

**Instructions for the Latin Church from the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults* (RCIA)
and the Code of Canon Law (C.I.C.)
on the Scrutinies and the Sacraments of Initiation ‘in extraordinary circumstances’**

CONCERNING THE ELECT

Scrutinies – The Bishop may dispense from one scrutiny for serious reasons and even from two in extraordinary circumstances (RCIA 20).

Sacraments of Christian Initiation – Because of unusual circumstances and pastoral needs, the Rite of Election and rites belonging to the period of purification and enlightenment may be held outside Lent, and the Sacraments of Initiation may be celebrated at a time other than the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday. (RCIA 26).

Even when the usual time has otherwise been observed, it is permissible for serious pastoral needs to choose a day other than the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday, but preferably one during the Easter season, to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation; the program of initiation during Lent, however, must be maintained. (RCIA 26).

When the time is changed in either way, even though the Rite of Christian Initiation occurs at a different point in the liturgical year, the structure of the entire rite, with its properly spaced intervals, remains the same. But the following adjustments are to be made (RCIA 26):

- As far as possible, the Sacraments of Initiation are to be celebrated on a Sunday, using, as occasion suggests, the Sunday Mass or one of the ritual Masses “Christian Initiation: Baptism” (RCIA 27).
- The Scrutinies should not be celebrated on solemnities, but on Sundays or even on weekdays, with the usual intervals (RCIA 30).

Canon 852 § 1: What is prescribed in the canons on the baptism of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the use of reason.

CONCERNING THE BAPTIZED

It is the office of the Bishop to receive baptized Christians into the full Communion of the Catholic Church. But a priest to whom the Bishop entrusts the celebration of the rite has the faculty of confirming the candidate within the rite of reception, unless the person received has already been validly confirmed. (RCIA 394)

The local Ordinary, by expanding or shortening the rite, may arrange it to suit the particular circumstances of the persons and place involved. (RCIA 398)

The rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church is so arranged that no greater burden than necessary (see Acts 15:28) is required for the establishment of communion and unity. (RCIA 387)

CONFIRMATION

See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* paragraphs 376 and 385.

- Canon 863: The Baptism of adults, at least of those who have completed their fourteenth year, is to be referred to the Bishop, so that he himself may confer it if he judges this appropriate.
- Canon 866: Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, immediately after receiving Baptism an adult is to be confirmed, to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist and to receive holy Communion.
- Canon 882: The ordinary minister of Confirmation is a Bishop. A priest can also validly confer this sacrament if he has the faculty to do so, either from the general law or by way of a special grant from the competent authority.
- Canon 883: The following have, by law, the faculty to administer Confirmation:
- 1 ° within the confines of their jurisdiction, those who in law are equivalent to a diocesan Bishop;
 - 2 ° in respect of the person to be confirmed, the priest who by virtue of his office or by mandate of the diocesan Bishop baptizes and adult or admits a baptized adult into the full communion with the Catholic Church;
 - 3 ° in respect of those in danger of death, the parish priest or indeed any priest.
- Canon 885: § 1 The diocesan Bishop is bound to ensure that the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred upon his subjects who duly and reasonably request it.
- § 2 A priest who has this faculty must use it for those in whose favour it was granted.
- Canon 837: § 1 Liturgical actions, to the extent that by their proper nature they involve a common celebration, are to be celebrated where possible with the presence and active participation of the Christian faithful. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 27)

DANGER OF DEATH

Should the health of an inquirer, catechumen or elect be jeopardized, *Christian Initiation of a Person in Danger of Death* is found in Part II, Chapter 3 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (pages 207-221). *Christian Initiation of the Dying* is found in the CCCB publication, *Pastoral Care* (© 1983), pages 231-243.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The following details are published in the CCCB *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead*:

1. Regarding initiating the Elect at a later time, see “Initiation Apart from Easter Vigil”, Lectionary nos. 751-755 (pages 18-48), and also the Ritual Mass “For the Conferral of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation”, #3;
2. Regarding the reception of candidates into Full Communion nearly any Sunday of the year, Lectionary no. 761-763 (Lectionary no. 761-763) pages 66-78.

Should Bishops or Diocesan Directors of Liturgy want further advice on possible options regarding the Scrutinies and the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Communion of adults, they are welcome to contact by email:

- For the English Sector, Ms. Christina Ronzio, Director, National Liturgy Office
- For the French Sector, M. Éric Sylvestre, P.S.S., Directeur, Office national de liturgie

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