

Diocese of London -Frequently Asked Questions

Questions Regarding the Sacraments:

RCIA

Question: Pastorally, when catechizing children it has usually been opportune to gradually celebrate the sacraments with them, to allow for a sustained and measured initiation for example, grade 5 students would also usually prefer to wait until grade 8 to be confirmed with their class and have more exposure to catechesis with such an approach. Should children receive all initiatory sacraments at once, or can confirmation be delayed?

Answer: Canon 866: Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and is to participate in the Eucharistic celebration also by receiving communion.¹

Denying a child the sacraments so that he or she might eventually receive them with his or her classmates is neither grave nor reasonable. One might consider “danger of death,” the only situation which would contravene this rule.

Question: What would be some signs that a non-Catholic child would be ready to be initiated despite the absence of Catholic parents, et cetera? What age could they make this determination?

Answer: A child of catechetical age may request baptism of its own initiative; however, the pastor must always seek the consent of the parents or legal guardians before acceding to this request. Consideration needs to be given as to how the child may be supported in living out the Catholic faith by the parish, family, Catholic school, godparents and other mentors. (Criteria, DOL, p.14, no.2)²

Question: Should convalidation be done during the Easter Vigil, in the event that one spouse is an RCIA candidate?

Answer: Convalidation should take place quietly, with two witnesses and a few guests; shortly before the candidate is received into full communion [...] it [should] be done privately on Holy Saturday morning or preferably, at some other time prior to entering into The Triduum.

Question: Why do we use Year A readings for RCIA scrutinies?

Answer:

¹ See Canon 866

² Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014

“Taking a look at the rubrics for the Scrutiny Rites, we read:

“Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies,” which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent; the readings with their chants are those given for those Sundays in the Lectionary for Mass, Year A....In every case the ritual Masses “Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies” are celebrated and in this sequence: for the first scrutiny the Mass with the gospel of the Samaritan woman; for the second, the Mass with the gospel of the man born blind; for the third, the Mass with the gospel of Lazarus. (146)

The assignment and order of the scrutiny Gospels from John reflect the community's progressive and communal catechesis for the elect in order that they may hear and believe (Samaritan woman), see and believe (man born blind), and finally believe without proof (Martha and Lazarus) [...]When we worry that the faithful are missing out on the readings of Year B or C on the Sundays of the scrutinies, we are forgetting that the faithful's role in these rites is to pray fervently for the elect.” (Macalintal) ³

Question: Are there Resources that you would recommend for RCIA for children such as workbooks, leaflets, et cetera. that would be appropriate for children and their parents?

Answer: There are a number of resources available through the following publishing houses:

- Novalis
- Liturgical Press
- Liturgy Training Publications
- **[The Association for Catechumenal Ministry](#)**
- The Archdiocese of Toronto also provides a very thorough resource on the RCIA process here:
http://www.archtoronto.org/discipleship/RCIA/RCIA_Resource.pdf
- The Archdiocese of Boston comprehensively outlines the Rite here:
<http://www.bostoncatholic.org/Being-Catholic/Content.aspx?id=11314>
- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops provides a brief ‘frequently asked questions about RCIA’ segment on their website here:
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/rite-of-christian-initiation-of-adults/index.cfm>

It is important to note that the RCIA is a process rather than a program. No resource is going to meet the needs of the various individuals who present themselves to the Church. Being flexible with recommended resources should be seen as the norm rather than the exception to the rule.

³ <http://www.teamrcia.com/2013/01/do-we-have-to-use-year-a-readings-for-the-rcia-scrutinies/>

Question: Now that preparation/ celebration of first reconciliation takes place before first communion (such as Grade 2); do you recommend two separate programs (1 program for each), or is there a combined program that you would recommend? In addition, since many adult candidates for confirmation have been incorporated in the RCIA, do you have a process, or resource to recommend for their preparation apart from RCIA?

Answer: No program will meet every scenario. Be flexible and use a variety of resources that caters to the needs of individuals, wherever possible.

Question: Suppose a grandmother baptizes her grandchildren over the kitchen sink against their father's will. Are the children validly baptized? Is it proper to record these baptisms in parish records?

Answer: If the baptism is done with proper intention, matter, and form, the baptism is valid. This will become an issue when the child receives other sacraments – please contact the Chancellor or the Director of Liturgy for further guidance.

Apart from a case of necessity, baptism is not to be conferred in private houses, unless the local ordinary has permitted it for a grave cause.⁴ “The Roman Catholic Church presumes that a baptism is valid if it is done with water and the Trinitarian formula: “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁵

Question: Could you please re-state the only cause where we need to lift the “declaration of faith” from the RCIA in the case of a child being received into the Church?

Answer: If a member of the Orthodox Church is being received fully, one can safely assume all three initiatory sacraments have been celebrated. A profession of faith is therefore all that is required for ‘full communion’.

Question: What would be some signs that a non-Catholic would be ready to be initiated despite the absence of Catholic parents et cetera? At what age could they make this determination?

Answer: Situations like this are of pastoral and civil concern. Consultation with the Chancellor or Director of Liturgy is strongly encouraged.

“A child of catechetical age may request baptism of its own initiative; however, the pastor must always seek the consent of the parents or legal guardians before acceding to this request. Consideration needs to be given as to how the child may be supported in living out the Catholic faith by the parish, family, Catholic school, godparents and other mentors”⁶

⁴ See canon 860§1

⁵ Commission for Ecumenism, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations, United Church of Canada. September 2010.

⁶ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014 p. 14; See also Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults no.244

Question: We are to welcome people “where they are”. If a person has shift work and cannot attend all RCIA classes, is there anything wrong with meeting them outside of class times to “catch up”?

Answer: RCIA is not a program, rather an initiatory process. One’s preparedness is not necessarily contingent upon classes attended, in comparison to how one grows in understanding and relationship with Jesus.

RCIA is not a series for converts and should be viewed as preparation for baptism.

Question: When a child of catechetical age is prepared and ready to be baptized, do we wait for Easter Vigil? You recommended other feast days or a Sunday. Can you give a list, knowing that the norm is vigil but if a child can be baptized in the fall, when should that be done? Also is permission from the Bishop needed to fully initiate outside of the Easter Vigil?

Answer: Bishop Fabbro has authorized all pastors in the diocese to confirm initiates. It is preferred to initiate children on a Sunday. For pastoral reasons, it may be preferred to initiate a child at a school liturgy.

Question: This question is regarding the baptism of a child whose parent (s) is/are not baptized catholic(s). Two parents: both are not Catholic but attended Catholic school and participated in the Church (not the sacraments) growing up. Both would like to have their children baptized and they would like to become Catholic. Can they have their child(ren) baptized prior to becoming Catholic?

Answer: Yes, children can be baptized, regardless of whether or not their parents have been. In this scenario, the children could be baptized before their parents are baptized, however this is not ideal. Baptism of the entire family at once is strongly encouraged. Parents play a very instrumental role in the spiritual life of their children and they ought to lead with their lives as an example: “dear parents and godparents [...] you must make it your constant care to bring him (her) up in the practice of the faith [...] if your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, renew now the vows of your own baptism.”⁷

Question: If a youth in grade 8 has been baptized in an Eastern (Orthodox) Church, when they attend mass, can the Bishop or priest give them a blessing so that they can come up in the procession to receive the Eucharist?

Answer: Confirmation is not to be simulated. The student should be encouraged to participate in other parts of the liturgy. Some ways in which the students might be encouraged to participate are the ministries of reader, greeter et cetera.

Question: What is the next step for baptized adults who wish to be confirmed? Are they only received at Easter?

⁷ Rite of Baptism for Children no.138

Answer: Not necessarily. Pastoral judgement and prudence must prevail – always building on the grace already found in baptism: “they are to make a Profession of Faith, receive confirmation and their first communion in one celebration. This may take place during the parish confirmation liturgy or at another suitable time”⁸.

Many liturgical theologians argue that the Easter Vigil should be reserved for baptism and that the welcoming of “converts” should be done at another time.

Question: For first communion and confirmation (of baptized infants), how do we manage non-participating parents (in the formation program), when the child appears to be properly disposed and prepared by school?

Answer: Spiritual formation is always a three-pronged ministry, shared between the Church, school, and home. If a child seems prepared, assume he/she is prepared.

Baptism

Question: Should baptisms, marriages, and deaths be mentioned in the Parish Bulletin? Do privacy laws restrict this?

Answer: Recording the names of those who receive the sacraments is never an inappropriate thing to do, since celebration of the sacraments are also parts of the Church’s public life. In the event that the individual’s safety, protection, health et cetera might be compromised due to this form of publication, pastoral prudence should prevail.

In addition, “since the earliest days, the Christian community has preserved documentation significant to its life and ministry [...] The Archives of the Diocese of London contains thousands of documents, registers, photographs and other assorted artifacts that have been collected since the establishment of the diocese in 1856. The archives also contain documentation in regard to every parish and church ever established in the diocese.”⁹

Question: If baptism is encouraged shortly after the birth of a child, does a diocesan policy discouraging Lenten baptisms contradict this?

Answer: The tradition of baptizing infants shortly after their birth stems from a period in Church history when Christians feared that unbaptized infants, who died shortly after birth, would not enjoy rewards of heaven. It is from this period in the Church’s history that the theory of “Limbo” was developed. As the Church progresses, her theology of the sacraments is enlightened, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in tandem.

Since Lent is a season of penance and purification in preparation for baptism and the renewal of baptismal vows, the celebration of infant baptism is actively discouraged during this time; however,

⁸ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014 p. 16

⁹ Diocesan Newsletter, Fall 2009, p.3

once again, particular circumstances may require or recommend that it take place during this season.¹⁰

Question: When a parent is requesting a baptism for his or her child and neither parent is fully initiated in the Catholic Faith, is there a *well-founded hope* that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Church? If the answer is yes, are there any further comments or direction for these parents and the child?

Answer: [the celebrant speaking to the parents of the child to be baptized]

You have asked to have your child baptized. *In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith.* It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

[...] The rite underscores a fundamental principle of Catholic teaching in reference to the vocation of parents, namely it is they who have the primary, God-given right to educate their children and thus the responsibility of preparing them for the sacraments.¹¹

Question: Canon Law 873 states that: “there is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each”. Our parish policy has always been to include only two names in the baptism register, but allow other ‘pseudo’ Godparents to be present and gather around the font during the baptismal ceremony. Is there a maximum amount of Godparents a child can have? Can we record more than two names as godparents in the baptism register?

Answer: The Diocesan website does not state that a child cannot have more than two godparents. Consider recording the names of one Godparent of each gender in the baptismal register and listing other sponsors as “Christian Witnesses”. Please find some of the [Diocesan guidelines](#)¹² for parents and Godparents in the link below:

http://wp.dol.ca/webportal/parish/cms/content/1/901/6/Baptism_/544

Question: Our parish often receives requests for there to be two Godparents of the same gender. Canon 873 requests one male, one female, or one of each and does not seem to provide two males or two females as an option. Are there pastoral situations where the two names listed in the register would be both male and both female?

Answer: Before Vatican II, godparents functioned as mentors for spiritual formation and potential guardians in the event the godchild was orphaned. Because of this, having one sponsor of either gender was desired in order to mirror natural parentage.

¹⁰ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014, p.13 no.7

¹¹ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014, p.38

¹² http://wp.dol.ca/webportal/parish/cms/content/1/901/6/Baptism_/544

In the event that two persons of the same gender desire to be the Godparents of one child, only record the name of one person in the baptismal registry.

Question: An unmarried couple (father is Anglican, mother is Catholic) desire to have their four year old child fully received into the Church, so that he/she may attend Catholic school. My guess is that the Catholic mother would make a profession of faith and express her desire for her daughter to be received into the Church, and that such would be recorded in the baptism register. If this is the case, is a certificate of some sort issued?

Answer: If a child is below the age of seven, his/her parents must make a profession of faith on the child's behalf. This is recorded in the baptismal register. The Church should provide a letter to the school confirming this profession.

Question: Can a deacon baptize a child who is older than the age of reason? In the event that a person over the age of reason cannot receive all three initiatory sacraments at once, can a deacon baptize the initiate?

Answer: No. A deacon can only baptize a person when there is danger of imminent death. Anyone over the age of seven must be fully initiated.

The Holy See further outlines the role of deacons in *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* which states that "the deacon, together with the bishop and priest, is the ordinary minister of Baptism. The exercise of this power requires either the permission of the parish priest, since he enjoys the particular right of baptizing those entrusted to his pastoral care, or the presence of necessity."¹³

Question: The description of a "well-founded hope" as it applies to baptism leaves room for a child to be baptized even if neither parent is practicing or interested in raising the child in the faith, provided that a grandparent or God parent is willing to assume the role of teaching the child. In this event, what certainty is needed that a grandparent or Godparent is willing to accept that role – do we need to discuss it with them directly or do we accept the parent's claim that such is the case? If the grandparent or Godparent says they are not willing to do this, should baptism be delayed? Can a child be baptized if neither parent is Catholic assuming that a grandparent or Godparent will assume the role of passing along the faith?

Answer: The primary responsibility of raising the child in the faith belongs to parents. Since the parents are expressing a desire to have their child baptized, this can be interpreted as a seed of faith and an opportunity to evangelize and initiate the entire family. Grandparents can assume this role as well. In many situations, for example, blended families, division due to separation or divorce, grandparents are pivotal. Pastoral sensitivity is always needed.

¹³ Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, Vatican, 1998

Furthermore, “because of the necessity of Baptism for salvation¹⁴, the Church’s legislation favours baptizing an infant rather than withholding the sacrament; for this reason, in cases of doubt as to the sufficiency of the required “well-founded hope”, infants should always be baptized”¹⁵

Question: Are Baptismal troughs appropriate during the Triduum?

Answer: Yes, this is an example the fullness of the baptismal washing. The Canadian Conference of Catholic bishops describe the bountiful symbol of the font as “a reminder to all that we become members of the body of Christ through baptism. The place of baptism should be visible to all. Simple, beautiful and uncluttered, it stands as a reminder that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb of God: we are God's holy people in this community.”¹⁶

Question: Regarding names chosen by parents, what are the rights/ duties of a pastor with respect to unusual names for children?

Answer: According to the Code of Canon Law 855, “parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given”. As long as the child’s name is not a blasphemy or profanity, pastors should not withhold the sacraments or pastoral care from the child simply because he or she has a unique name.

Question: In the event that a family adopts a child and desires baptism for him or her, should the child’s name be listed in the Baptismal registry under the name of his or her adoptive parents?

Answer:

The Diocese of London recommends the following for individuals baptized after adoption:

For children baptized after adoption, ordinarily no reference to the adoption or the natural parents is to be made in the baptismal register. Any such data which has been recorded is to be treated as confidential and is not to be included on any certificate. The following information shall be entered in the register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adoptive parent(s);
2. The name(s) of the adoptive parent(s);
3. The date and place of birth;
4. The names of the sponsor(s) selected by the adoptive parent(s);
5. The date and place of the baptism; and
6. The name of the minister performing the baptism.

¹⁴ *Lumen Gentium* 14

¹⁵ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014 p. 26

¹⁶ *Renewing Our Baptism*, CCCB. September 2006.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for adopted children will be no different from other baptismal certificates. No mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.¹⁷

Canon 877 Registration of Baptism of Adopted Children states:

§3. In the case of an adopted child, the names of the adopting parents are to be registered and, at least if this is done in the local civil registration, the names of the natural parents in accordance with § §1 and 2, subject however to the rulings of the Bishop's Conference.

Decree No. 19

In accordance with the prescriptions of c. 877, §3, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops hereby decrees that baptism may not lawfully be administered before adoption has taken place unless:

1. there has been a specific request by the natural parent(s) that the child be baptized and there is found hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith; OR
2. there is danger of death.

If the adopting parents are aware that the child was baptized before adoption, they are to ask that the following note be made in the baptismal register:

“This child was legally adopted

as _____ (name)

on _____ (date)

at _____ (place)

by _____ (names of adopting parents).”

Holy Eucharist

Question: **If receiving the consecrated host is sufficient, why is the Communion Cup offered at Mass?**

Answer:

In celebrating the Eucharist, we give thanks to God who comes to dwell with us again – body, soul, and divinity. He offered both his body and blood on the table and on the cross and we remember this sacrifice in the form of bread and wine. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops offers

¹⁷ *Sacramental Records Handbook*, Diocese of London. June 2008. p.13

detailed resources on the theology and history of receiving communion from the cup, please find an excerpt below:

"Jesus said to them: 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them' " (*Jn* 6.54-56).

At the Last Supper: Jesus made it possible for us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and so share in his life. [...] Since Vatican II we have gradually increased the number of occasions when we receive communion under both forms. We are beginning to recognize the importance of this symbol of the cup: Jesus' blood is poured out to save us from our sins. As we take part in the joyful banquet, we are also ready to share with him in the cup of his suffering, in order that we may one day share in his glory.¹⁸

http://www.cccb.ca/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2125&Itemid=1226&lang=eng

Question: **Is it ever permissible to distribute Hosts from the Tabernacle at Mass?**

Answer:

According to the GIRM

85. It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the Priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated. This teaching and practice has been articulated countless times over the last centuries.

Confirmation

Question: **Is it appropriate for initiates to participate in the long standing Catholic custom of adopting a Saint's name upon Confirmation? Culturally, this is very strong and may even be a component of school curriculum. The saints serve as an inspiration towards holiness.**

Answer: No, "candidates are confirmed utilizing their baptismal name so as to demonstrate the essential unity between the sacraments of initiation"¹⁹. Essentially, by preserving this form of individuality, even Dakota or Brittney can have the possibility of becoming models of holiness.

Question: **If a youth in grade 8 has been baptized in an Eastern (Orthodox) Church, when they attend mass, can the Bishop or priest give them a blessing so that they can come up in the procession to receive the Eucharist?**

¹⁸ *Communion from the Cup*. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. September 2006.

¹⁹ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014 p. 16 no.6

Answer: Confirmation is not to be simulated. However, the current diocesan policy states that “members of such churches [Eastern Non-Catholic (Orthodox) Christians] may receive the sacraments of penance, Eucharist and anointing of the sick from Catholic Ministers if they seek these sacraments on their own and they are properly disposed (canon 844, §3)”²⁰. The student should also be encouraged to participate in other parts of the liturgy that are more ecumenical in nature such as readings and the general intercession.

Question: What is the next step for baptized adults who wish to be confirmed? Are they only received at Easter?

Answer: Full reception at Easter is usually reserved for those who have never been initiated. Adults who have been baptized already belong to the body of Christ and can receive the Eucharist and Confirmation on days apart from Easter (see canon 889 §1, 2, 890, 891). The diocese recommends that the adult “make a Profession of Faith, receive confirmation and their first communion in one celebration. This may take place during the parish confirmation liturgy or at another suitable time”²¹

Marriage

Question: Parish A with a priest will be having a Mass for a couple that never practices and parish B (which only has deacons to preside at weddings) will not provide Mass for devout and frequent Mass participants. Does this not seem to be an inconsistency we want to avoid?

Answer: Marriage in Mass is the Catholic norm regardless of whether or not the couple attends Mass regularly (see *Rite of Marriage* 6). This should be practiced insofar as possible, however, considering the diocesan need for more vocations to the priesthood, Marriage in Mass may not always be likely.

Question: According to Form I, if a couple desires marriage and one of the parties does not intend on returning to Catholicism, their situation is to be treated as a “Mixed Marriage”. The norm for Mixed Marriages is no Mass. If the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be do not have any intention of practicing the faith, can Mass still be offered at their wedding?

Answer: The Eucharist is the ultimate sign of unity between Christ the bridegroom and his Church – Christian marriage mirrors and foretastes this wholeness. Celebration of the Eucharist within marriage maintains the oneness already proclaimed by the couple. Therefore, celebrating “Mixed Marriages” in Mass scandalizes the sacrament by forcing false unity upon the gathered. Those who do not revere the Holy Mass yet partake of the Eucharist are equally culpable of scandal and “eat and drink judgment against themselves”(1 Corinthians 11:28).

According to the Diocese of London and the *Rite of Marriage*, “the marriage of two Catholics normally takes place during Mass regardless of the frequency of their participation in the Sunday

²⁰ *Canonical Handbook for Parish Secretaries*. Diocese of London. November 2011. p.5

²¹ Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014 p. 16

Eucharist”²². Therefore, as long as the bride and groom are baptized Catholic, they are permitted to the offering of Mass at their wedding.

Question: A couple wants to have a destination wedding. Ideally we would want the couple to marry in the church and then celebrate their marriage at the destination. However, some couples have suggested the opposite. They want to be married at the destination and then return home and have the marriage convalidated. Obviously, if the couple approached us a few years later, we would convalidate, but do we accept (by accept I mean would along with the couple as they make their plans) the scenario where convalidation after the fact was actually part of the plan from the start? This seems manipulative, but at the same time, I cannot see ever refusing to convalidate the marriage.

Answer: Pastors should be mindful of the many reasons and circumstances that lead couples to choose a destination wedding. If a couple requests convalidation, the pastor should work with them accordingly. Can. 1158 §1. “If the impediment is public, both parties must renew the consent in canonical form”.

Question: A man, who is currently cohabiting with his future spouse, is in the process of an annulment. At the Easter Vigil the pastor will baptize and confirm her but will not permit her to receive the Eucharist. Does it make sense to partially initiate? Should all initiatory sacraments be withheld until the annulment has been finalized?

Answer:

Those in irregular marriages (including cohabitation, common law, civil marriage et cetera) may not be initiated until the situation has been resolved; the diocese of Salt Lake City aptly sums up the Church’s position below:

Sometimes persons come to the Church for Christian initiation (or to complete initiation) who are in irregular marriages, that is, marriages not valid according to Church law. Perhaps the person has been previously married and is now in a civil union; or it might be that the person seeking initiation is civilly married to someone who has been previously married. In either case, the person wishing to enter the Church is not free to validate his or her current marriage. Because a person cannot fully participate in the sacraments while in an invalid union, it is required that persons in irregular marriages be free to marry prior to the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.²³

²² Diocese of London, *Criteria for the Administration of the sacraments of Initiation, First Penance and Marriage*, January 2014 p. 20 no. 7

²³ *Canon Law and RCIA Issues*. Diocese of Salt Lake City.p.2

Anointing of the Sick

Question: **Are there any “reader friendly” pamphlets on the Sacrament of the Sick?**

Answer: The CCCB leaflet is useful and freely accessible at:

www.cccb.ca/site/Files/06_Help_Sick.pdf

Funeral

Question: **Is the title: Mass of the Resurrection used for a funeral Mass? When is the title Memorial Mass used?**

Answer:

A funeral Mass is one of the Masses for the dead (not interchangeable with Mass of the Resurrection, which is a colloquial term). Memorial Masses are offered for those who have died.

According to the GIRM,

379. The Church offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ's Pasch for the dead so that, since all the members of Christ's Body are in communion with one another, what implores spiritual help for some, may bring comforting hope to others.

380. Among the Masses for the Dead, the Funeral Mass holds first place. It may be celebrated on any day except for Solemnities that are Holy days of Obligation, Thursday of Holy Week, the Paschal Triduum, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, with due regard also for all the other requirements of the norm of the law.

Question: **How should Clergy and Pastoral Team Members celebrate Funeral Masses with Ashes Present?**

Answer:

The practice of cremation has come to be employed with ever increasing frequency in Canadian society. The Catholic Church has sanctioned this mode for the disposition of mortal remains since 1963. In permitting Catholics to choose cremation, the Church has stated that they are free to do so for any reason, unless it is for reasons that are contrary to Christian teaching (see *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1176, 3). Such a reason would include a denial of the resurrection of the dead, which is quite obviously, elemental to our faith.

The Catholic acceptance of cremation has found its way into the *Order of Christian Funerals*, published in 1990. Three options are foreseen in the ritual:

- When cremation takes place after the funeral liturgy;

- When cremation takes place before the funeral liturgy; and a
- Funeral liturgy including the Eucharist, with the cremated remains present.

In the latter case, the indult from the Holy See allowing this option requires that the Ordinary judge whether it is pastorally proper to do so, taking into account the concrete circumstances of each case. In other words, the permission of the Bishop is to be sought in every case where this option is chosen.

Further, in regard to the celebration of funeral rites in the presence of cremated remains, the ritual directs that holy water and incense are not to be used in the final commendation. However, after further consultation with the National Liturgy Office in Ottawa, the rubric has been changed: signs of reverence toward the body, such as sprinkling with holy water and the use of incense, may indeed be used in this form of rite.

Advent

Question: **Are pinecone wreaths for Advent candles verboten? How essential is greenery?**

Answer: The greenery of the advent wreath is a sign of hope, despite the dark and cold winter. Please note that the wreath is a domestic practice and not intrinsic to the liturgy. The wreath could be placed in the narthex and we would still be celebrating the Season well. The word and the Eucharist are primary; lights and wreaths, and décor help us enter into the prayer of the season.

One source says:

“The symbolism of the Advent wreath is beautiful. The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous life. Even these evergreens have a traditional meaning which can be adapted to our faith: The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns, and one English legend tells of how the cross was made of holly. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ. Any pine cones, nuts, or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection. All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and the new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, who entered our world becoming true man and who was victorious over sin and death through His own passion, death, and resurrection.”

From: Catholic Education Resource Centre, Canada

Furthermore, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also provides a detailed outline of acceptable Advent practices, customs, and decorations:

http://www.cccb.ca/site/Files/01_Ad_Joy_Hope.pdf

Lent

Question: **Are certain Masses prohibited during Lent?**

Answer:

Ritual Masses- are prohibited on Ash Wednesday, during Holy Week, and on Sundays of Lent. (see GIRM #372)

Funeral Masses- may not be celebrated on Holy Thursday, during the Easter Triduum or on Sundays of Lent. (GIRM #380)

When marriages are celebrated during Lent, they are to reflect the special nature of this season. *Rite of Marriage* #11

Question: **Is the *Alleluia* proclaimed during Lent?**

Answer: The *Alleluia* is not used from the beginning of Lent until the Easter Vigil. (GIRM #62)

Question: **Should the Altar be decorated during Lent?**

Answer: In Lent, the altar should not be decorated with flowers and musical instruments may be played only to give necessary support to the singing. This is in order that the penitential character of the season be preserved. (*Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* #17)

Question: **What is the protocol one must follow when diluting Holy Oils?**

Answer: In case of true necessity only, a priest may increase the volume of blessed oils by adding unblest oil to them. It would be an abuse however, if this practice became routine for the sake of expedience and convenience. (NCCB Committee on the Liturgy Vol. 30)

Question: **Can women participate in the Foot Washing (*Mandatum*) on Holy Thursday?**

Answer: It has become customary in many places to invite both men and women to be participants in this rite in recognition of the service that should be given all the faithful to the church and the world.

While this variation may differ from the rubric of the *Sacramentary* which mentions only men (*very selecti*) it may nevertheless be said that the intention to emphasize service along with charity in the celebration of the rite is an understandable way of accentuating the evangelical command of the Lord who came to serve and not to be served , that all members of the church must serve one another in love. (NCCB Committee on the Liturgy Vol. 23-BCL Secretariat, 1987)

Question: **What are the Fasting and Abstinence Regulations on Ash Wednesday and throughout Lent?**

Answer:

1. Everyone 14 years of age or over is bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday.
2. Everyone 18 years of age and under 60 years of age is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
3. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, only one full meatless meal is allowed. Two other meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige.
4. Catholics should not lightly excuse themselves from these prescribed minimal penitential practices.

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Ash Wednesday- during Mass, ashes are blessed and imposed after the homily. When distributed outside of Mass, a Liturgy of the Word precedes the imposition of ashes followed by general intercessions and the Lord's Prayer. (See the *Book of Blessings* nos. 1656-1678)

The ordinary minister for the blessing of ashes is a priest or deacon. Extraordinary ministers of Communion and other lay persons may assist with the imposition of ashes where there is a requirement to designate lay persons for the ministry.

The Length of Lent- Lent runs from Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord's Supper exclusive. *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* (hereafter- GNLYC) #28

Triduum and Easter

The following link leads to [***Eighteen Questions on the Paschal Triduum***](#) which is an article courtesy the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/triduum/questions-and-answers.cfm>

Question: How should parishes prepare for Easter Communion using hosts consecrated on Holy Thursday?

Answer: The underlying principle here is that at all liturgies the faithful should receive communion with hosts consecrated at that liturgical act (see GIRM 85). Consequently at the Easter Vigil, communion should be from hosts consecrated at that liturgy. The vision is that parishes will devise a plan to consecrate enough hosts and not too many.

Question: How should we venerate the cross on Good Friday?

Answer: There should be one cross on Good Friday. This is not a crucifix. There are many ways to venerate the cross. People should feel free to approach the cross from all sides, and to offer veneration by kneeling before it, or touching it, or standing silently in reverence, or kissing it. If there is not a steady stream of people putting their lips on the feet – there is no reason to wipe after each person.

Question: How are readers for the Passion selected?

Answer: Because the Triduum is the greatest of Feasts and the passion a very demanding literary presentation, we want the best readers to proclaim it. I would also want them to rehearse so that the timing and expression of the narrative would be well prepared. The lectors should not just show up and read – that does not indicate the care and responsibility that is entailed in this proclamation.

Question: Are Passion plays permissible on Good Friday?

Answer: At the Good Friday service the passion play should not be acted out (dramatized). It should not be acted out during the liturgy because it moves the experience to a representation (historization) making it commemorative rather than allowing the redemptive event of the Passion to be encountered. The 2001 Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy says it this way:

#144 In relation to sacred “representations” it is important to instruct the faithful on the difference between a “representation” which is commemorative, and the “liturgical actions” which are anamnesis, or mysterious presence of the redemptive event of the Passion.

A passion play prepared by the children would be very appropriate during Lent or the early days of Holy Week.

If there is need for another Liturgy on Good Friday, celebrate Morning Prayer, or if it is specifically for the children: a simple Liturgy of the Word, using a portion of the Passion narrative and Intercessions, but no communion service.

All of this is to say that there is a profound difference between liturgical prayer that is the action of Christ, and the prayer that we create to enter into the ritual and symbolic acts. The latter opens us to a readiness to let Christ celebrate in us. But liturgical prayer is the deep encounter with Christ, the spirit, our true God.

Question: What is the protocol, in the event that multiple services must take place during the Triduum?

Answer: Clustered parishes have special circumstances. We start with the principle that the sacred Triduum is one great feast. It is suggested that this feast rotate its venue each year, so that the Mass of the Lord's Supper, Good Friday Morning Prayer, the Solemn Liturgy, Holy Saturday Morning Prayer, and the Vigil are celebrated in one parish. On Good Friday, additional services are celebrated at each of the other parishes but for all other liturgies, people are welcomed to the selected location for that particular year.

It is a matter of teaching people about the unity of the feast – a three day gathering that moves from liturgy to prayerful reflection to liturgy to prayer reflection et cetera. That is why we talk about a paschal fast.

Question: During the Triduum, when can the Blessed Sacrament be exposed?

Answer:

Perpetual exposition and solemn adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is prohibited during the Sacred Triduum except for the evening of Holy Thursday when solemn adoration (not exposition) is permitted after the Mass of the Lord's Supper until midnight. The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a closed tabernacle or pyx. Under no circumstance may it be exposed in a monstrance.

Question: Can the Easter Vigil be celebrated at any time?

Answer:

The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* states that “the entire celebration of the Easter Vigil should take place at night, that is, beginning after the nightfall and ending before the dawn of Sunday.” The *Circular Letter* expressed concern that in some places the Easter Vigil “is celebrated as if it were an evening Mass, in the same way and at the same time as the Mass celebrated on Saturday evening in anticipation of Sunday”. This celebration is not merely an “anticipated Mass” on a Saturday evening nor is it a “midnight Mass” or simply a “sunrise service”. Rather, it is a true vigil as the Church keeps watch throughout the night.

Scheduling the Easter Vigil in the later afternoon do that children and older adults can more easily participate may, at first, seem like a good pastoral judgement. However, the result of such a decision violates the basic character of the Vigil and good liturgical practice and, therefore, is not a good pastoral practice.

***Question: If the tabernacle is to be empty as Holy Thursday Mass begins, should the altar if reserve outside the church be set up on Wednesday of Holy Week and the extra hosts present after the Mass of that Wednesday be transferred to that Tabernacle of Reserve so the Tabernacle in the church is emptied for Holy Thursday? Or should the Altar of Reserve be set up on Thursday and the remaining Eucharist be transferred quietly when it is ready; sometime before the Mass?**

Answer:

Regarding the tabernacle on Holy Thursday:

At the Wednesday Liturgy, consume all but very few hosts in case of emergency to the dying. Some time on Thursday quietly move this single of very few hosts to the place of repose.

On Good Friday, leave the single host for the dying in the place of repose and then try to consume all the remaining hosts prepared for the Good Friday liturgy.

Question: Is it appropriate to distribute tapers for the renewal for the renewal of Baptismal promises on Easter Sunday?

Answer:

There is no directive in the Sacramentary that they should be used on Easter Sunday for the Renewal of Baptismal promises. There is an indication that sprinkling with blessed water should occur. Pastorally the long tradition stands that tapers are lit for the baptismal promises on Easter Sunday. This mirrors the action of the Vigil for the great numbers people who have not attended the Vigil. Tapers are definitely indicated for the renewal at the Vigil service.

In addition, "The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) provides the following proposals as options [...] for liturgies and prayer services: [...] The presider will light a taper from the Paschal Candle and people will come forward to light a taper and return to their seats." (Optional Resources for Liturgies and Prayer 1, 4)

Mass

<http://www.peterboroughdiocese.org/newmissal/romanmissalfaq.pdf>

Question: Is it permissible for the processional cross to have the corpus attached, or is it advised that it not?

Answer: According to the GIRM:

308. Either on the altar or near it, there is to be a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, a cross clearly visible to the assembled people. It is desirable that such a cross should remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations, so as to call to mind for the faithful the saving Passion of the Lord.

In addition, in keeping with noble simplicity, we would not duplicate symbols. So if there is a crucifix on the sanctuary wall it would be considered "near" the altar. Thus a second crucifix is not required.

Question: What is the prescribed posture for the assembly throughout the Mass and why?

Answer: According to the GIRM:

42. A common bodily posture, to be observed by all those taking part, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered together for the Sacred Liturgy, for it expresses the intentions and spiritual attitude of the participants and also fosters them.

43. The faithful should stand from the beginning of the Entrance chant, or while the Priest approaches the altar, until the end of the Collect; for the *Alleluia* chant before the Gospel; while the Gospel itself is proclaimed; during the Profession of Faith and the Universal Prayer; and from the

invitation, *Orate, fratres (Pray, brethren)*, before the Prayer over the Offerings until the end of Mass, except at the places indicated below.

The faithful should sit, on the other hand, during the readings before the Gospel and the Responsorial Psalm and for the Homily and during the Preparation of the Gifts and the Offertory; and, if applicable, during the period of sacred silence after communion.

In the diocese of Canada, the faithful should kneel at the Consecration, except when prevented on occasion by ill health, or for reasons of lack of space, of the large number of people present, or for another reasonable cause. However, those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the Priest genuflects after the Consecration.

[...] For the sake of uniformity in gestures and bodily postures during one and the same celebration, the faithful should follow the instructions which the Deacon, a lay minister, or the Priest gives, according to what is laid down in the Missal.

Question: Who can purify the vessels and when can the cleansing take place?

Answer:

According to the GIRM:

279. The sacred vessels are purified by the Priest, the Deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, insofar as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then consumed by whoever does the purification. The paten is wiped clean as usual with the purificator.

Question: Why do we go to Mass on Sundays?

Answer: In *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 106, one reads that the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day [...] Sunday which is the foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year. We come together on Sunday, the day Christ rose from the dead, to hear the words of God, to call to mind the passion, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ, and to thank God for our life in Christ. All three of these things are accomplished in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The celebration of the Eucharist is regarded by Vatican II as the “source and summit of the Christian life”. All other liturgical rites and all the works of the Christian life are linked with the Eucharistic celebration, flow from it, and have it as their end. The priest, acting in the person of Christ and the gathered assembly remember Christ’s Eucharistic sacrifice in the Mass.

At the Last Supper Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and banquet, by which the Sacrifice of the Cross is continuously made present in the Church whenever the Priest, representing Christ the Lord, carries out what the Lord himself did and handed over to his disciples to be done in his memory (GIRM 72). In the celebration of the eucharist we fulfill Christ’s command in the most perfect way. We offer God our thanks and our praise, we bring our gifts of bread and wine and ask God to accept them and make them holy, that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The primary and original reason for reservation of the eucharist outside of Mass is the administration of viaticum. The secondary ends are the giving of communion and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ present in the sacrament. The reservation of the sacrament for the sick led to the praiseworthy practice of adoring this heavenly food that is reserved in churches (SCDW, 5).

From all that is above we can see that the celebration of the eucharist is the most effective praise we can give to our God. By listening to the scriptures we learn how to live as children of God. We thank God for our salvation by offering bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's command, His death and resurrection. By sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ we become what we receive and are sent out into the world to live as Christ did.

The Eucharist is the source of our lives because we are nourished in word and sacrament. It is the summit because it completes and celebrates the work of our lives.

Question: Is it ever appropriate to say the Hail Mary during Mass?

Answer: GIRM

79.g) The *intercessions*, by which expression is given to the fact that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, of both heaven and of earth, and that the oblation is made for her and for all her members, living and dead, who are called to participate in the redemption and the salvation purchased by the Body and Blood of Christ.

Therefore, Mary is already praying with the gathered and to say the Hail Mary during Mass would be inappropriate and unnecessary.

Question: When are bells used during the Mass and why?

Answer:

GIRM 150. A little before the Consecration, if appropriate, a minister rings a small bell as a signal to the faithful. The minister also rings the small bell at each elevation by the Priest, according to local custom.

Question: Is it acceptable to have (lay) extraordinary ministers distribute communion?

Answer:

"On June 7, 1969, the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments granted to each of the Ordinaries in Canada: "the right to permit a qualified person to distribute Communion in churches and in public oratories during mass when it would otherwise take too long to distribute Communion, especially if there is a lack of clergy""(Liturgical Ministers 96)

According to the GIRM

162. The Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, that is, duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been duly deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the Priest may depute suitable faithful for this single occasion.

Question: **How should one receive communion?**

Answer:

#34.a In accordance with the custom of the church, the faithful may receive communion with kneeling or standing. One or the other practice is to be chosen according to the norms laid down by the conference of bishops and in view of the various circumstances, above all the arrangement of the churches and the number of communicants. The faithful should willingly follow the manner of reception indicated by the pastors so that communion may truly be a sign of familial union among all those who share in the same table of the Lord.

Although each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, at his choice,[178] if any communicant should wish to receive the Sacrament in the hand[...]the sacred host is to be administered to him or her.(*Redemptionis Sacramentum* 92)

Question: **Is it appropriate to exercise devotional practices (Rosary, Prayer of St. Michael et cetera.) after Mass?**

Answer: Devotional practices are best prayed at times apart from the liturgy. Sunday is the Day of the Lord, on this day we celebrate the life, death, resurrection and ascension into glory of the Lord Jesus. We make our prayer in Jesus to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. All of our attention is focused on the paschal mystery.

The intercession of saints and angels is made in the preface, so we join our voices with all of creation as we sing Hosanna.

Sunday has its distinct character and festivity as outlined in *Dies Domini*, 1998, John Paul II.

Devotional prayer is welcomed and encouraged – separate from the liturgy.

Miscellaneous

Question: **What is the significance of basilicas and what are the rights and privileges of the structure?**

Answer:

During the First century, basilicas functioned as halls of civility and justice for the Roman Empire. After Christianity was legitimized, in the early Fourth century, Christians adopted aspects of Roman architecture for their own worship spaces: interior columns, mosaics, nave, apse, and atrium – basilicas.

An article in *New Advent* provides a canonical description of *Basilica* “as a term used by canon lawyers and liturgist, is a title assigned by formal concession or immemorial custom to certain more important churches, in virtue of which they enjoy **privileges** of an honorific character which are

not always clearly defined. Basilicas in this sense are divided into two classes, the greater or patriarchal, and the lesser, basilicas.”²⁵

The article further notes that some of these privileges include:

- A certain precedence before other churches (not, however, before the cathedral)
- The *conopaeum* (a sort of umbrella)
- The bell
- The *cappa magna*

Question: How should a community conduct Sunday celebrations in the absence of a Priest?

Prot. 691/86

Principle Requisites for Sunday assembly

- a) Gathering of the faithful to manifest the Church, called together by God, presided over by a priest who acts in the person of Christ
- b) Instruction in the paschal mystery through the Scriptures that are proclaimed and that are explained by a priest or deacon
- c) Celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, by which the paschal mystery is expressed, and which is carried out by the priest in the person of Christ and offered in the name of the entire Christian people.

18. Whenever and wherever Mass cannot be celebrated on Sunday, the first thing to be ascertained is whether the faithful can go to a church in a place nearby to participate there in the Eucharistic mystery. At the present time this solution is to be recommended and to be retained where it is in effect; but it demands that the faithful, rightly imbued with a fuller understanding of the Sunday assembly, respond with good will to a new situation.

21. It is imperative that the faithful be taught to see the substitutional character of these celebrations, which should not be regarded as the optimal solution to new difficulties nor as surrender to mere convenience. Therefore a gathering or assembly of this kind can never be held on a Sunday in places where Mass has already been celebrated or is to be celebrated or was celebrated on the preceding Saturday evening, even if the Mass is

²⁵ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02325a.htm>

celebrated in a different language. Nor is it right to have more than one assembly of this kind on a given Sunday.

22. Any confusion between the kind of assembly and a Eucharistic celebration must be carefully avoided. Assemblies of this kind should not take away but rather increase the desire for the faithful to take part in the celebration of the eucharist, and should make them more eager to be present at the celebration of the eucharist.

23. The faithful are to understand that the Eucharistic sacrifice cannot take place without a priest and that the Eucharistic communion which they may receive in this kind of assembly is closely connected with the sacrifice of the Mass. On that basis the faithful can be shown how necessary it is to pray that God will “give the Church more priests and keep them faithful in their love and service.”

Question: **What is the structure and significance of general intercessions?**

With regard to Universal Prayer, the GIRM states that:

69. In the Universal prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighted down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world.

70. The series of intentions is usually to be:

- a) for the needs of the Church;
- b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- d) for the local community

71. It is for the Priest Celebrant to regulate this prayer from the chair [...] They are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.

The people, for their part, stand and give expression to their prayer either by an invocation said in common after each intention or by praying in silence.

Influenza and Church Life

Question: During influenza season, how can a Parish ensure sanitary distribution of Holy Communion and respectful gestures as the Sign of Peace?

Answer: Parishes are advised to provide hand sanitizer and many of them have chosen to use the smaller bottles that allow Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to sanitize their hands in their pew before moving into the sanctuary to distribute communion.

It is only under grave circumstances of a pandemic that restrictive measures are taken concerning communion practices. The only jurisdiction to prohibit communion on the tongue is that of grave concern for an epidemic.

We do have a health committee monitoring the development of the flu outbreak. The chair of the committee has already asked the pastors to remind parishioners of best hygiene practices: staying home when ill, coughing/ sneezing into one's sleeve when necessary, refraining from handshaking when not well. An intentional bow of acknowledgement can sometimes be a stronger ritual action than a handshake during which no eye contact is made.