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# 2024-2025 ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (OCIA) GUIDEBOOK

(Prior to December 1, 2024, known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA))



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Pastor's Welcome Letter

<b>Guidelines for the OCIA and Children of Catechetical Age</b> .....	3
General .....	4
Those Who Participate in the OCIA Program .....	4-5
Other Individuals and the OCIA Program .....	6
Other Considerations .....	7-8
Process (Stages and Periods of Preparation and Celebration) .....	9-12
Sponsors and Godparents .....	13-19
Record Keeping .....	19-20
Marriages and the OCIA .....	20-21

## Attachments:

A	–	Suggested Sample OCIA Candidate or Catechumen Interview Checklist
B	–	Some Churches Without Valid Baptisms
C	–	Suggested List of Catechetical Topics of Instruction for Those in OCIA
D	–	List of Approved Materials for Catechetical Instruction for Those in OCIA
E	–	Glossary of OCIA-Peculiar Terms
F	–	Adult Confirmation Registration and Information
G	–	Invalid Marriages and (how they affect) the OCIA Program
H	–	Form for Catholic Godparents and Sponsors
I	–	Godparent and Sponsor Prayer
J	–	Guidelines for Choosing a Godparent and Sponsor
K	–	2024-2025 Calendar of OCIA Rituals and Events

# ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

## ***GUIDELINES FOR THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE***

“The catechumenate for adults [and children of catechetical age (age 7 or older)], comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be taken into use at the discretion of the local Ordinary [e.g., diocesan bishop]. By this means, the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred Orders to be celebrated at successive intervals of time” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 64).

“In the sacraments of Christian initiation, we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire people of God in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord’s death and resurrection...The three sacraments of Christian initiation [Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist] closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world” (*The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* (OCIA), General Introduction, 1-2).

The mission of the Church is inseparable from that of Christ and the Holy Spirit. “In her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 738). The OCIA is the ordinary way by which adults (individuals age 7 and older) are made fully members of the Church and, thus, participants in the mission of the Church.

### **Introductory Information**

This guidebook does not replace the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* (OCIA) or the Diocese of Colorado Springs OCIA Guidelines. Rather they are intended to clarify certain administrative and canonical issues as they affect the St. Michael Parish. The *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* (OCIA) is always the principal, governing directive to be used in bringing new members into the Roman Catholic Church. This guidebook contains excerpts concerning godparent and sponsor qualifications and responsibilities from the Code of Canon Law, OCIA, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, and other resources.

The mission of the Church is a mission of hospitality, evangelization, and justice. Through the process of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) and Children of Catechetical Age (normally age of 7 and older), the parishes within the Diocese of Colorado Springs strive to form and catechize a people who will embrace and carry on this mission of Jesus.

When issues arise that are outside these published directives and/or require pastoral care, resolutions or exceptions may be granted upon consultation of the Pastor.

## Part I – General

- Those seeking to enter into full Communion or complete their Sacraments of Initiation within the Catholic Church must participate in an initial interview. During this initial interview by the parish's OCIA coordinator, an assessment is to be made regarding the individual's general knowledge of the Catholic doctrine and faith formation. At times, it may be appropriate for candidates to join the catechumens in some of their formational process. However, care must be taken to distinguish and respect the baptized status of the candidate.
- During this interview process, the interviewer must be alert to canonical impediments to validly receiving sacraments in the Church. These impediments may include but are not limited to: any irregular marital situations (e.g., civil marriages outside the Church and/or subsequent marriages following civil divorces without an annulment), candidate and/or spouse surgical interventions to prevent procreation of children, etc. Irregular marriages and cohabitation of partners outside a valid marriage, **must** be resolved before the celebration of any sacraments and before the person can progress forward and participate in any liturgy of catechumenate or candidate welcoming or reception into the Catholic Church. Please refer to Part V of this guidebook for further information.

## Part II: Those Who Participate in the OCIA Program (or Process)

1. **Unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age\***: (age of reason 7 years or older)

These individuals are the ones for whom the OCIA was designed – those who seek membership in the Body of Christ through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. These individuals are the ones who will enter the order of **catechumens**.

For those who are married, proof of valid marriage must be obtained – or, if the marriage is invalid, it must be validated in the Church – before the individual's admission to the catechumenate. Those in an irregular marital union may take part in the catechetical instruction, but may not be called forward to participate in the Order of Election.

The parish priest is to administer all the Sacraments of Initiation to these individuals – ordinarily at the Easter Vigil.

(\* Children of catechetical age in the OCIA shall be subject to the same safe environment training requirements outlined in the Bishops' Charter as those enrolled in the parish's children's RE program.)

2. **Those baptized in another Christian denomination and seeking full communion with the Roman Catholic Church:**

These individuals are called **candidates**. Although not full participants in the OCIA, these individuals *may* receive their catechesis together with the catechumens. Care must be taken however, to distinguish and respect the baptized status of these candidates. They should not be seen as catechumens. Candidates are already members of the Body of Christ, although imperfectly.

When persons validly baptized into another ecclesiastical body seek to become members of the Catholic Church, they are welcomed as candidates for full communion (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* #69).

- Proof of valid baptism in a Christian denomination must be presented by those seeking candidacy for full communion.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be celebrated at a time prior to and distinct from the reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation.
- Diocesan guidelines contain a listing of those non-Catholic baptisms that are recognized as valid or not valid by the Catholic Church. If there is a question about whether a candidate's baptism is considered valid, a consultation with the Pastor is to be sought. If a record of baptism cannot be obtained, a memorandum for record and/or witness statement will be maintained in the person's parish OCIA file. (Please refer to Attachment 1 for a list of denominations and communities whose baptism is not valid.)
- It is most desirable that candidates be received into the Catholic Church on a day (preferably Sunday) other than the Easter Vigil. The parish priest is to administer Confirmation and the Eucharist, together with the Profession of Faith.
- For those who are married, proof of valid marriage must be obtained. Those in an irregular union must regularize their marriage and may take part in the catechetical instruction, but may not be permitted to progress forward and be called to candidacy.

### 3. **Baptized, but uncatechized, Adult Catholics:**

These individuals are those who have been baptized into the Catholic Church, but have little or no catechetical formation in the Catholic faith. Usually, they have not been confirmed nor have they, in some cases, received the Sacrament of Eucharist.

These are neither catechumens nor candidates. Their instruction should be separate and distinct from the catechumenate and candidates. However, if parish resources are limited, they *may* receive their catechesis together with the catechumens and candidates. Again, these individuals are to be distinguished from the catechumens and the candidates.

Proof of baptism in the Catholic Church must be obtained if these individuals are to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

It is recommended that baptized, but *uncatechized children* be given instruction appropriate to their age and level of understanding that prepares them to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. In keeping with the Confirmation policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, they are to participate in the preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Eucharist provided within each parish with their peers in accordance with published diocesan guidelines.

## Part III: Others Individuals and the OCIA Program

### 1. **Adult practicing Catholics who have not been confirmed.**

- Baptized adult Catholics seeking Confirmation who regularly attend Sunday Mass, were catechized through elementary and middle school, or have been actively involved in parish religious education and ministries are not candidates for OCIA. They require only a brief and simple preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

**The priest may not validly confirm previously baptized Catholics, unless he has the faculty from the bishop to do so.** Ordinarily they are to be confirmed by the bishop at the cathedral on Pentecost Sunday. If they are unable to come to the cathedral, they may be confirmed by the bishop together with the parish's annual youth Confirmation class.

These Catholics shall participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before being confirmed, so as to be properly disposed to receive the sacrament.

### 2. **Catechized Adult Catholics Who have Been Away from the Catholic Church/Faith:**

- Likewise, fully initiated (e.g., have already received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) who have been away from the Catholic Church for some extended period of time are candidates for a parish program for reaching out to inactive or alienated Catholics — such as Catholics Come Home — not the OCIA Program.

These Catholics all participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving any other sacraments, so as to be properly disposed to receive the sacraments.

### 3. **Orthodox Christians who wish to enter the Catholic Church** should be properly catechized, but **they make only the Profession of Faith.** The sacraments of the Orthodox Churches are valid and are not to be repeated. Proof of reception of the sacraments in the Orthodox Church must be obtained.

They shall receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before making the Profession of Faith.

Note: If an Eastern Rite Catholic wishes to become a Latin Order Catholic, please consult the chancellor of the diocese for direction.

## Part IV - Other Considerations

Note to Parish/OCIA Staff and Volunteers: If the person is in an irregular marriage and is seeking sacraments in the Catholic Church, it is very important that the OCIA coordinator or someone from the OCIA team monitors the progress of their annulment case with the petitioner regularly (e.g., at least once a month). Care must be taken that any necessary canonical process is completed and affirmative judgments are received prior to sending the person forward to the Order of Election. The petitioner must be fully informed that a negative decision from the Tribunal is always a possibility.

Cohabitation outside of valid marriage is an obstacle to receiving the Sacraments of Initiation. Living together without the benefit of a valid bond of marriage, directly contradicts the fundamental Catholic Church teachings.

The bottom line is: No one in a situation of cohabitation may be admitted past the catechetical period of instruction and progress to the Order of Catechumens or Welcomed as a candidate, until that moral impediment and persisting status of life is eliminated.

1. **Norms:**

The Order identifies children of catechetical age (normally age 7 and above) (the presumed age of reason) in the category of adults. Thus, the process also applies to unbaptized children of catechetical age.

2. **Parish OCIA Coordinator and Team:**

- Per diocesan guidelines, each parish within the Diocese of Colorado Springs is encouraged to appoint a parish OCIA coordinator or director and/or a team for the implementation of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) who will provide for the journey of faith that takes place within the context of the parish community.
- The pastor must ensure that he, the OCIA Coordinator, and team have adequate training and on-going recurring education in the areas of Christian formation and the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. Their close coordination and communication is essential.
- The OCIA Coordinator and team assist the pastor in the interviewing process, faith formation, faith development, and the ongoing celebration of the OCIA-peculiar Orders.

3. **Interviewing Process:**

- The parish has developed a process of interviewing individuals seeking to enter the Catholic Church or who wish to complete their Sacraments of Initiation (Please see Attachment A for a sample form).

- The interviewer (normally the OCIA coordinator), in consultation with the pastor, determines the level of readiness of each inquirer for a particular period of preparation and celebration of the Orders.
- Some individuals, because of their previous exposure to the Christian life and the Catholic faith, may need only a short time of preparation. Others however, may need a longer time, before they are presented for the Order of Election and subsequent reception of the Sacraments of Initiation.
- The interviewing process must carefully explore the cohabitating and/or current and past marriage status of each inquirer (and their current spouse) expressing a desire to enter the church, so that any circumstances that are or present an impediment (e.g., irregular marriage needing convalidation; an annulment from a previous marriage is needed; etc.) are made known early on and the necessary canonical procedures are implemented. A catechumen or candidate in an irregular marriage must have his/her marriage regularized within the Catholic Church, before being sent to the Order of Election and receiving the Sacraments of Initiation. If a catechumen has filed a petition for a Declaration of Nullity (annulment), the tribunal should be notified that the petitioner is a catechumen and the OCIA Coordinator should communicate regularly with the inquirer and pastor on the progress and status of their case.

The bottom line: Until an annulment from any previous marriage(s) is received and/or a convalidation of an existing marriage occurs, the person may not progress past the catechetical instruction phase of the OCIA formation process. The parish deacon, priest, or bishop is incapable of making any exceptions by the Canon Law of the Church.



## Part V - Process

### 1. Stages and Periods of Preparation and Celebration

The OCIA specifies that unbaptized adults who express a desire to join the Catholic Church and unbaptized children of catechetical age are invited into a journey of faith consisting of three Orders and four time periods. The Orders and periods imply appropriate time for instruction, faith formation, and preparation for the Orders. The following is a general diagram of these Orders and periods of time.

PERIODS	ORDERS
1. Evangelization and Pre-Catechumenate	Followed by: A. Acceptance into Order of Catechumens B. Becoming a Catechumen
2. Catechumenate	Completed by: C. Election or Enrollment of Names
3. Purification and Enlightenment	Followed by: D. Celebration of the Scrutinies E. Celebration of Sacraments of Initiation
4. Mystagogia	Followed by: F. Ongoing participation in the sacraments

### 2. Period of Pre-Catechumenate: (OCIA #36-116)

This is a time of evangelization on the part of the Church and of inquiry on the part of the individual. During this time, the catechumenal team presents the basic teachings of the Church in light of the gospel message. This period is to last for an indeterminate length of time; depending upon the needs of each individual inquirer. The aim of the pre-catechumenate is faith and an initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love (OCIA #37).

(Adults) Qualifications before progression to the Period of the Catechumenate and celebration of the Order of Acceptance (or the Order of Welcome, if already baptized) into the Order of the Catechumenate are:

- *First* faith and *initial* conversion;
- The intention to change their lives;
- The first stirrings of repentance;
- A calling upon God in prayer;
- A sense of the Church and experience of Christians (OCIA #42); and
- No canonical impediments which would prevent them from entering the Order of Acceptance or Welcome,

(Children) Qualifications before progression to the Period of the Catechumenate and celebration of the Order of Acceptance (or the Order of Welcome, if already baptized) into the Order of the Catechumenate are:

- Foundational catechetical knowledge of themes in this period, such as: call; response; covenant; journey; God’s love; God’s faithfulness; Jesus as our friend; images of God; hospitality; community; Church; an introduction to the Mass; scripture; the cross; etc.
- Preparation will be needed for the questions and answers in the Order:

Q: What do you want to become?

A: “A Christian.”

Q: Why do you want to become a Christian?

A: “Because I believe in Christ.”

Q: What do you gain by believing in Christ?

A: “Eternal life.”

With the assistance of the OCIA coordinator, sponsors, catechists, and deacons, the parish priest(s) have the responsibility for judging the outward indications of such dispositions. Before the Order of Acceptance is celebrated, sufficient and necessary time, as required in each individual’s case, is set aside to evaluate, and if necessary, to purify the candidate’s motives and dispositions (OCIA #43).

Note: Persons still in irregular or invalid marriages are not permitted to proceed beyond this inquiry phase, until their marriage is in right order in accord with the marriage laws of the Church (e.g., via canonical annulment or convalidation processes, as appropriate).

3. **Period of Catechumenate:** (OCIA #75-117)

The Catechumenate is an extended period for faith formation and development in the Christian life. This period begins with the Order of Acceptance (OCIA #48-74) into the catechumenate and may last from one to several years. Catechumens are joined to the Church and are part of the household of Christ. They are nourished with the Word of God and are strengthened in their journey by other liturgical celebrations provided for in the OCIA. The term "*catechumen*" is strictly reserved for the unbaptized, who are admitted into the Order of the Catechumens. They may celebrate marriage in the church

as a Liturgy of the Word (not in the Mass) and in the case of death, the catechumen may receive a Christian burial (OCIA #47 and OCIA National Statute #14).

Unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason (normally age 7 and older) are to follow, as appropriate, the process for adults in preparation and celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. Depending on the age and readiness of the child, the catechumenal process may last from one to several years before the child is sent forward to the Order of Election and to receive the Easter Sacraments. Some of their instruction may be in conjunction with baptized children of their same age (NCCB Statute #19). Their status as catechumens however, is not to be compromised or confused (Canon 852; General Introduction to Christian Initiation #34-35; the OCIA #253 and 259; and in the Order of Baptism for Children # 27-31).

Instruction during the period of the Catechumenate not only continues to present Catholic teaching, but also seeks to enlighten faith, direct the heart toward God, foster participation in the liturgy, inspire apostolic activity, and nurture a life completely in accord with the Spirit of Christ. Catechumens learn to connect their life stories and activities to those of salvation history as found in the Lectionary (OCIA #75). They are to actively participate in the Liturgy of the Word with the assembled Catholic community.

In accordance with the "Order of Dismissal" in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, the Catechumens are dismissed each Sunday after the homily in the Liturgy of the Word, to learn from and about the sacred scripture presented during that liturgical celebration.

The Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens as well as the Minor Exorcisms and Blessings *may* be celebrated one or more times during the period of the Catechumenate, symbolizing their need for God's help and strength, and giving them encouragement to overcome obstacles and recognize their God-given gifts (OCIA 90-94; 95-97; 98-103).

The aim of the Catechumenate is training in the Christian life (OCIA #75). Qualities nurtured within the Catechumenal process include:

- Turning more readily to God in prayer;
- Bearing witness in the faith;
- Keeping their hopes set on Christ in all things;
- Following supernatural inspiration in their deeds; and
- Practicing love of neighbor; even at the cost of self-renunciation (OCIA #75.2).

The qualifications *before* celebrating the Order of Election include:

- A conversion in mind and action;
- A sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching;
- Living in the spirit of faith and charity;
- The intention to receive the sacraments; and

- And the readiness to express this publicly (OCIA #120).

Continuing with the evaluative efforts from the pre-catechumenate stage, with the assistance of the OCIA coordinator, sponsors, catechists, and deacons, parish priest(s) have the responsibility for judging the person's progress in the Catechumenate stage and their suitability to participate in the Order of Election.

4. **Purification and Enlightenment:**

During the period of *purification and enlightenment*, the catechetical focus of instruction becomes a stronger emphasis on the spiritual and mystical life in preparation for the sacraments. Normally coinciding with Lent, this period enables catechists to shift the focus of teaching from an exposure of the Deposit of Faith to prayer, reflection, and meditation.

5. **Mystagogia:**

Mystagogia is the period or stage of the OCIA process that begins after people are baptized or received into full communion with the Church. This is a time for the parish community and its new Catholics to grow together in deepening their grasp of the paschal mysteries and what daily living of the Catholic faith is all about. This happens through meditation on the Gospels, participating in the Eucharist, and demonstrating works of charity. As a way to assist our new members in this stage of their conversion, parishes are encouraged to facilitate catechetical/informational classes; ideally on a myriad of faith-based subjects, not previously covered in the people's OCIA instruction.

6. **Order of Election and Recognition:**

Unbaptized persons who have gone through preparation appropriate to their age and development as catechumens are sent to St. Mary's Cathedral in Colorado Springs or other designated church on or near the First Sunday of Lent. At the Order of Election, they are welcomed and received by the Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs. This Order designates the persons as those elected to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the coming Easter Vigil. These elect are to participate in the scrutinies and other Orders designated throughout the Lenten season at the parish level. While the Order of Election is for the Catechumens, within the St. Michael Parish community, candidates are also highly encouraged to attend and actively participate.

7. **Celebration of the Sacraments:**

The Easter Vigil is the usual time for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist). At times, for pastoral reasons, a decision may be made to administer these sacraments at some other time of the year. However, careful pastoral consideration must be given to the benefits of leading the individual through the

appropriate stages and periods of development that are integrally built into the cycle of the church's liturgical year.

8. **Sponsors and Godparents:**

- A sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention" (*OCIA*, Introduction, 10).
- "Godparents (for each a godmother or godfather, or both) accompany the candidates on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. Godparents are persons chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest" (*OCIA*, Introduction, 11).
- There is a distinction between an OCIA sponsor and an OCIA godparent. The **sponsor** accompanies the catechumen (unbaptized) through the Order of Acceptance and the Catechumenate. The **godparent** accompanies the catechumen through the Order of Election, the periods of purification and enlightenment, the celebration of Sacraments of Initiation, and the period of Mystagogy.
- Each catechumen is to have a sponsor who helps the catechumen to be an example of living the Christian life in accord with the scriptures and the laws and practices of the Catholic Church. The sponsor may also become the Godparent at the time of receiving the sacraments. If the catechumen prefers, another person may be chosen as a Godparent.
- **The qualifications and requirements of a Godparent are:** to be a fully, initiated Catholic in good-standing; an active parishioner; has completed at least the 16<sup>th</sup> year of age; is not bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared; and is not the father or mother of the person in the OCIA.

A sponsor or a godparent must:

- be at least 16 years of age;
- be a practicing, Catholic in good standing; who has already received all of their Sacraments of Initiation;
- be an active and registered parishioner;
- be qualified to fulfill the duties of the role and not bound by any canonical penalty or impediment;
- if married, have been married in the Catholic Church or have received appropriate permissions/dispensations.

- NOT be the father or mother of the individual seeking the sacrament(s).
- be approved by the individual's pastor to fulfill this important ministry.

If a spouse or fiancé is chosen as a sponsor, it is recommended that another suitable and approved sponsor that is the same sex as the candidate also be chosen.

A baptized member of a non-Catholic denomination is not to act as a godparent except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a WITNESS of the baptism.

- Sponsors/Godparents are to possess the qualities of compassion; honesty; prayerfulness; patience; good listening skills; and a willingness to share aspects of their faith journey with others. Additionally, the role of a sponsor/godparent is to be a compassionate guide; an understanding mentor; a living sign of conversion; and a link between the candidate and the larger Church's faith community.
- For the OCIA process, Sacrament of Baptism, Sacrament of Confirmation, etc., only one Catholic Godparent or Sponsor is required, although two are preferred and may be chosen (one male, one female or both). A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic faith community may not participate as an approved Sponsor or Godparent, however may function as a Witness of the sacrament (Canon 873 and 874).
- **Responsibilities:** The following is a enumerated list of responsibilities for a OCIA sponsor and/or godparent:
  - **During the Precatechumenate Period:**
    - Pray every day for the person you are serving and guiding in this faith journey.
    - Ask God every day for his help and for wisdom in serving this inquirer to the best of your ability.
    - Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all the inquirers and respect and encourage your inquirer's freedom and personal boundaries.
    - Get to know your inquirer.
    - Exchange contact information with your inquirer (e.g., telephone numbers, email addresses, etc).
    - Encourage your inquirer in his/her desire to learn and live the Catholic way of life.
    - Listen to the faith journey of your inquirer, as often as they wish to share.
    - Attend as many catechetical sessions with your inquirer, as possible. If they miss a formation class or OCIA activities, contact them and express your heartfelt concern.
    - Support the parish clergy and OCIA catechists, and trust that the OCIA process will make it possible for your inquirer to hear and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

- Avail yourself to reinforce the formation teachings through regular, one-on-one encounters with your inquirer.
- **At the Orders of Acceptance and/or Welcoming:**
  - Pray for the inquirers who are going through these first Orders.
  - Be available for any rehearsal/practice for the Orders.
  - Reflect on what liturgy means to you, so that you might help your inquirer understand the place of liturgy in the life of the Church.

Note:

During the Order of Acceptance, you, as a sponsor of an unbaptized inquirer, will be asked whether you are “ready to help [your inquirer] find and follow Christ.”

During the Order of Welcoming, as a sponsor of a baptized inquirer, you are asked whether you are ready to help your inquirer to complete his/her Christian initiation or to prepare for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

- **During the Catechumenate Period:**
  - Continue / follow the norms aforementioned in the pre-catechumenate period.
  - Be willing to say “I don’t know” and to say “let’s ask”.
  - Assist your catechumen/candidate in the Christian initiation process by: bearing witness to the faith; nurturing him/her in their ongoing process of conversion; providing support, guidance, and comfort as his/her situation warrants; and remaining open to God’s will when things go differently than you hope.
  - Be present at Sunday Mass and Masses of Days of Obligation with your catechumen/candidate.
  - Avail yourself to the parish’s OCIA director and catechists to assist in OCIA activities, if/as needed.
  - Discuss with him/her situations that have come up raising difficulties in putting the Christian life into practice in the family or workplace.
  - Discuss with him/her struggles with temptation or sin that need prayer and support.
  - Discuss any opposition from family or friends to your catechumen’s/candidate’s decision to enter the Church.
  - Share good Catholic resources (books, magazines, etc.) or to go a Catholic bookstore together to browse.
  - Gently challenge ideas that conflict with a Christian understanding of God.
  - Invite your catechumen/candidate to attend Mass or other parish activities or ministries with you.
  - Send them a birthday or Christmas card and emphasize your continued presence, prayers, and support for them.

◦ **At the Orders of Sending** (Optional):

*“I turn to you, godparents, for your testimony about these candidates. Have these catechumens taken their formation in the Gospel and in the Catholic way of life seriously? ... Have they given evidence of their conversion by the example of their lives? ... Do you judge them ready to be presented to this bishop for the Order of election?” .. “As God is your witness, do you consider these candidates ready to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist?” (OCIA, 112 and 440)*

- Pray for the catechumens and candidates who are going through this Order.
- Be available for participation in the Orders.

Note:

Godparents and sponsors will first be called upon by the priest celebrant to publicly testify to an individual’s readiness for the sacraments of initiation at the parish Order of Sending. An option Order at the parish-level, it proceeds the participation of you and the individual’s in the Orders of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion at the St. Mary Cathedral in Colorado Springs, presided by our diocese’s bishop. During this Order, you as a godparent publicly attest to your catechumen’s readiness after each of three questions put to you by the priest celebrant or you, as a sponsor, publicly attest to your candidate’s readiness.

◦ **At the Orders of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion:**

- Pray for the catechumens and candidates who are going through this Order.
- Be available for participation in the Orders.
- If transportation is not provided or otherwise readily available, offer to take your catechumen/candidate to the Orders.

Note:

These Orders belong to the bishop and are normally celebrated at the Cathedral early in Lent, with the catechumens, candidates, godparents, sponsors, and others. These Orders are a solemn acknowledgment that the elect, as the catechumens are now called, and the candidates are ready to receive the Sacraments of Initiation into the Catholic Church. For many of them, this is their first opportunity to experience the universal Church and meet their bishop.



◦ **During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment:**

- Focus your prayer life toward asking God to pour out an abundance of graces upon your elect/candidate, so that he/she might respond with the eagerness of a lover of God's outpouring of himself in love.
- Encourage him/her in beginning the practice of Lenten fasting and abstinence.
- Invite him/her to the devotions normally available during Lent in your parish, such as the Stations of the Cross.
- Help your elect/candidate choose a suitable Christian name (for Baptism) or a patron saint (for Confirmation) through available published resources.
- Be present at the OCIA-peculiar Orders involving your elect/candidate.
- If you are the sponsor of a baptized candidate, be present when he/she celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time, to encourage him/her and to celebrate afterwards their experience of the Lord's mercy and forgiveness.
- If possible, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the same time, and explain your own feelings to your candidate.
- Accompany him/her throughout Holy Week.

Note:

This may be the first Holy Week your elect/candidate has experienced. There is no better spiritual preparation for receiving the Sacraments of Initiation than a fully-celebrated Holy Week; walking the journey with our Lord.

◦ **At the Celebration of the Preparation Orders on Holy Saturday:**

- To the extent possible, set aside the day for prayer, reflection, and fasting for the sake of the elect/candidate you are serving.
- Consider a suitable gift to celebrate the event of initiation, such as patron-saint medal, a book or DVD of the chosen patron saint, a rosary, etc.
- Be present for the Orders.

Note:

As Holy Saturday draws, the elect and candidates realize that, before the day is over, they will be fully-initiated Catholics and will have received their Lord and Savior in the most intimate union of the Eucharist.

The explanations of baptismal names and patron saints, normally solicited from the elect/candidates during the Preparation Orders, can be a source of considerable

emotion. These selections reveal something essential about how each individual perceives himself/herself in relation to God, the Church, and the parish community.

◦ **At the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil:**

This is a night, and a celebration, of inexpressible joy. With the entire Church, the parish assembly rejoices in our Lord's Resurrection. The new Catholics have achieved their long-desired goal to become adopted sons and daughters of the Father and members of Mother Church and have attained "one-flesh" union with their Divine Bridegroom in the intimate embrace of the Eucharist. You as a godparent or sponsor, together with the entire community of the faithful, are caught up in the joy of this "wedding feast." As a godparent or sponsor, you might feel, as did St. John, that "no greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth" (3 John 1:4). It is, indeed, a time to lift up your heart to the Lord!

◦ **During the Period of Mystagogy (the Neophyte Year and beyond):**

Your responsibilities as godparent and sponsor do not end at the Easter Vigil, however, continue through the period of mystagogy—the seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost—and into the neophyte year. Your new Catholic will continue to need your assistance and direction in the beginning of walking in newness of life.

The neophyte year, until the following Easter, is a special time of both joy and trial. Your neophyte may need your guidance and support even more as he/she begins to live the life of a disciple of Christ in its fullness.

The neophyte year carries with it special risks of falling away from the practice of the faith. Many neophytes experience significant temptations to fall back into old ways of life, and to neglect, in small or large ways, the practice of their faith. Work and family demands, crises, illness, difficulties in finding a "fit" with parish ministries, etc., can provide opportunities for temptations to lessen your neophyte's fervor.

- Continue, and even intensify, your daily prayer for your neophyte.
- Continue to participate in catechetical sessions through the period of mystagogy.
- Spend some time in Eucharistic adoration.
- Provide room for and encourage your neophyte to explore the richness of different spiritualities within the Church.
- Assist him/her to develop closer ties with other members of the parish.
- Encourage him/her to seek out others in learning how to live out his/her new faith and his/her vocation in life.
- Keep in touch throughout the entire year.

◦ **Concluding Comments:**

Being a godparent or sponsor entails a significant commitment of time and a desire to be of loving service. You may feel wholly unequal to the task set before you. At times, you may have questions, doubts, or even misgivings. But remember that *no one* is “up to the task” unaided! God does not call you to his service without giving you the grace you need to succeed. You bring to one person a willing heart, ready to love. This means a desire to do God’s will, a spirit of self-giving that springs from your own relationship with Christ, and a desire for others to experience that relationship as well. Relying on God’s grace the Holy Spirit at work in your life and in the life of the person to whom you are committed to be a companion and friend, you *can* fulfill your role as godparent or sponsor. After all, keep in mind that being a godparent or sponsor is not “all about you”. With perseverance and prayer, you will grow to be more like Christ and be more equipped to bring others to the knowledge of his great love.

## **Part VI- Record Keeping**

1. **Order of Acceptance into the Catechumenate:** Each unbaptized person received into the Catechumenate via a Order of Acceptance is entered into the **Register of Catechumens** (OCIA #46). This record includes the name of the Catechumen, names of the sponsors, the minister and the date and place of the celebration. This record is important because Catechumens acquire certain rights, such as a Christian burial in case of death or the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage in a Liturgy of the Word ceremony, before receiving the sacraments.
2. **Order of Election:** At the time of the Order of Election, on the first Sunday of Lent, those Catechumens ready for the full, Easter Sacraments of Initiation are invited to the Order of Election. Their names are entered into the **Book of the Elect**. The **Book of the Elect** is an official record book to be kept permanently in the archives (normally in a secure, fireproof container with other sacrament record books) of each parish.
3. **Baptismal Record:** At the time of baptism, documentation is to be recorded in the parish’s baptismal records with the appropriate notation of Confirmation and First Communion (Canon 877).
  - The record of baptism from another Ecclesiastical Body is to be recorded in the Baptismal Record of the parish where the remainder of the Sacraments of Initiation will be celebrated.
  - Where serious doubt remains concerning baptism or its validity exists, a conditional baptism *may* be celebrated but this is to be done in a private ceremony and not at a public liturgical assembly of the community. It is to be so recorded in the parish sacrament record books (Canons 845 and 869).

4. **Full Communion/Baptism in Another Ecclesiastical Body:** When a candidate is received into full communion in the Catholic Church, the date of their profession of faith is to be recorded in the parish baptismal register, with the place, name of minister, and sponsors. Additionally, the register notation should include baptismal information about the other denomination.
5. **Completion of Sacraments of Initiation:** Persons baptized in the Catholic Church who are completing the Sacraments of Initiation as adults, must secure a record of their baptism prior to receiving Confirmation. If the baptism was in a Catholic Church other than the church of Confirmation, the appropriate notification of confirmation is to be sent to the church of baptism for recording.
6. A notice of First Eucharist and/or Confirmation must be sent to the parish of baptism upon administration of those sacraments also.

## **Part VII – Marriages and the OCIA**

### **Important Canonical Topics to Remember about Marriage**

- a. A valid marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament.
  - b. A marriage is presumed to be a valid sacrament until proven otherwise by the appointed authorities of the Church.
  - c. A valid sacramental marriage is indissoluble; that is, it cannot be dissolved by the subsequent withdrawal of consent of one or both of the parties or by the intervention of external authorities (e.g., a civil divorce).
1. **Determining whether an irregular marital situation exists for an applicant:**

*Early on in the inquiry process, the marital status of every applicant must be scrutinized by the parish's OCIA coordinator to determine if there are any irregularities that would prevent the applicant from participating in the Order of Election and/or receiving the Sacraments of Initiation. An Initial Interview Questionnaire (see Sample in Attachment A) is essential to clarifying the marital status, so the pastor can later meet with the applicant for further discussion about the needed next steps. Depending on the complexity of the matter, a longer procedure to remedy the situation may be necessary. Thus, the catechumen/candidate may have to wait for another year before celebrating the Order of Election or the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation. It is imperative that such situations be addressed very early on in the process and that the applicant know clearly the Church's Tribunal procedures that lay ahead and whether the applicant can proceed to the Order of Election, receive of the Sacraments of Initiation, or whether he/she may have to wait until the next year.*

Any annulment applicant is not to be given a premature or false hope that the Tribunal process will be completed quickly and/or in time for the Order of Acceptance or Welcoming, reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, or that the annulment petitioner will automatically receive an affirmative decision. Creating such unrealistic expectations and false impressions to the applicant can and often do, result in disappointment and frustration for the applicant, his/her family, and their spouse, sponsor(s), and/or grandparent(s).

2. Once a person has become a catechumen (the result of celebrating the Order of Acceptance) that person is a member of the household of faith and has certain rights in the Church. Among them is the right to be married according to the Catholic Order of Marriage. The language of the Order of marriage for a catechumen is adapted to reflect the fact that the catechumen is unbaptized. The marriage should take place in the context of a celebration of the Word and not a full Mass. (NCCB, #10 and Order of Marriage, Chapter I, #33).

3. **Divorced but not remarried individual seeking the sacraments of Initiation:**

A person who is divorced, has received no annulment, and has not remarried may celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. That person should clearly understand, however, that the Church considers him or her bound by the sacred bond of the previous marriage and that a future marriage would not be possible unless the previous marriage is: (a) dissolved by the previous spouse's death; or (b) declared invalid (annulled) through a canonical process of the Church.

**\*\* Special acknowledgements and gratitude are extended to the Archdiocese of Baltimore, MD; Archdiocese of Hartford, CT, Diocese of Pueblo and the Diocese of Las Cruces, NM for their contributions to these parish-level OCIA Guidelines.\*\***

**\* This guidebook also includes the current Diocese of Colorado Springs OCIA standards.**

- Attachment A – Suggested Sample OCIA Candidate or Catechumen Interview Checklist
- Attachment B – Some Churches Without Valid Baptism
- Attachment C – Suggested List of Catechetical Topics of Instruction for Those in OCIA
- Attachment D – List of Approved Materials for Catechetical Instruction for Those in OCIA
- Attachment E – Glossary of OCIA-Peculiar Terms
- Attachment F – Adult Confirmation Registration and Information
- Attachment G – Invalid Marriages and (how they affect) the OCIA Program
- Attachment H – Form for Catholic Godparents and Sponsors
- Attachment I – Godparent and Sponsor Prayer
- Attachment J – Guidelines for Choosing a Godparent and Sponsor
- Attachment K – 2024-2025 Calendar of OCIA Rituals and Events



- I am presently separated. Yes / No
- I am engaged or have a significant person and I am planning on marrying in the future. Yes / No
- I was previously married. Yes / No
  - Marriage #1: Civil Divorce: Yes / No Church Annulment: Yes / No
  - Marriage #2: Civil Divorce: Yes / No Church Annulment: Yes / No
  - Are you interested in obtaining more information about the Annulment process? Yes / No
- I am currently cohabitating with a person with whom I am not married. Yes / No
- I and/or my spouse have had surgical procedures which prevent procreation of children? Yes / No  
(e.g., tubal ligation, vasectomy, etc.).

**Interview Information**

Describe your experience of God and religion up to this point in your life. Where did you learn about God? What was/is your family's involvement in religion? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been affiliated with a faith community? Can you please tell me about your experience(s)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If baptized Catholic, what sacraments have you received? \_\_\_\_\_  
Where? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the source of your interest in the Catholic Church? When did you first become interested? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your Church education and/or background in religion: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are your general impressions of the Catholic Church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What questions would you like to have answered at this time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time are you willing to invest in learning more and in getting to know more people in the community? \_\_\_\_\_

## Baptism Godparent and Confirmation / OCIA - Sponsor Certificate of Eligibility

The Catholic Church requires that all those who assume the role, responsibilities and obligations of Godparent or Sponsor for the Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation, practice their faith and exemplify it in their conduct as members of the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, verifying the eligibility of Baptism Godparent(s) and/or Confirmation Sponsor(s) is very serious (including those individuals who reside and practice their faith outside of this parish church).

*(Please read and complete this form carefully, check any applicable boxes below, sign and then present this form to your Pastor to complete the bottom portion and return this form to us.)*

- I am a baptized, Roman Catholic, registered at and a participating member of (parish):  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- I have been asked to be a Baptism Sponsor (Godparent) or a Sponsor of a candidate for OCIA or the Sacrament of Confirmation and am not the father or mother of the person, who is to receive the Sacrament(s) (Canon 874 §1, 1 and 5 and Canons 892, 893).
- I have received all three of the Sacraments of Initiation (i.e., Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) (Canon 874 §1, 3 and Canon 893 §1).
- I have attained the minimum age of 16 years of age (Canon 874 §1, 2 and Canon 893 §1).
- If I was married, it was the Sacrament of Matrimony in a Catholic Church. (Canon 1108, 1118ff) Church Name/ Location: \_\_\_\_\_.
- I worship regularly at Mass (on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation) (Canon 1247), give witness to my faith by frequently receiving the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, and participate in the life of my Catholic parish church.
- \*I am not a party in an invalid marriage (i.e., outside the Catholic Church) or cohabitating (living together outside the Sacrament of Matrimony). (\***Ineligible otherwise**)
- I actively strive to live out my commitment to Jesus Christ and His Church, by stewarding my time, talents and treasure, and by my loving response(s) to my neighbor.
- I realize that I will assume a great responsibility before God and His Church in becoming a Godparent or Sponsor. I promise to provide support and guide the person I am sponsoring with my prayers and by providing a good, Catholic example in my daily life.

SPONSOR/GODPARENT FOR: \_\_\_\_\_

(Print Name of Person to be Baptized or Confirmed)

**I hereby declare, by my signature, I am attesting to the truth of all of my response(s) above.**

Godparent/Sponsor's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Godparent/Sponsor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**I certify that the above person is: (1) A registered and participating member of this parish; (2) A practicing, baptized Catholic in good standing; (3) Has received all Sacraments of Initiation, and (4) Eligible to serve as a Baptism Godparent or Confirmation Sponsor.**

Signature of Godparent's/Sponsor's Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/City of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Revised: 09/15/2024)

(Parish Seal)



*FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY*

**RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE INTERVIEWER**

Recommendations for beginning the faith journey (type of process and placement within the process):

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Type of Canonical Process required (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Forms given to inquirer on this date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date for follow-up discussion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date set for meeting with parish priest: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Info: \_\_\_\_\_

*FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY*

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **Some Churches without Valid Baptism**

All non-Christian religious groups and communities do not have valid baptism, e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Baha'i, Vedanta Society.

The following is not intended to be a complete list of all those religious groups that do not have valid baptism, even if some of them claim to be Christians.

Amana Church Society  
American Church (Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God)  
Apostolic Faith Mission  
Bohemian Free Thinkers  
Children of God ("The Family")  
Christadelphians  
Christian and Missionary Alliance  
Christian Community (disciples of Rudolph Steiner)  
Christians of the Universalist Brotherhood  
Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Scientists)  
Church of Divine Science  
Church of Daniel's Band  
Church of Illumination  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)  
    including all communities associated with or which have derived from  
Church of Revelation  
Erieside Church  
General Assembly of Spiritualist  
Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association  
House of David Church  
Iglesia ni Kristo (Philippines)  
Independent Church of Filipino Christians  
Jehovah's Witness  
Masons (Freemasonry)  
Mennonites (some communities)  
Metropolitan Church Association  
Moravians (some communities)  
Mormons (cf. supra Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)  
National David Spiritual Temple of Christ Church Union  
National Spiritualist Association  
New Jerusalem Church (Swendenborg or "New Age" Church)  
Pentecostal Churches  
Peoples Church of Chicago  
Some communities of the Plymouth Brethren  
Quakers (Society of Friends)

Reunification Church ("Moonies")  
Salvation Army  
Shakers  
Spiritualist Church  
Swedenborg Church (New Jerusalem or "New Age Church")  
Unitarians  
United Society of Believers (Shakers)  
Universal Emancipation Church

## **ATTACHMENT C**

### ***Suggested List of Catechetical Topics of Instruction for Those in OCIA*** **(if using the U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults)**

The Holiness of God and Our Holiness	Chapter 1
Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition in the Catholic Church	Chapters 2 and 3
The Church and its Main Characteristics	Chapters 10 and 11
The Liturgy: Public and Private Prayer	Chapter 14
The Church's Magisterium or Authority to Teach	Chapter 24
The Creed and the Trinity	Chapter 5
Jesus Christ: Son of God and Our Salvation	Chapters 7 and 8
The Holy Spirit: Lord and Giver of Life	Chapter 9
The Communion of Saints, Purgatory, Canonization, etc.	pages 54-56, 160-161
Doctrine of Creation	Chapters 5 and 6
Original Sin and Human Nature and Destiny	Chapter 6
Formation of the Moral Conscience	Chapter 23
Faith and Its Meanings	Chapter 4 and 5
Justification by Faith, How Grace Works	Chapter 24, page 328-330
Incarnation and the Human Descent of Jesus	Chapter 7
"Born of a Woman": The Church's Teaching About Mary	Chapter 12
Second Coming, Last Judgment, and Resurrection of the Dead	Chapter 13
The Moral Life and the 10 Commandments in General	Chapters 23 and 24
Commandments in the Decalogue Concerning God	Chapters 25, 26, and 27

Commands in the Decalogue Concerning Mankind	Chapters 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34
The Virtues	Chapter 23, pages 315-318
Sacraments and “Sacramentals”: What They Are and How They Work	Chapters 22 and 14
Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism	Chapter 15
Sacraments of Initiation: Confirmation	Chapter 16
Sacraments of Healing: Penance and Anointing of the Sick	Chapters 18 and 19
Sacraments of Initiation: Eucharist	Chapters 17 and 14
Service to Communion Sacraments: Matrimony	Chapter 21
Service to Communion Sacraments: Holy Orders	Chapter 20
The Many Types of Prayer	Chapter 35
How to Pray: The Our Father	Chapter 36
Catholic Social teaching: An Introduction	Chapter 31, pages 420-428
Charismatic Gifts: The Isaiah and the Pauline Gifts	Chapter 16

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Note: The parish’s catechetical and sacramental preparation program for the Sacraments of Initiation must also include the standards outlined in the National Directory for Catechesis (e.g., 35, 36, etc.), which include (but are not limited to):

- Summons the catechumen to profess faith in the person of Jesus Christ from heart, to follow him faithfully, and to become his disciple.
- Presents a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith so that the catechumen or candidate can enter deeply into the mystery of Christ.
- Incorporates the catechumen into the life of a Christian community, which professes, celebrates, and bears courageous witness to the faith of Jesus Christ.
- Includes instruction on the Orders of Christian initiation, their basic symbols and forms, and the offices and ministries at work in them.
- Presents the Jewish roots of the Last Supper, God’s covenant with his people in the blood of his beloved Son, and teaches that the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ signifies and effects communion with the most Holy Trinity, forgives venial sins, and through the grace of the Holy Spirit, helps the communicant to avoid mortal sin.

## **ATTACHMENT D**

### ***List of Approved References for Catechetical Instruction For Those in OCIA*** (within the Diocese of Colorado Springs)

1. Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, @2024, USCCB, Washington, DC.
2. Catechism of the Catholic Church 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, @1997, NCCB, Washington, DC.
3. U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults, @2006, USCCB, Washington, DC.
4. National Directory for Catechesis, @2005, USCCB, Washington, DC.
5. Diocese of Colorado Springs Guidelines for the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age, Office of Bishop and the Office of Total Catholic Education, Colorado Springs, CO.

### ***List of Approved References for Catechetical Instruction For Those in OCIA*** (within the St. Michael Catholic Church)

(May be used as ancillary or additional sources to (not in lieu of) the diocesan approved list)

1. OCIA Godparent and Sponsor Handbook, @2008, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Clinton, MD.
2. Catechist Manual, Catechumenate, Foundations in Faith, Year A, Year B, and Year C, @1998, Resources for Christian Living (RCL), Allen, TX.
3. OCIA: A Practical Approach to Christian Initiation, @1990, Brown Publishing-ROA Media (English and Spanish editions).
4. Believing in Jesus: A Popular Overview of the Catholic Faith, @2009, by Leonard Foley, O.F.M., St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH.

## **ATTACHMENT E**

### ***Glossary of OCIA-Peculiar Terms***

<b><i>Candidate</i></b>	One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who is now preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.
<b><i>Catechumen</i></b>	One who is not baptized and is preparing for full initiation through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
<b><i>Catechumenate</i></b>	The second period of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. It involves intense preparation in word, worship, community, life, and service.
<b><i>Catechesis</i></b>	From the Greek word meaning “to echo”, the process entails the handing on of the faith.
<b><i>Children of Catechetical Age</i></b>	Baptized and/or unbaptized individuals between the ages of 7 and 18, who seek to enter the Catholic Church or receive their remaining Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church.
<b><i>Cycle A B C</i></b>	The 3-year cycle of liturgical readings: Cycle A: Gospel of Matthew; Cycle B: Gospel of Mark; and Cycle C: Gospel of Luke. All 3 incorporate selections from the Gospel of John.
<b><i>Dismissal</i></b>	The Order of dismissing the candidates and catechumens within a parish from the Sunday liturgy after the homily to reflect upon the Word of God with a trained, dismissal catechist.
<b><i>Elect</i></b>	The name or designation given to the catechumens that have celebrated the Order of Election, signifying that they have been chosen for the initiation sacraments.
<b><i>Ephphetha Order</i></b>	(on Holy Saturday) The Order of opening the ears and mouth, in which the elect are reminded of their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation.
<b><i>Evangelization</i></b>	The task of the Church which involves inviting, welcoming, giving witness to the faith, and proclaiming the gospel to inquirers.
<b><i>Exorcism</i></b>	Prayers for freedom and strength for new life invoking the liberating power and presence of Christ.
<b><i>Inquirers</i></b>	Those who participate in the Precatechumenate of a parish. They are “inquiring” into Christianity in the Catholic Tradition.
<b><i>Inquiry</i></b>	The first period of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. Also known as the Pre-catechumenate.

<b><i>Liturgical Year</i></b>	The seasons and cycles of the Christian year, which are accentuated with various liturgies. It is the instrument and means for leading God's people along the way to the Lord.
<b><i>Mystagogy</i></b>	The final period of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. It begins after initiation and may last for one year or more within the Diocese of Colorado Springs. The neophytes experience being fully a part of the Christian community.
<b><i>National Statutes</i></b>	The particular law for the implementation of the OCIA in the United States; presented by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) in 1986.
<b><i>Neophyte</i></b>	During the period of Mystagogy, the newly baptized are called neophytes.
<b><i>Precatechumenate</i></b>	The first period of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. Also known as Inquiry.
<b><i>Presentations</i></b>	Special Orders for presenting the Creed and the Lord's Prayer to the Elect.
<b><i>Proxy</i></b>	An authorized substitute for Sponsor. See Attachment J for further details.
<b><i>Purification and Enlightenment</i></b>	The third period of the OCIA, which usually coincides with the Lenten season.
<b><i>OCIA</i></b>	An acronym for the <u>O</u> rd <u>e</u> r of <u>C</u> hristian <u>I</u> nitiation of <u>A</u> ddults. It is the <i>process</i> through which the un-initiated are called, evangelized, catechized, and ritualized into the Catholic Church.
<b><i>Order of Acceptance</i></b>	The liturgical Order marking the beginning of the catechumenate.
<b><i>Order of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Education</i></b>	The liturgical Order, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent by the bishop at the cathedral, by which the Church ratifies the candidates' readiness for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.
<b><i>Order of Election</i></b>	The liturgical Order, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent by the Bishop at the cathedral, by which the Church ratifies the catechumens' Readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation.
<b><i>Order of Sending</i></b>	The optional liturgical Order celebrated at the parish church, whereby the community sends the catechumens and candidates to the bishop for the Order of Election.
<b><i>Scrutinies</i></b>	Orders of self-searching and repentance and possess a spiritual purpose. The scrutinizes are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good. Usually 3 are celebrated on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent.





## **ADULT CONFIRMATION PROGRAM**

### **General:**

The Adult Confirmation Program is a sacramental preparation program for baptized, Catholic adults, who have received the Sacraments of First Communion and Reconciliation, and who express a sincere desire to complete their Sacraments of Initiation by the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

### **Requirements:**

Candidates for this sacramental preparation program will:

1. Be a baptized, Catholic, who is 18 years or older.
2. Be a registered parishioner in this parish.
3. Have made their First Communion and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
4. Provide current proof of Baptism and First Communion to the parish's program coordinator.
5. If married, have been married in the Catholic Church, and possess no impediment to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.
6. Be active in the Catholic faith and regularly attend Mass on Sundays and Days of Obligations, as a minimum.
7. Express a desire for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
8. Participate in a parish-level Confirmation preparation program.
9. Have a Sponsor for the Sacrament of Confirmation. \*

\* The requirements and qualifications of a Confirmation Sponsor as previously noted in this guidebook for the OCIA Program..

Candidates for the Adult Confirmation Program will be interviewed by the pastor or his designated representative utilizing Attachment F or a similar document.

## **ATTACHMENT G**

### **PREVIOUS AND/OR INVALID MARRIAGES AND THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INTIATION OF ADULTS (OCIA)**

In general, the duration of the OCIA Program or process depends upon the progress of the individual and can vary from one to three years. In the Diocese of Colorado Springs, the suggested time for completing the process of the OCIA Program is one year or more.

When an individual *first* comes to the parish, it is important to inquire into the marital status of the inquirer, and if married or engaged, that of his or her spouse, fiancé, or fiancée. This can be determined by using an initial interview questionnaire (Attachment A in this guidebook). Early in this period, a person who has been divorced and re-married should be directed to discuss the situation with the pastor, so that if a canonical procedure is necessary, the process can begin as soon as possible. Because some Tribunal procedures can be rather lengthy, the individual must be advised that his or her full initiation into the Catholic faith cannot occur until and unless the annulment process is completed and an affirmative decision is received. If a Tribunal Court judicial (annulment) process is necessary, in the Diocese of Colorado Springs, it must be granted before an individual celebrates the Order of Election, Order of Welcoming, and receives any of the Church's sacraments of initiation.

#### **ADDRESSING IRREGULAR MARITAL SITUATIONS OF APPLICANTS FOR THE OCIA**

**Standard #1:** A marriage is presumed to be valid until proven otherwise by appointed authorities of the Catholic Church. (Valid means that the mandated requirements applicable to the couple are fulfilled; the act is legally effective.)

**Standard #2:** A valid marriage is indissoluble; that is, it cannot be dissolved by the subsequent withdrawal of consent of one or both of the parties or by the intervention of external authorities (e.g., a court issued Dissolution of Marriage (civil divorce)).

**Standard #3:** A valid marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament.

What constitutes an irregular marital situation? (1) The applicant for the OCIA Program was previously married, divorced, is now re-married (without the first marriage being annulled), and the previous (divorced) spouse is still alive; (2) The applicant is married to a person who was previously married and divorced (without the first marriage being annulled) and whose previous spouse is still alive; and/or (3) The applicant is in a first marriage with a Catholic (who was also free to marry), but they were married outside the Catholic Church (e.g., by a judge, Justice of the Peace, or another minister) without the permission of the bishop of the Catholic party.

#### **Determining whether an irregular marital situation exists for an applicant**

Early on in the inquiry process, the marital status of every applicant must be examined by the parish's OCIA coordinator to determine if there are any irregularities that would prevent the

applicant from celebrating the Order of Election, Order of Welcome, and/or receiving the Sacraments of Initiation. The Initial Interview Questionnaire (Attachment A) is essential to clarifying the individual's marital status, so the pastor can meet with the applicant for further discussion about the needed next steps.

Depending on the complexity of the matter, a longer procedure to remedy the situation may be necessary. Thus, the catechumen/candidate *may* have to wait for another year before celebrating the Order of Election or the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation. It is imperative that any irregular marital situation be addressed very early on in the process and that the applicant know clearly the Church's Tribunal procedures that lay ahead and whether the applicant can proceed to the Order of Election, Order of Welcome receive of the Sacraments of Initiation or whether he/she may have to wait until the next year.

It is important to note that we should not pressure the Tribunal to expedite any case in order that the applicant can go through any of the OCIA Orders or receive the Sacraments of Initiation. The Tribunal procedures have specific time requirements and procedural steps, and they are also affected by factors outside the Tribunal's control. Calling often or pestering the Tribunal simply hampers or frustrates the overall judicial process.

Please do not give the applicant a premature or false hope that the Tribunal process will be quick, completed in time for them to participate in the Order of Election, Order of Welcome or the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation or that the annulment petition will automatically receive an affirmative decision. Creating such unrealistic expectations and false hopes for the applicant can and often does, result in great disappointment and frustration for the applicant, his/her family, and their spouse, sponsor, and/or grandparent(s).

### **ARTICULATING A WELCOMING CONTEXT FOR AN APPLICANT IN AN IRREGULAR MARRIAGE:**

*(Suggested models - adjust to the specific circumstances of the applicant)*

Every person is unique, and has a unique history and set of circumstances when he/she approaches the Church for Christian Initiation or full communion. Each person's process of conversion is unique, and the internal change of heart and deepening spiritual growth is different from any other person. The readiness of each individual to take the significant steps in the OCIA process depends on many factors: intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual, historical, and ecclesiastical.

The OCIA is ordinarily a process of one or more years, depending on the particular situation of each individual. Your previous marriage(s) is/are part of your unique history; thus, for you the process will incorporate some additional steps and may take a longer period of time. These additional steps to address your previous marriage(s) are not simply '*hoops to jump through*' nor are they a '*penalty*' for past marital difficulties which ended in a civil divorce. They are part of your unique journey toward Christian initiation (or full communion).

When you meet with our pastor, he will review your marital history and current status of life, and clarify which Tribunal procedure may or will be necessary to remedy your current irregular marital situation, so you will be free to progress forward to the next significant step in the OCIA process. The full completion of the Tribunal procedures **may** take up to or over a year and our pastor can help you begin these procedures. Please do not set your hopes on celebrating any of the OCIA rituals and being baptized this year." Again, these additional steps to address your previous marriage(s) are not simply *'hoops to jump through'* nor are they a *'penalty'* for past marital difficulties which ended in a civil divorce. They are part of your unique journey toward Christian initiation (or full communion). You may have a longer opportunity to study and learn about the Catholic faith and to grow in your relationship with the Lord Jesus while the Tribunal is processing your case(s).

**ARTICULATING A WELCOMING CONTEXT  
FOR A DIVORCED APPLICANT NOT CURRENTLY RE-MARRIED:**

*(A suggested model - adjust to the specific circumstances of the applicant)*

Every person is unique, and has a unique history and set of circumstances when he/she approaches the Church for Christian Initiation or full communion. Each person's process of conversion is unique, and the internal change of heart and deepening spiritual growth is different from any other person. The readiness of each individual to take the significant steps in the OCIA process depends on many factors: intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual, historical, and ecclesiastical.

The OCIA is ordinarily a process of one or more years, depending on the situation of each individual. Your previous marriage(s) is/are part of your unique history that will have to be resolved, if you ever wish to re-marry in the Catholic Church. For now, the fact that you are not re-marrried means that there is no obstacle to your proceeding in the OCIA toward the Order of Election or reception of remaining sacraments of initiation. *However, you must understand clearly that once you become an Elect (or become a Candidate), you will not be free to re-marry in the Catholic Church until and unless your previous marriage(s) is/are resolved through a Tribunal procedure (which may take up to or more than a year) and an affirmative decision is received.* If you wish, you may begin that Tribunal procedure now with the assistance of our pastor, or you may wait until later if you have no present plans to re-marry. Our goal at this point is for you to proceed in the OCIA with a clear understanding of your unique situation.

**If the divorced applicant is engaged:**

If you have already scheduled your wedding to take place in the near future, then your re-marriage will create an "irregular" marital situation that will delay your proceeding toward the OCIA rituals and/or reception of the Sacraments of Initiation. The Tribunal procedures will have to be completed first, thus, delaying the OCIA rituals and reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, possibly until next year at the earliest. In addition, if your intended spouse was previously married, he/she will have to also initiate a Tribunal procedure, since that previous marriage has a direct effect also on your status and ability to marry him/her in the Church.

These additional steps to address your previous marriage(s) (or those of your intended spouse) are not simply *'hoops to jump through'* nor are they a *'penalty'* for past marital difficulties which ended in a civil divorce. They are part of your unique journey toward Christian initiation (or full communion). You may have a longer opportunity to study and learn about the Catholic faith and to grow in your relationship with the Lord Jesus while the Tribunal is processing your case(s).

**OTHER AVAILABLE DIOCESE OF COLORADO SPRINGS  
TRIBUNAL RESOURCES TO EXPLAIN ANNULMENTS**

- Visit the diocese's website: <http://www.diocs.org>
  - Click on the screen heading: “**Departments and Ministries**”.
  - Scroll down to “**Diocesan Tribunal**” and click on this office title.
  - Scroll down the page to the appropriate section (along the left margin of the page) and select the Frequently Asked Questions; Process tips; Document or Fee Summary; or the necessary forms for the processing of an annulment (based on your discussion with the pastor).
  
- If you have any questions on annulments or the process, please contact the Diocese of Colorado Springs Office of the Tribunal at: **719-636-2345**.

**ATTACHMENT H**

(in addition to the form letter on page #24 of this handbook)

Form for Catholic Confirmation Godparent or Sponsor

*You have been asked to be a godparent and/or sponsor for an OCIA or Confirmation Candidate at the St. Michael Catholic Church. We ask you to reflect on your responsibilities as a sponsor and fill out this commitment form. Please return it promptly to our parish office.*

<p>I, _____ have been asked to serve as a <i>(First Middle Last)</i></p> <p>godparent and/or sponsor for OCIA or Confirmation candidate :</p> <p>_____.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Name of OCIA or Confirmation Candidate)</i></p> <p>I am a registered and participating member of _____ Church <i>(Name of the Catholic Church)</i></p> <p>in the city/state of _____.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(City and State of Church)</i></p>
---

I understand and attest that:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am at least 16 years old and am not the mother or father of the Confirmation candidate
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have received all of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist).
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ If married, I received the Sacrament of Marriage within the Catholic Church.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ I regularly participate in Sunday Mass and Days of Obligation, and give witness to my faith in Christ Jesus by regularly receiving the Eucharist. If/when possible, I will attend Sunday Masses with my candidate.

(Revised: 09/15/2024)

\_\_\_\_\_ I will participate in my parish community through giving my time, talent, and/or treasure.

\_\_\_\_\_ I actively strive to live out my commitment to Christ and to the parish life of the Church by my interest, support and loving response to those I meet in daily life.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will give my support to the person I am sponsoring by the example of my Catholic faith as practiced in my daily life.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will have one-on-one meetings with my Candidate, at least once a month, to discuss faith issues and/or questions arising from their formal studies and preparation for the sacrament(s).

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that various OCIA/OCIA or Confirmation preparation activities occur (e.g. spiritual retreats; special group meetings; OCIA/OCIA rituals; etc.) involving my candidate. Additionally, I understand I may be invited to any of the activities and will attend and participate, when possible (e.g. this enables you as the sponsor to “walk” with the candidate during their time of intellectual, faith, and spiritual preparation).

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Signature of Godparent or Sponsor)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Date)*



## *ATTACHMENT I*

### Godparent / Sponsor Prayer

God of all ages, you send out your Spirit,  
to touch the hearts of people,  
so that they may believe in you  
and in Jesus whom you sent.

Look kindly on all candidates as they listen to your voice.  
Open their hearts to Your Spirit  
and bring to fulfillment the good work you have begun in them.

As I reach out to those seeking to enter your Holy Church,  
make me an instrument of your love.  
Teach me to respect what is holy in others,  
and be patient with what I do not understand.

Deepen my faith in the Gospel,  
and help me to pass it on by good example.

With those who are hesitant or afraid,  
Let me be a source of encouragement,  
and with those who are weak, let me be a pillar of strength.

I humbly accept the ministry of Godparent/Sponsor,  
and I pray that you will continue to guide and sustain me,  
as I journey along with my candidate towards Your call to holiness.

Amen.

## ATTACHMENT J

### Guidelines for Choosing a Godparent and Sponsor

Each OCIA/OCIA and Confirmation candidate (also known as a *confirmandi*) will be asked to select a godparent and/or sponsor to represent the support and faith of the community. The godparent and sponsor is a vital part of the preparation process, who gives witness to faith that is alive through his or her example of prayer, ministry and honest sharing. The candidate and their sponsor will spend a lot of time together talking, reflecting on scripture, and praying. The godparent/sponsor will help the candidate process their thoughts, questions, and concerns.

Officially in their canonical role, godparents are present for the adult candidate's baptism and sponsors present candidates to the Bishop and the community for Confirmation. In addition, the sponsor might be called to be the confirmandi's Confirmation companion at some of the parish confirmation gatherings or retreats.

As you can see, it is important that the godparents, sponsor and candidates know and be comfortable with each other. We will provide you with the information, skills, suggestions and support for the sponsor role, if needed. Godparents and sponsors don't have to know *everything* there is to know about the Catholic faith. The important thing is that they personally value being a Catholic – a disciple and servant of Jesus Christ and a member of the Church. Being asked to be someone's godparent and/or sponsor is an honor, not an imposition.

The "rules" for choosing a godparent and/or sponsor are that they must be a practicing Catholic, who is in good standing, has received all of their Sacraments of Initiation and are at least 16 years old; male or female. They cannot be you parent, however the candidate's parent may be a sponsor for another candidate. A spouse and *romantic* relationships are also strongly discouraged. It is preferred that the person be a member of this parish community, because the sponsor represents the local parish community and will be asked to attend preparation events with you on your spiritual journey ahead.

Prayerfully consider your choice of a OCIA/OCIA or Confirmation Godparent and/or Sponsor. If you can't decide whom to ask, we can help you find a suitable Godparent or Sponsor here in the parish. If you need a Godparent or Sponsor, please contact the parish's OCIA or Confirmation Coordinator, as soon as possible.

**Use of a Proxy During the Confirmation Mass:** In the event that the sponsor cannot attend the Confirmation Mass in person due to a legitimate and verifiable conflict (e.g., hospitalization, travel delay, etc.), a proxy, explicitly designated by the Sponsor and the Confirmation candidate, who meets all of the qualifications of a Sponsor, may stand-in for the Sponsor during the liturgy. If the Sponsor is unable to participate in the Confirmation Mass and desires to utilize a proxy, he or she must notify the Pastor in writing, a minimum of one week in advance for his approval. **A parent may not be a sponsor or a proxy.**

Please direct any questions or comments to the Parish Office or the parish's OCIA or Confirmation Coordinator, as appropriate.

**ATTACHMENT K**

**2024-2025 CALENDAR/SCHEDULE OF OCIA RITUALS AND EVENTS**

(Published and Distributed Separately)



United We Are The Body of Christ.  
Becoming Intentional Disciples on the Faith Journey.

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