

Rite of Welcoming the Candidates – REVISED TEXT

*OPENING PROCESSION

When the rite is celebrated within Mass, the entrance song or antiphon is sung as usual. Because they are already numbered among the baptized, the candidates are seated in a prominent place among the faithful.

- *Note the difference in the Opening Rite from the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate. By virtue of one's Baptism, you are already admitted into the Christian assembly. There is no special gathering rites and "entrance into the Church." Your baptism (whether it's Catholic or non-Catholic) makes you a part of the church.*
- *The Opening Procession for Mass is as normal. The Candidates and their sponsors are NOT in the opening Procession.*

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 reminds the assembly that these candidates have already been baptized. If it seems opportune, he may also indicate briefly the particular path which has led the candidates to seek the completion of their Christian initiation.

- *The celebrant is in the sanctuary.*
- *It's good to have a set greeting written out – welcoming the candidates to the church. It's important to highlight their baptism – and the importance of their baptism.*
- *Note: there is no sign of the cross here to begin (that comes later). This is an informal welcome on behalf of the whole parish by the Pastor. However, for pastoral reasons, you will want to consider beginning Mass the usual way with the Sign of the Cross and liturgical greeting – as that is what the assembly is accustomed to after the Opening Song. It might be too "jarring" to just start welcoming the Candidates.*
- *The celebrant may also share a little bit of information about the Candidates with the assembly, so that the assembly can get to know them better. Is someone seeking marriage in the Church? Is there someone who was a model Christian for the candidate? Keep it brief.*

The celebrant then invites the sponsors and candidates to come forward. As they are taking their places before the celebrant, an appropriate song may be sung (i.e. Psalm 63).

- *Suggested wording, after any introductions: "It is with great joy that we welcome you to this celebration in the name of Christ. You are already part of the Christian family by virtue of your baptism, and we recognize and celebrate your presence and participation in our worshipping assembly. I invite you to now come forward and speak of your desire to complete your initiation into the Roman Catholic Church."*
- *The candidates are NOT called forward by name. They give their names later in the rite.*
- *Determine ahead of time where the candidates will stand? At the sanctuary steps, in the sanctuary? The candidate's sponsors also come forward with the candidates.*
- *Music MAY be played here, but this movement is probably very short so as not to require music.*

OPENING DIALOG/QUESTIONS

- *Two options for presentation of the names. Either the celebrant asks:
WHAT IS YOUR NAME? (The question may be asked just once for a group, but each member of the group gives their name individually.)
or
The celebrant calls out the name of each candidate, who answers "PRESENT."*

- *The next question can be asked individually or just once for multiple candidates to answer at the same time. The answer doesn't have to be a rote answer; perhaps let the candidate answer in his or her own words.*
- WHAT DO YOU ASK OF GOD'S CHURCH?
Candidate(s): Eucharist and Confirmation or to be a full member of the Catholic Church...

***DECLARATION OF INTENT** _____

- *This ritual replaces the First Acceptance of the Gospel, because, as baptized Christians, they have already made a "first" acceptance of the Gospel.*

Two options:

- A. The celebrant addresses the candidates, adapting one of the following formularies or similar words to the answers received in the opening dialogue:
BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO, IN HIS GREAT MERCY, HAS GIVEN US A NEW BIRTH UNTO A LIVING HOPE, A HOPE WHICH DRAWS ITS LIFE FROM CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. BY BAPTISM INTO CHRIST JESUS, THIS HOPE OF GLORY BECAME YOUR OWN. CHRIST OPENED FOR YOU THE WAY OF THE GOSPEL THAT LEADS TO ETERNAL LIFE. NOW, UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, YOU DESIRE TO CONTINUE THAT JOURNEY OF FAITH.
- ARE YOU PREPARED TO REFLECT MORE DEEPLY ON THE MYSTERY OF YOUR BAPTISM, TO LISTEN WITH US TO THE APOSTLES' INSTRUCTION, AND TO JOIN WITH US IN A LIFE OF PRAYER AND SERVICE? Candidates: I am.
- B. PLEASE DECLARE BEFORE THIS COMMUNITY THE REASONS WHY YOU DESIRE TO ENTER MORE FULLY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. The candidates respond with a brief personal witness.
- *The second option may be a good way for the candidates to introduce themselves to the community. A few recommendations: if you use this option, the priest should just ask for their name at the beginning, and not do his own personal introduction of the candidates. Also, candidates should have the witness WRITTEN OUT and approved beforehand by the pastor or the religious education director. Finally, the candidate should have a microphone or go to the lectern/cantor stand (NOT THE AMBO). Rehearse beforehand.*

AFFIRMATION BY THE SPONSORS AND 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 are gathered with us, ready to help these candidates complete their Christian initiation? All: We are.

With hands joined, the celebrant says:

Father of mercy, we thank you for these your servants. You have already consecrated them in baptism, and now you call them to the fullness of the Church's sacramental life [as we respond]: we praise you, and we bless you, Lord.

All respond: We praise and bless you, Lord.

- *Note the position of the celebrant. He may need to turn between address the sponsors and the assembly so his back isn't to the assembly when he is meant to be speaking to them.*
- *This prayer is another acknowledgment of their baptism.*
- *The final acclamation is important – again – the assembly's own voice to the prayer of thanksgiving. This acclamation can be repeated below. Consider cueing the assembly by saying, "Together...we praise and bless you, Lord..."*

SIGNING OF THE CANDIDATES WITH THE CROSS

- *Unlike the signing of the senses for catechumens, the celebrant doesn't have the option of making the sign of the cross on the forehead; just the sponsors do this while the celebrant makes the sign of the cross OVER the candidate(s). The words the celebrant says at the signing of the forehead is another acknowledgment of the candidates' baptism.*
- *It is the SPONSORS or CATECHISTS who sign each of the senses, while the celebrant says the corresponding formulary.*
- *Before the signing begins, the candidates and their sponsors may need to move to a location that is more visible to the assembly (if there are multiple candidates, perhaps spreading out in the aisles).*
- *The signing begins with an invitation and the signing of the forehead (required). It continues with the (optional) signing of the other senses. If the other senses are signed, the signing concludes with the celebrant making the Sign of the Cross over all of them (again).*
- *After the Signing of the Forehead and each sense, a short acclamation may be sung. Consider using the acclamation "We praise and bless you, Lord" which was done at the beginning, or even a Gospel Acclamation refrain that you use in Lent. Other short refrains may be sung. Whatever you use, keep it consistent for all the senses.*
- *Sponsors: Let the gestures on the sense be big. And sign each sense: meaning if you are going to sign eyes, sign BOTH of them. BOTH feet. BOTH hands. For EYES, EARS, LIPS, HEART – do not touch the person, but make a sweeping gesture over each sense. For SHOULDERS – turn the person around and sign both shoulder blades. For HANDS – take their hands, palm up, into yours and sign both. For FEET – kneel down on the ground and sign both their feet. After the Feet – stand up, and turn the candidate toward the celebrant so they can see him give the blessing.*

The celebrant speaks to the candidates and sponsors in these or similar words:

Dear candidates, you have expressed your desire to share fully in the life of the Catholic Church. I now mark you with the sign of Christ's cross and call upon your catechists and sponsors to do the same.

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 your forehead as a reminder of your baptism into Christ's saving death and resurrection.

The assembly responds with the following or another suitable acclamation: Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Following the signing of the forehead, the other senses may be signed by the sponsor as the celebrant is saying the formularies. An acclamation of praise can be sung after each sense is signed:

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

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

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

Receive the sign of the cross on your chest, that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith.

Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yolk of Christ.

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

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

Then, without touching them, the celebrant alone makes the sign over the candidates at once, while saying:

I sign you all of your in the name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit that you may live for ever and ever.

Catechumens: Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

- *The candidate's and sponsors remain where they were standing at the Signing of the Senses.*
- *Two options for the Concluding Prayer, the second is another acknowledgment of the candidates baptism:
Let us pray.*
- A. Opening Collect of the Day
- B. Almighty God, who through the Cross and Resurrection of your Son have given life to your people, grant, we pray, that, following in the footsteps of Christ, your servants, who in Baptism accepted the sign of the Cross, may possess its saving power in their lives and show it forth in their deeds. Through Christ our Lord.
- *Note: There is no option to Present a Cross as there is in the Rite of Reception. Again – the candidates have been baptized and have already been marked with the cross. The signing of the senses here takes on a different meaning – we're not claiming them for Christ. We are acknowledging and reminding you that you are ALREADY claimed for Christ. They do not receive the cross, for they have already been baptized into the life and death of Jesus Christ.*

*INSTRUCTION

- *There is no invitation to hear the Word of God since that invitation was given at Baptism. Rather, the celebrant speaks briefly to the candidates and to their sponsors, helping them to understand the dignity of God's word proclaimed and heard in the church.*
- *The instruction is not set, although something should be prepared ahead of time. As part of the instruction, candidates should be invited to return to their seats and all to be seated for the readings.*

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- *The readings for the Mass of the day are prescribed. The homily follows.*

PRESENTATION OF THE BIBLE

- *A brief introduction for the assembly might be helpful: "As we have heard the scriptures proclaimed to us, we now present the Book of Scriptures to our Candidates so that they may read and study God's Word in preparation for their full initiation into the Catholic Church."*
- *It is also helpful to invite the Candidates forward to receive the bible: "Come forward now to receive the Word of God."*
- *As the celebrant hands each candidate a Bible, he says "Receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" or something similar. The candidates may respond with a simple "Amen" Or "Thanks be to God."*

*PROFESSION OF FAITH

- *Unlike the Rite of Entrance (where the Creed is optional even when it is prescribed), the Creed is recited when it is prescribed (on Sundays and solemnities). Again, this faith profession is an acknowledgment of the candidates' baptism. They have the privilege, right, and duty to profess the faith given in their baptism.*

UNIVERSAL PRAYER FOR THE CANDIDATES

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

- *Intercessions for Mass are said in the customary way. In addition to the regular intercessions for Mass, multiple intercessions are made for the candidates. Options for the intercessions for candidates are given. You can select all or some of them.*
- *One suggestion: put three or four of the intercessions for candidates FIRST – beginning each petition with: "For our candidates, that..." After these, list the regular intercessions for Mass.*

PRAYER OVER THE CANDIDATES

- *This prayer serves as the conclusion to the intercessions (another acknowledgment of baptism):*
ALMIGHTY AND ETERNAL GOD, WHOSE LOVE GATHERS US TOGETHER AS ONE, RECEIVE THE PRAYERS OF YOUR PEOPLE. LOOK KINDLY ON THESE YOUR SERVANTS ALREADY CONSECRATED TO YOU IN BAPTISM, AND DRAW THEM INTO THE FULLNESS OF FAITH. KEEP YOUR FAMILY ONE IN THE BONDS OF LOVE THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- *The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins as usual with the preparation of the Gifts.*