



OCIA Sponsor Handbook

PURPOSE:

This handbook has been developed to provide participants with a general overview and background information concerning the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) (formally called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) up until November 2024) preparation process and is meant to be used as helpful guidelines.

The topics noted below are all considered basic procedures that prospective OCIA catechumens and candidates ask about the program and its overall basic process. We hope you will find this handbook to be a useful resource.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The OCIA process of the Catholic Church is used to present the beliefs of our faith to those adults, who have made a conscious decision to explore coming into full communion with the Church.

The St. Michael Parish Church's OCIA Team, in collaboration with the pastoral staff, is committed to the presentation of the sound and long-standing doctrine of our Catholic faith in a welcoming and understandable manner to those members of our community who have made the decision to seek this step in their personal faith journey and join with us as we strive to live the mission of Jesus Christ through prayer, service, outreach, fellowship and a true sense of family as we minister to all members of our parish and community, especially to those in need.



PARTICIPANT DEFINITIONS:

Godparent(s): In the context of the Catholic Church's OCIA, a godparent is a crucial figure for those seeking baptism. A godparent is a person chosen by a catechumen (an unbaptized adult seeking to become a baptized Catholic) to support and guide them on their faith journey. Those godparent(s) not an existing member of our parish church, must complete an eligibility form (signed by their own Catholic pastor) before assuming this role and responsibilities. (See Atch 3)

Catechumen: Anyone who is exploring the Catholic faith who has *never* been baptized or was not baptized in a Trinitarian Baptismal ceremony with the application of water and utilizing the words: *"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*

Candidate: A validly baptized person (Catholics who have received the Sacrament of Baptism or as noted above, other validly baptized persons of a different Christian Faith) who is interested in being received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. This involves those who will be receiving both the Sacrament of Confirmation and Eucharist for the first time at the Easter Vigil service.

This does not include those previously baptized Catholics who have already received Eucharist, however, are seeking reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Per our diocese's liturgical and catechetical policies and practices, these individuals will typically receive the Sacrament of Confirmation by our bishop at St. Mary Cathedral in Colorado Springs shortly after the Easter celebration and before the Feast of Pentecost.

Sponsor: "A sponsor accompanies any individual seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are individuals who have known and assisted the individual and stand as witnesses to his/her moral character, faith, and intention. As they become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents and the entire Christian community [*represented by the local-parish church faith community*] the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to the practice of love God and love of neighbor, even at the cost of self-renunciation." (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults)

Note: Having a spouse or fiancé serve as a sponsor, while is technically permissible, is *not* generally recommended. It is better to recruit a member of the parish, who will enlarge the circle of support for the catechumen, rather than to rely on a spouse or fiancé, who by nature of their relationship, already has a central, but different role and responsibility in the person's life. Those godparent(s) not an existing member of our parish church, must complete an eligibility form (signed by their own Catholic pastor) before assuming this role and responsibilities. (See Atch 3)



INTERVIEWS:

Each Catechumen and Candidate is required to complete our diocese's OCIA Intake Form and periodically meet with one of the parish's priests or deacons, to discuss his/her progress in this journey of faith. The interviews, if/when necessary, are scheduled well before the scheduled conferral of the OCIA Sacraments of Initiation (catechumens) or Sacrament of Confirmation (candidate).

BAPTISMAL VERIFICATION:

As noted above, the Catholic Church recognizes baptisms performed by other Christian ecclesiastical bodies utilizing the "Trinitarian" formula during their baptismal ceremony.

Each Candidate is required to provide evidence of their baptism. It may take the form of a Baptismal Certificate issued by the church where you were baptized, a letter from a church official attesting to the baptism, and in certain circumstances, written statements from witnesses attesting to the baptism. Regarding the latter and last resort option, please refer to Attachment 1.

Please begin your search for evidence, *as soon as possible*. Contact one of the team members if you have any questions or would like some guidance on obtaining the required evidence. This documentation is needed before the Rite of Sending.

SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS:

Each Catechumen is required to have a sponsor. The sponsor must be a practicing Catholic in good standing who attends Mass regularly and who would provide a good example and support throughout the journey. Your sponsor is expected to attend the sessions with you to serve as another resource during the catechetical process, and simply be your "Catholic Buddy." Please refer to "The Role of the Sponsor" handout for additional information.

For Catechumens, the sponsor may also serve as your baptism godparent. A spouse may not be your godparent and, in general, we do not encourage the selection of your spouse or significant other as your sponsor. If it is a positive influence and assistance in your journey and that person can attend with you on a regular basis, then it will be the right choice for you. If there is a qualifying family member or friend who you want to be your godparent and/or sponsor, but who may be unable to attend sessions with you on a regular basis, please contact the Sponsor Coordinator, or one of the other team members, to discuss this. If you are unable to identify a person who meets these criteria, there are several parishioners who have volunteered to serve as a sponsor, and you will be able to meet them at the sessions on a voluntary basis.



RETREATS:

There may be a scheduled OCIA Retreat on a Saturday morning during the OCIA calendar year. Further information will be disseminated regarding the retreat later.

Saint Names for Confirmation:

Each Candidate and Catechumen must select a patron saint for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This name will serve as your Confirmation Name. Everyone is asked to prepare a short paper about the saint and why they chose that individual to be their patron saint. There are several sources of information about the lives of saints available at the library, book stores and online.

Three internet sites you may find helpful in your search for information are:

- 1) <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsnt.htm>
- 2) <http://www.catholic.org/saints/>,
- 3) <http://www.catholic-pages.com/dir/saints.asp>.

You will learn more about this as the year goes on. Feel free to ask any of the OCIA Coordinator about the process of selecting a patron saint, if you have any questions.

CEREMONIAL RITES:

There are three special Rites in which the group will participate. These are especially important, and we ask that you (as the sponsor) make every effort to attend.

The ***Rite of Welcoming*** and the ***Rite of Sending*** will occur at Our Lady of the Pines Parish Church during the 10:30 a.m. Mass on the scheduled dates.

The ***Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion*** will occur at a designated parish church (such as the St. Mary Cathedral in Colorado Springs) by the Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs. Both the candidates and catechumens who are experiencing the OCIA programs across the entire diocese participate in this Rite. It is one of the last formal steps in the process of joining in full communion with the Catholic Church.

ADVENT WREATH:

Prior to the beginning of Advent, all Candidates and Catechumens are asked to make an Advent wreath. At the winter retreat you will have an opportunity to share the meaning of your wreath with the group. Information about the structure and meaning of the wreath will be provided closer to that time.

OCIA TEAM CONTACT LIST:

OCIA Coordinator	Fr. Bob Newbury	rgnewbury@yahoo.com
Sponsor Coordinator	Fr. Bob Newbury	rgnewbury@yahoo.com
OCIA Team Members	TBD/as needed.	

REFERENCES

USCCB, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults,
(<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/christian-initiation-of-adults>)

Diocese of Colorado Springs, OCIA Guidelines, September 1, 2010

Diocese of Colorado Springs, OCIA Intake Form, 2022

Attachments:

1. Affidavit of Baptism
2. Affidavit of First Communion
3. Sponsor Eligibility Form
4. USCCB, Christian Initiation of Adults (Article)

Approved by:
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Pastor



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ATTACHMENT 1
AFFIDAVIT OF BAPTISM

(This form is used ONLY when there is a verifiable Baptism, but no official document or certificate exists.)

In the presence of _____
(Name of person under whose authority this affidavit is accepted by the Catholic Church)

I testify that _____
(Baptized person-full legal name at the time of Baptism)

child of _____
(Full legal name of mother of person baptized (including maiden name))

and _____
(Full legal name of father of person baptized)

born in _____
(Include Locality (town, city, county, etc.), Region (state, province, territory, etc.), and Country)

on the _____ day of _____ in _____
(Day of Birth) (Month of Birth) (Year of Birth)

WAS BAPTIZED

on the _____ day of _____ in _____
(Day of Baptism) (Month of Baptism) (Year of Baptism)

at _____
(Place of Baptism, including Church Name (or hospital, etc.), Locality, Region, and Country)

by _____
(NAME of the individual who performed the Baptism, including TITLE, if known)

the godparents (or sponsors) being _____
(If known)

Witness to the Baptism: _____ Date _____
(Signature of witness--this can be the subject of the affidavit if old enough to remember the Baptism)

Notarization: I do hereby certify that the above, named individual making this sworn statement in writing did appear before me in person with sufficient identification.

(Signature of Notary Public or Priest or Deacon)

Date _____

(Parish Seal)

Office Use Only: Date Affidavit received _____ Received by _____
(Name)

(Revised: September 15, 2024)

ATTACHMENT 2

AFFIDAVIT OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

(This form is used ONLY when there is a verifiable Baptism, but no official document or certificate exists.)

In the presence of _____
(Name of person under whose authority this affidavit is accepted by the Catholic Church)

I testify that _____
(Baptized person-full legal name at the time of the First Holy Communion)

child of _____
(Full legal name of mother of this person (including maiden name))

and _____
(Full legal name of father of this person)

born in _____
(Include Locality (town, city, county, etc.), Region (state, province, territory, etc.), and Country)

on the _____ day of _____ in _____
(Day of Birth) (Month of Birth) (Year of Birth)

RECEIVED THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

on the _____ day of _____ in _____
(Day) (Month) (Year)

at _____
(Place of First Holy Communion, including Church Name, Locality, Region, and Country)

by _____
(NAME of the individual who performed the conferral of First Communion, including TITLE, if known)

Witness of the conferral of the Sacrament of First Holy Communion

Notarization: I do hereby certify that the above, named individual making this sworn statement in writing did appear before me in person with sufficient identification.

(Signature of Notary Public or Priest or Deacon)

Date _____

(Parish Seal)

Office Use Only: Date Affidavit received _____ Received by _____
(Name)

(Revised: September 8, 2022)

ATTACHMENT 3

OCIA Baptism Godparent / 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 the Sacrament of Confirmation and I am not the father or mother of the individual, who is to receive the Sacrament (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.
(please wait to sign your attestation, until your in the presence of your Pastor)

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 is (4) Eligible to serve as a Baptism Godparent or Confirmation Sponsor.

Signature of Godparent's/Sponsor's Pastor: _____

Name/City of Parish: _____

Date: _____ (Revised: 07/07/2025) (Parish Seal)

ATTACHMENT 4

Christian Initiation of Adults (from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Each year on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil, thousands are baptized into the Catholic Church in the United States. Parishes welcome these new Catholics through the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Listed below are some questions and answers about the process of Christian Initiation.

What are the steps of Christian Initiation?

Prior to beginning the process of becoming a Christian, an individual acquires knowledge of Jesus Christ, considers his or her relationship with Jesus Christ and is usually attracted in some way to the Catholic Church.

This period is known as the ***Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate***.

For some, this process involves an extended period of searching; for others, a shorter time. Often, contact with people of faith and a personal faith experience led people to inquire about the Catholic Church. After a conversation with a priest or a parish director of Christian Initiation, the person, known as an "*inquirer*," may seek acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, through the Rite of Acceptance. During this Rite, the inquirer stands amidst the parish community and states that he or she wants to become a baptized member of the Catholic Church. The parish assembly affirms this desire and role of prayer and support for them, and the inquirer becomes a *Catechumen*.

The ***Period of the Catechumenate*** can last for as long as several years or for a shorter time.

It depends on how the person is growing in faith, what questions they encounter along the way, and how God leads them on this journey. During this time, the Catechumens consider what God is saying to them in the Scriptures, what changes in their life they need to make to respond to God's inspiration, and what Baptism in the Catholic Church means. When a Catechumen and the priest and the parish team working with him or her believes the person is ready to make a faith commitment to Jesus in the Catholic Church, the next step is the request for baptism and the celebration of the Rite of Election. Even before the Catechumens are baptized, they have a special relationship to the Church.

The ***Rite of Election*** includes the enrollment of names of all the Catechumens seeking baptism at the coming Easter Vigil. Typically, on the first Sunday of Lent, the Catechumens, their sponsors and families gather at the Cathedral church. The Catechumens publicly express their desire for baptism to the diocesan bishop. Their names are recorded in a book, and they are called the *Elect*.



The days of Lent are the final *Period of Purification and Enlightenment* leading up to the Easter Vigil.

Lent is a period of preparation marked by prayer, study and spiritual direction for the Elect, and prayers for them by the parish communities.

The Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation takes place during the Easter Vigil Liturgy on Holy Saturday when the Elect receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. Now the person is fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

As a newly initiated Catholic, they continue their formation and education continue in the Period of the Post-Baptismal Catechesis, which is also called *Mystagogy*. This period continues at least until Pentecost.

During this period, the newly baptized members reflect on their experiences at the Easter Vigil and continue to learn more about the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In addition, they reflect on how they will serve Christ, help in the Church's mission, and outreach activities.

What is meant by being received into full communion with the Church?



Coming into full communion with the Catholic Church describes the process for entrance into the Catholic Church for already baptized Christians.

In most cases, these individuals make a profession of faith, however, have no need to be baptized again (e.g., baptized once and for all). To prepare for this reception, the people, who are called Candidates, usually participate in a formation program to help them understand and experience the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. Although some preparation may be like that received by Catechumens preparing for baptism, the preparation for Candidates is different since they have already been baptized and committed to Jesus Christ, and many have also been active members of other Christian communities.

Per our diocese's liturgical policies and practices, these individuals will typically receive the Sacrament of Confirmation by our bishop (sometimes at the St. Mary Cathedral in Colorado Springs) shortly after the Easter celebration and before the Feast of Pentecost.

What is the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday like?



The Easter Vigil takes place on Holy Saturday, the evening before Easter Sunday. This is the night that "shall be as bright as day" as proclaimed by the Exsultet, an ancient church hymn as we joyfully anticipate Christ's Resurrection

The Holy Saturday Liturgy begins with the Service of Light, which includes the blessing of the new fire and the Paschal candle which symbolizes Jesus, the Light of the World.

The second part consists of the Liturgy of the Word with a series of Scripture readings.

After the Liturgy of the Word, the Catechumens are presented to the parish community, who pray for them with the Litany of the Saints.

Next, the priest blesses the water, placing the Easter or Paschal candle into the baptismal water.


Those seeking Baptism they renounce sin and profess their faith after which they are baptized with the priest pronouncing the words:

"I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."



After the Baptism, the newly baptized are dressed in white garments and presented with a candle lighted from the Paschal Candle.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PASCHAL CANDLE?



LIGHT
The light of Christ that shines in the darkness.

FIRE
It represents Christ's resurrection.


GRAINS OF INCENSE
They represent the 5 wounds of Christ.

ALPHA AND OMEGA
Christ is the beginning and end of all things.

CROSS
It represents Christ and his eternal light.

YEAR
It reminds us of God's presence here and now.

Source: Aleteia.com

 **CatholicLink**

They are then Confirmed by the priest or bishop who lays hands on their heads and invokes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He then anoints them with the oil called Sacred Chrism.

During Holy Week each year, the Diocesan Bishop and all his priests and deacons gather for the Chrism Mass. During this Mass, the priests are asked to renew their promises to God, His Church, and the bishop. As part of the coming new, liturgical year the Bishop proffers prescribed prayers over the Church's three sacramental oils over the diocese's parishes new oils: (blesses) Oil of the Sick and Oil of the Catechumens, and (consecrates) the Sacred Chrism Oil.



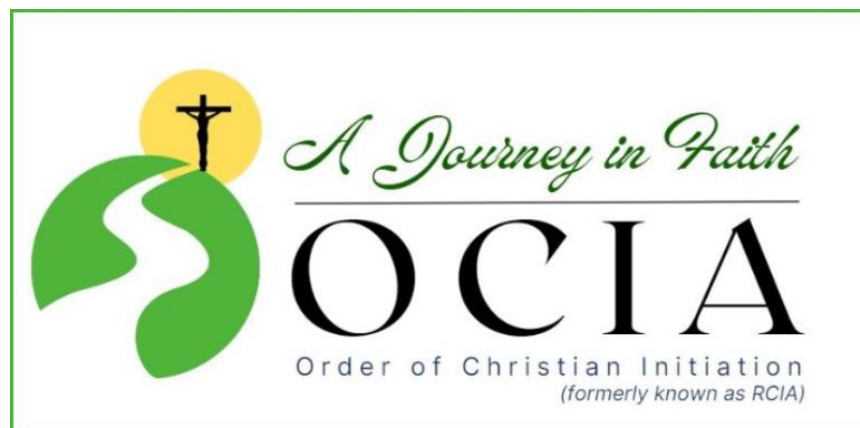
(Bishop mixing olive oil and balsam for the Sacred Chrism at the Holy Week Chrism Mass in Arizona)

The Mass continues with the newly baptized participating in the general intercessions and in bringing forth the gifts to the presiding priest at the altar.

At the Distribution of Holy Communion, the newly baptized receive the Eucharist, Christ's Body and Blood, for the first time.

What does the white robe symbolize?

The newly baptized are dressed in a white garment after baptism to symbolize that they are washed clean of sin and that they are called to continue to walk in this newness of life.



What does the candle symbolize?



A small candle is lit from the Easter candle and given to the newly baptized as a reminder to them always to walk as children of the Light and, in turn, to be the light of Christ to the world.

What does the Sacred Chrism symbolize?

The Sacred Chrism, or oil, is a sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit being given to the newly baptized and newly confirmed. It is also a sign of the close link between the mission of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who comes upon the recipient by God, the Father in Baptism.

What is the role of a godparent for an adult being baptized?



Prior to the Rite of Election, the Catechumen may choose one or two godparents, who will accompany the Catechumen on the Day of Election, at the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, and during the Period of Mystagogy. They are called to show the Catechumens good example of the Christian life, sustain them in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, bear witness, and guide their progress in the baptismal life.

(([https:// www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/christian-initiation-of-adults](https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/christian-initiation-of-adults)))