



RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

RECEIVING THE CANDIDATES

The candidates, their sponsors, and a group of the faithful. Gather outside the church (or inside at the entrance or elsewhere) or at some other site suitable for this rite. As the priest or deacon, wearing an alb or surplice, a stole, and, if desired, a cope of festive color, goes to meet them, the assembly of the faithful may sing a psalm or appropriate song.

GREETING

The celebrant greets the candidates in a friendly manner. He speaks to them, their sponsors, and all present, pointing out the joy and happiness of the Church. He may also recall for the sponsors and friends the particular experience and religious response by which candidates, following their own spiritual path, have come to this first step.

OPENING DIALOGUE

Unless the candidates are already known to all present, the celebrant asks for or calls out their given names. The candidates answer one by one, even if, because of a large number, the question is asked only once. One of the following or something similar may be used.

A The celebrant asks:

What is your name?

Candidate:

N.

B The celebrant calls out the name of each candidate.

The celebrant answers:

Present.

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

Celebrant:

What do you ask of God's Church?

Candidate:

Faith.

Celebrant:

What does faith offer you?

Candidate:

Eternal life.

At the discretion of the diocesan bishop, the candidates' first acceptance of the Gospel (no. 52) may be replaced by the rite of exorcism and renunciation of false worship (nos. 70-72) [see no.33.2].

CANDIDATES' FIRST ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOSPEL

The celebrant addresses the candidates, adapting one of the following formularies or similar words to the answers received in the opening dialogue.

- A** God gives light to everyone who comes into this world; though unseen, he reveals himself through the works of his hand, so that all people may learn to give thanks to their Creator.

You have followed God's light, and the way of the Gospel now lies open before you. Set your feet firmly on that path and acknowledge the living God, who truly speaks to everyone. Walk in the light of Christ and learn to trust in his wisdom. Commit your lives daily to his care, so that you may come to believe in him with all your heart.

This way of faith along which Christ will lead you in love toward eternal life. Are you prepared to begin this journey today under the guidance of Christ?

Candidates:

I am.

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

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

Candidates:

I am.

C This is eternal life; to know the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. Christ has been raised from the dead and appointed by God as the Lord of life and ruler of all things, seen and unsee.

If then, you wish to become his disciples and members of his Church, you must be guided to the fullness of the truth that he has revealed to us. You must learn to make the mind of Christ Jesus your own. You must strive to pattern your life on the teachings of the Gospel and so to love the Lord your God and your neighbor. For this was Christ's command and he was its perfect example.

Is each of you ready to accept these teachings of the Gospel?

Candidates:

I am.

AFFIRMATION BY THE SPONSERS AND THE ASSEMBLY

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

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

All:

We are.

With hands joined, the celebrant says:

Father of mercy,
we thank you for these your servants.
You have sought and summoned them in many ways
and they have turned to seek you.

You have called them today
and they have answered in our presence:
we praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

All sing or say:

We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

SIGNING OF THE CANDIDATES WITH THE CROSS

Next the cross is traced on the forehead of the candidates [or, at the discretion of the diocesan bishop, in front of the forehead for candidates in whose culture the act of touching may not seem proper (see no. 33.1)]; at the discretion of the celebrant the signing of one, several, or all of the senses may follow. The celebrant alone says the formularies accompanying each signing.

SIGNING OF THE FORHEAD

One of the following options is used, depending on the numbers of candidates.

A If there are only a few candidates, the celebrant invites them and their sponsors in these of similar words.

Come forward now with your sponsors to receive the sign of your new way of life as catechumens.

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

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

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

B If there are a great many candidates, the celebrant speaks to them in these or similar words. *

Dear candidates, your answers mean that you wish to share our life and hope in Christ. To admit you as catechumens I now mark you with the sign of Christ's cross and call upon your catechists and sponsors to do the same. The whole community welcomes you with love and stands ready to help you.

Then the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over all together, as a cross is traced by a sponsor or catechist on the forehead of each candidate. The celebrant says:

Receive the cross on you forehead
It is Christ himself who now strengthens you
with this sign of his love. **
Learn to know him and follow him.

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

* In those exceptional cases when, at the discretion of the diocesan bishop, a renunciation of false worship (no.72) has been included in the rite of acceptance. "Dear candidates your answers mean that you have rejected false worship and wish to share our life and hope Christ. . ."

** In those exceptional cases when, at the discretion of the diocesan bishop, there has been a renunciation of false worship "with this sign of his victory"

SIGNING OF THE OTHER SENSES

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

While the ears are being signed, the celebrant says:

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

While the eyes are being signed:

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

While the lips are being signed:

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

While the breast is being signed:

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

While the shoulders are being signed:

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

[While the hands are being signed:

Receive the sign of the cross on your hands.
that Christ may be known in the work which you.

While the feet are being signed:

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

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

I sign you with the sign of eternal life
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Catechumens:

Amen

CONCLUDING PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

A Lord,
we have signed these catechumens
with the sign of Christ's cross.

Protect them by its power,
so that. Faithful to the grace which has begun in them,
they may keep your commandments
and come to the glory of rebirth in baptism.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

B Almighty God,
by the cross and resurrection of your Son you have given life to your people.

Your servants have received the sign of the cross:
make them living proof of its saving power
and help them to persevere in the footsteps of Christ.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

At the discretion of the diocesan bishop, the giving of a new name (no. 73) may take place at this time.

At the discretion of the diocesan bishop, the invitation to the celebration of the word of God may be preceded or followed by additional rites signifying reception into the community, for example, the presentation of a cross (no. 74) or some other symbolic act.

INVITATION TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

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

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

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

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

LITURGY OF THE WORD

INSTRUCTION

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

The Lectionary for Mass or the Bible is carried in procession and placed with honor on the lectern, where it may be incensed.

Celebration of the liturgy of the word follows.

READINGS

The readings may be chosen from any of the readings in the Lectionary for Mass that are suited to the new catechumens, or the following may be used.

FIRST READING

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

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalms 33:4-5, 12-13, 18-19, 20, and 22

R. (v12b) Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Or:

R. (v.22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

John 1:41, 17b

We have found the Messiah: Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and grace

GOSPEL

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

HOMILY

A homily follows that explains the readings.

PRESENTATION OF A BIBLE

A book containing the gospels may be given to the catechumens by the celebrant; a cross may also be given, unless this has already been done as one of the additional rites (see no.74). The celebrant may use words suited to the gift presented, for example, “receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” and the catechumens may respond in an appropriate way.

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE CATECHUMENS

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

[If it is decided, in accord with no. 68, that after the dismissal of the catechumens the usual general intercessions of the Mass are to be omitted and that the liturgy of the eucharist is to begin immediately, intentions for the Church and the whole world are to be added to the following intentions for the catechumens.]

Celebrant:

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

Assisting minister:

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

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

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

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

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

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

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

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

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

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That in due time they may be found worthy to receive the baptism of new birth and renewal in the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

PRAYER OVER THE CATECHUMENS

After the intercessions, the celebrant, with hands outstretched over the catechumens, says one of the following prayers.

Let us pray.

A [God of our forebears and] God of all creation,
we ask you to look favorably on your servants N. and N.;
make them fervent in spirit,
joyful in hope,
and always ready to serve your name.

Lead them, Lord, to the baptism of new birth,
so that, living a fruitful life in the company of your faithful
they may receive the eternal reward that your promise.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

R. Amen

B Almighty God,
source of all creation,
you have made us in your image.
welcome with love those who come before you today.

They have listened among us to the word of Christ;
by its power renew them
and by your grace refashion them,
so that in time they may assume the full likeness of Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen

DISMISSAL OF THE CATECHUMENS

If the eucharist is to be celebrated, the catechumens are normally dismissed at this point by use of option A or B; if the catechumens are to stay for the celebration of the eucharist, option C is used; if the eucharist is not to be celebrated, the entire assembly is dismissed by use of option D.

A The celebrant recalls briefly the great joy with which the catechumens have just been received and urges them to live according to the word of God they have just heard. After the dismissal formula, the group of catechumens goes out but does not disperse. With the help of some of the faithful, the catechumens remain together to share their joy and spiritual experiences. For the dismissal the following or similar words are used.

Catechumens, go in peace, and may the Lord remain with you always.

Catechumens:

Thanks be to God.

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

My dear friends, this community now sends you forth to reflect more deeply upon the word of God which you have shared with us today. Be assured of our loving support and prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully in the Lord's Table.

- C If for serious reasons the catechumens cannot leave (see no.75.3) and must remain with the baptized, they are to be instructed that though they are present at the eucharist, they cannot take part in it as the baptized do. They may be reminded of this by the celebrant or similar words.

Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord's eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God's children will eat and drink with the Lord and work with his Spirit to re-create the face of the earth.

- D The celebrant dismisses those present, using these or similar words:

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

All:

Thanks be to God.

An appropriate song may conclude the celebration.