

Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion

(Praenotanda 473-486; Ritual Sequence 487-498)

This rite should always be celebrated in such a way that it clearly can be characterized as a gathering of the community. While provisions are made in the ritual text for it to be celebrated outside of Mass, this is not the preferred mode since a clear connection between the reception of the baptized candidate and the Eucharist is desirable. In other words, the act of reception should lead, for the first time, to the celebration of the Eucharist for the one who is newly received, as opposed to delaying it to a later time.

The ritual text, in paragraph 477, refers to the requirement that candidates receive enough doctrinal and spiritual preparation so that they are ready to be received. Read this paragraph in the light of paragraphs 401, 402 (regarding uncatechized adults), and paragraphs 30 and 31 of the National Statutes of the RCIA (found in Appendix III). In the case of non-Catholics who are catechized, paragraph 473 states that “no greater burden than necessary” is required for establishing communion and unity between them and the Church.

Main Thrust of the Rite

This Liturgy celebrates the reception of those who were born and baptized in a separated ecclesial community into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Paragraph 487 says that when this rite is celebrated on a solemnity or a Sunday, the Mass of the day should be celebrated. On other days, the Mass in the Sacramentary entitled “For the Unity of Christians” may be used.

The language of the ritual text could not be stronger in prohibiting anything in our formation efforts that precede this rite, and anything within this celebration by word or gesture that equates candidates with catechumens.

Ritual Sequence

The rite begins after the scripture readings and the homily. Paragraph 489 notes that the homilist ought to express gratitude to God for the candidates and refer to their own Baptism as the foundation for their being received to the Sacrament of Confirmation that is already or in this celebration about to be received, and to the Eucharist of which they will partake for the first time in a few moments.

Invitation

The priest presider invites the candidates and their sponsors to come forward and make the Profession of Faith with the whole community. A text is given for this invitation at paragraph 490, but it may be appropriately adapted by the priest presider.

Profession of Faith

The ritual text at paragraph 491 stipulates that the Nicene Creed is used for this Profession of Faith. The Apostles’ Creed is associated with the administration of Baptism. So, respecting the Baptism of the candidates and staying true to the prohibition to avoid *anything* that equates candidates with catechumens, the Church directs us to use the Nicene Creed.

After reciting this with the community, the priest presider prompts the candidate to make a further short statement professing his or her embrace of all that the Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God. The candidate could possibly memorize this brief statement. On the other hand, nerves might be calmed if the statement is reproduced on a card or included in a program booklet.

Act of Reception

The priest presider says the act of reception as given in the ritual text at paragraph 492. Note also that the corresponding gesture of placing his hand on the head of the one to be received is omitted when confirmation is to be conferred immediately.

Confirmation

Confirmation is described (as indicated by the boxed text) as optional because some of those who are received may already be validly confirmed. For all others, the priest has the faculty according to the law to administer confirmation, as is noted in paragraph 481 (see also Code of Canon Law 883.2).

The priest presider lays hands on the candidate's head and prays, using the prayer given at paragraph 493. If there is more than one candidate present, the priest presider extends hands over them all. Then, with the sponsor's right hand on the candidate's shoulder, the priest presider makes the sign of the cross with chrism on the candidate's forehead, using the formula statements at paragraph 494.

Celebrant's Sign of Welcome

Paragraph 495 directs that the priest presider takes the newly received person's hands in his own as a friendly sign of acceptance.

General Intercessions

Model intentions are given in the ritual text at 496. A direction and a model text for their introduction are also provided which emphasize that the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation should lead the way into the petitions. The first petition should also mention the newly received by name.

Sign of Peace

In a lovely touch, paragraph 497 says that at the conclusion of the General Intercessions, the sponsor and the entire worshipping assembly may greet the newly received with a sign of peace. If everyone participates in this gesture at this point in the ritual sequence, the sign of peace before Holy Communion is omitted.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Paragraph 498 says that it is fitting for all to receive under both kinds at this Mass.

Tips and Implications

1. Candidates who are being received do not choose a (new) confirmation name. Paragraph 33.4, while giving direction to us regarding catechumens in the initiation process, probably also applies here.
2. Non-Catholic candidates for reception into the full communion of the Church are encouraged to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation prior to their reception. The ritual text notes in paragraph 461 that the Penitential Rite can be used as a preparation for the Sacrament of Penance.
3. The names of those received into full communion should be recorded in a special book, which also makes note of their date and place of Baptism.