infants, with the *Order of Baptism of Children*.** Depending on the circumstances, this can be done during the Easter Vigil, with the instructions and rites provided in the Combined Rites (OCIA Part II, Appendix I, Section 4). But otherwise they do not undergo any OCIA rites, and they would receive First Communion and Confirmation (from the bishop) at the usual ages.
74. **OCIA Part II, Chapter II treats the Order of Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age.** In general, children of any age can participate in a parish's OCIA rites together with the adult catechumens or candidates who are going through the program (including the Easter Vigil), unless circumstances recommend otherwise.

Indeed, older children (between the ages of 14 and 17) are canonically in a special category of adults when it comes to Baptism (see Canon 863), and so therefore appropriately participate in rites together with adults over the age of 18.

But Part II, Chapter II does offer some parallel rites adapted for children preparing for Baptism, which may be useful if younger children (between the ages of 7 and 13) comprise a large enough contingent of a parish's catechumens such that they might benefit from their own rites.

For younger children, at least the First Step (Entrance into the Catechumenate) and Second Step (Scrutinies or Penitential Rites) provided in Part II, Chapter II should be completed, if they are not participating alongside adults in the Rite for Entrance or the Scrutinies from OCIA Part I, Chapter I. But, strictly speaking, younger children are not required to participate in the other adult rites from the Period of the Catechumenate or the Period of Purification and Enlightenment as found in OCIA Part I, Chapter I.

75. **Children and the Rite of Election and Calling to Continuing Conversion:** Per OCIA 277, the Rite of Election is merely optional for children of catechetical age. Moreover, the diocesan Rite of Election and Calling to Continuing Conversion as celebrated in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend utilizes all the texts intended for adults (without incorporating parents, as the children's Rite of Election adaptation does).

As such, it is appropriate that older children (aged 14 to 17, as noted above in no. 74) attend the Rite of Election and Calling to Continuing Conversion in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

However, younger children (ages 7 to 13) should not attend the Rite of Election and Calling to Continuing Conversion, as these diocesan rites are ritually and logistically intended for older participants. The only exception in which younger children may attend these diocesan rites is if they are part of a whole family who is entering the Church together, or if at least one parent will be going through the rites as well.

If there is a strong desire at a parish for younger children (ages 7 to 13) who are preparing for Baptism to undergo the children's Rite of Election, then it can be celebrated by the pastor at the parish as described in OCIA 280.

76. **Parental permission is required for younger children to proceed in OCIA.** This applies to both Baptism and reception into full communion for any child between the ages of 7 and 13. In speaking of the initiation of children of catechetical age, OCIA 252 says, “They come to Christian Initiation, brought by either parents or guardians, or moved on their own initiative with the permission of these same people.” For the Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate, OCIA 260 further states, “Parents or guardians of the children, as far as possible, should be present. But if they are unable to come, they indicate the assent they have given to the children.”
77. **For an adopted child to be baptized or brought into the Church,** the adoption must be legally finalized. This is necessary because if the adoption for some reason falls through, the child would be faced with the serious situation of not knowing he or she is a Catholic, and/or not having anyone to raise them in the faith. (See Part VIII, no. 64 above for how to record such Baptisms.)
78. **Confirmation should be conferred at the same time as Baptism or reception into full communion for any children of catechetical age (7 or older).** See nos. 12, 13, and 43 above.
79. Any child who was baptized Catholic and is now undergoing catechesis for Confirmation must be confirmed by a bishop (see Part V, nos. 44-45 above).
80. **Catechesis:** As acknowledged in OCIA 254, catechesis of children who are catechumens or candidates for full communion can potentially be done together with their baptized peers. But age-appropriate catechesis on Confirmation should of course be specially incorporated for such children before they receive the sacrament.
81. **Children age 7 or older who were baptized non-Catholic must make their own Profession of Faith to enter the Church** (if under age 14, the parental permission noted in no. 76 above is required). They also receive Confirmation and First Communion at the same liturgical celebration (see the rites beginning at OCIA 487).
82. **For a child below the age of reason who was baptized non-Catholic:**
- A. If the child is under the age of reason, at least one parent must make a Profession of Faith on behalf of the child (see no. 83 below). If neither parent is Catholic, reception into full communion cannot yet happen.
 - In some cases, one might try to ascertain if the child really already has the use of reason (potentially true for a 6-year-old). If that is determined to be the case, then he/she can make a Profession of Faith on his/her own and be brought into the Church by making the Profession of Faith, being confirmed, and receiving Communion. It is recorded as normal.
 - B. If the child is clearly under the age of reason and neither parent is Catholic, that child would have to wait until he/she has attained the age of reason OR until after a parent has made the Profession of Faith to become Catholic, in which case the parent can then make the profession on behalf of the child (see no. 83 below).

- C. If family members are all being initiated at the same time, a parent must make the profession first, and then the parent can make the profession on the child's behalf.
- D. In the case of a child below the age of reason, both First Communion and Confirmation for that child would have to wait until the usual age (Confirmation in this case must be conferred by the bishop at the usual age).

83. **How to make the profession on behalf of a child below the age of reason:**

- A. **If it is just the child being brought into full communion**, one could do one of the following outside Mass:

Option 1

- Use the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith from the *Order of Baptism of Children* nos. 56-59 (replacing references to Baptism in the introduction with ones about full communion with the Catholic Church). The parent(s) says the "I do's" on behalf of the child as they would for an infant.
- Then, the Profession of Faith from OCIA 491 (including "I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church...") is said by a parent (who must be Catholic at that time) on behalf of the child.
- Then the Formula of Reception from OCIA 492 ("N., the Lord receives you into the Catholic Church...") is said by the minister. The reception is recorded in the parish full communion register (see Part III, no. 34 above).

Option 2

- Alternatively, one could use Chapter VI of the *Order of Baptism of Children*, entitled "Order of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church." The reception is recorded in the parish full communion register.

Option 3 (non-liturgical)

- If for some reason none of the above rites are used, an external declaration of either Catholic parent before the pastor or other authority that they want their child (under age 7) to be a Catholic suffices as a valid juridical act to bring about the same juridical effect as celebrating the rite. This fact must be recorded in the parish full communion register.

- B. **If a family is entering full communion together**, one would use OCIA Part II, Chapter VI within Mass as usual, first receiving the parents and any others who have reached the age of reason. Then the aforementioned steps from Option 1 above (Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith from the *Order of Baptism of Children*, nos. 56-59 answered by the parent; Profession of Faith from OCIA 491 said by the parent; and Formula of Reception from OCIA 492) are done for the children. Receptions are recorded in the parish full communion register.

- C. For any of the scenarios described above, the child(ren) must be physically present.
 - D. If either parent is Eastern Catholic, contact the chancery prior to receiving the child into the Catholic Church in order to determine which church the child will be a member of (i.e., the Latin Church or an Eastern church). See Part XI, no. 86 below.
84. For older children who lack the use of reason due to intellectual disabilities, please see Part XI, no. 87 below.

XI. OTHER SITUATIONS

85. **A Catholic who becomes Protestant (without formal defection) and then wants to return to the Church** needs only go to confession. There's no need for a Profession of Faith or reception back into full communion.
86. **Eastern Orthodox Christians** seeking to become Catholic need only make the formal Profession of Faith as found in OCIA 490-492, without any liturgical rituals (see OCIA 474). If they were baptized Eastern Orthodox, it is presumed they would have received valid Confirmation and Communion in infancy.
- A. Please note that an Orthodox who becomes Catholic will automatically become a member of whichever Catholic Eastern Rite his or her current Orthodox Church corresponds to, regardless of whether a Roman Catholic priest received the profession. This should be made clearly known to the individual beforehand. And while he or she may always continue to attend Mass at the Roman Catholic parish, the person should also be put in touch with that Eastern Catholic community.
 - B. **Recording:** In addition to what is normally recorded in the parish full communion register (Part III, no. 34 above), the following should be noted for Orthodox who become Catholic:
 1. Date of Confirmation (presumed same as date of the Orthodox Baptism)
 2. Information about which Eastern Catholic Church the person belongs to (e.g., "N. is ascribed to the Greek Catholic Church"). It's important that the Church of ascription is notated in the Profession of Faith record because it can have ramifications for things such as the validity of any future wedding.
 - C. If the person wishes to become Roman Catholic, there is a formal application process to transfer to the Latin Church.
87. **Intellectual Disabilities and OCIA:**
- A. **Baptism or Reception into Full Communion:** In the case of intellectually disabled children or adults of any age who do not have use of reason, their parents or legal guardians can have them baptized with the *Order of Baptism of Children*, or make

the Profession of Faith on their behalf via the options described in Part X, no. 82 above (cf. Canon 99).

- B. **For someone who is intellectually disabled to receive the Eucharist**, it requires at least an ability to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary food. One should err towards there being any chance that person understands – but it is left to the pastor’s judgment.
- C. **The intellectually disabled have a right to Confirmation**, per Canon 889. Unlike with the Eucharist, there is no requirement for understanding for the reception of Confirmation. Those who do not have the use of reason are not required to be suitably instructed, properly disposed, nor able to make a profession.

Any additional questions may be directed to the diocesan Office of Worship.

GENERAL DECREE

**I hereby decree these norms as particular law for the
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend**

+ Kevin C. Rhoades

**Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend**

Joseph M. Garcia

**Mr. Joseph Garcia
Chancellor**



**Given on October 1, 2025,
the Memorial of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus,
at the Archbishop Noll Center,
Fort Wayne, Indiana.**