



Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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- Unbaptized! Uncatechized! There Is a Difference?

Immediately after the Christmas season each year, the Worship Office sends out to all parishes a form in order to gather information: the names and status of the adults participating in the catechumenate who hope to be initiated at Easter. In having to identify their status, what becomes evident is that confusion exists when differentiating between a catechumen and a candidate. In addition, it becomes apparent that on a parish level the candidates are treated pastorally and ritually in the same manner as catechumens. This seeming difficulty and apparent misunderstanding in distinguishing catechumens from candidates not only warrant a serious look at how the Church of Newark treats candidates, but also cry out for pastoral planning that will **un**-combine the rites of the catechumenate that are now combined to accommodate both catechumens and candidates.

BAPTIZED OR UNBAPTIZED? THERE IS A DIFFERENCE!

It has become the practice in many parishes to invite all the people who are interested in becoming Catholic or who seek to complete their initiation to join the parish's

catechumenate. Not everyone belongs in the catechumenate and it should not be the practice of our parishes to expect everyone, regardless of their religious history or background, to be required to enter into a process that is designed for the unbaptized. The restored catechumenate is intended for unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age. Even adults who are baptized and have had no catechesis **whatsoever** are not the same as catechumens. The candidate's status differs from that of a catechumen since by baptism he or she has already become a member of the Church and a child of God (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* RCIA400). To require the baptized, whether catechized or not, to join the parish's catechumenate can show a disrespect for the efficacy of baptism. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is clear that the status of a candidate differs from that of a catechumen. Although a plan of catechesis should correspond to the one laid down for the catechumen, a

candidate has a special status because he or she is already baptized and this status needs to be taken into account in pastoral planning. The age-old axiom, *lex orandi; lex credendi* holds true: we become what we pray.

CANDIDATES

In the United States, the majority of the adults who come to us for the sacraments of initiation have the status of **candidates.** These may be adults who have been baptized in other Christian denominations and are seeking reception into the Catholic Church or they may be adults, baptized in the Catholic Church and who are seeking the sacraments of confirmation and/or the eucharist. A marriage partner who is a practicing Catholic often leads the baptized spouse to seek the sacraments that complete initiation in the Church. Other candidates, although baptized, have not yet heard the message of the mystery of Christ. Some candidates have received an informal catechesis by attending Sunday eucharist on a regular basis and some even over a long period of time. In the Church of Newark candidates who **completed** initiation this past Easter season numbered some 900 adults and catechumens who were fully initiated numbered approximately 400.

CANDIDATES OR CATECHUMENS? THERE IS A DIFFERENCE!

UN-COMBINING THE COMBINED RITES

After more than ten years of experience with the implementation of the RCIA in the Archdiocese of Newark, it is time to question whether our pastoral praxis of receiving baptized Christians into full communion and the admission of baptized Catholic adults to Confirmation and/or Eucharist respects their status as **baptized**. The rite of election as celebrated in the Archdiocese of Newark gathers catechumens and candidates together. Catechumens are seated in



the front of the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart and the candidates are seated towards the back. Catechumens are called forward to sign the *Book of Elect* and are greeted by the Archbishop while the candidates watch, often as **spectators** and wait for a call to continuing conversion from the diocesan bishop. Evaluation remarks such as, “the candidates feel left out; candidates feel as if they don’t belong; the rite ignores the candidates; let the candidates sign the *Book of Elect*, what’s the difference?” surface each year. More and more the combination of the rite of election of the catechumen with the call to continuing conversion of the candidates is not only perpetuating an indifference in distinguishing a catechumen from a candidate, but such pastoral practice can also be misunderstood as inhospitable.

In the Church of Newark it has become necessary to separate the rite of election for catechumens from the call to continuing conversion of the candidates. The celebration of the rite of election (catechumens), without combining it with the call to continuing conversion (candidates), will help us to ritualize more clearly God’s election of the unbaptized. In addition, a separate ritual for the candidates who are called to continuing conversion is more in keeping with the theology of the Church. On the First Sunday of Lent in the year 2000, the celebration of the call to continuing conversion for candidates

(the number of candidates necessitates two celebrations) will be separate and distinct from the annual rite of election for catechumens.

DISTINGUISHING STATUS ON A PARISH LEVEL

This effort to distinguish and respect the status of the baptized on an archdiocesan level needs to be mirrored on a parish level. Parishes need to question whether local practice respects the baptismal dignity of candidates who request the sacraments of the Church. Combining the rite of acceptance of catechumens and the rite of welcoming of baptized candidates presents the two groups as being the same. It is better praxis to separate the rite of acceptance for catechumens from the rite of welcoming for candidates. Such pastoral planning respects the unique spiritual journey of each.

Both catechumens and candidates need suitable catechesis; however, their doctrinal and spiritual preparations differ. Catechumens are catechized for baptism and life in the Church after baptism. Candidates are not catechized **for** the sacrament of baptism, but rather **from** the sacrament of baptism which they have already received. The conversion of the candidates begins with the acceptance of baptism, the effects of which they must develop (RCIA400). Catechesis of candidates must call forth a growth in the understanding of baptism and a respect for baptism, thus leading to a shift in persons from a life



that simply recalls baptism, “I was baptized,” to a life that lives baptism, that says “I am baptized.” Candidates have “passed through the gateway to life in the Spirit...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* CCC 1213). This catechesis of candidates strengthens the Christian life that was already begun in them. It is catechesis in light of their baptism, post-baptismal (mystagogical) catechesis. Catechesis that derives its focus from baptism and points toward the eucharist is the basis for the formation of candidates.

THE EASTER VIGIL

The celebration of the Easter Vigil in parishes calls into question the appropriateness of the practice of combining

catechumens and candidates in a single catechumenal process. In some parishes there are numerous candidates and few catechumens (now elect) who are initiated. The combined celebration of the sacraments of initiation and reception into full communion can be problematic and often overburdens the Easter Vigil and minimizes its baptismal character. In addition, combining the initiation of catechumens and candidates can make the Easter Vigil a presider’s nightmare in trying to remember who is receiving what sacrament or sacraments. The Easter Vigil is the high point of the liturgical year, the high point of faith formation, the high point of catechesis for the entire (all the baptized)

Church but the celebration of the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and eucharist) at the Easter Vigil is for the unbaptized. What must be remembered is that Easter is a prolonged celebration of 50 days and the time *par excellence* for the individual celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

CHRISTIAN ADULTS SEEKING FULL COMMUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pastoral considerations suggest that along with the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation, the Easter Vigil could include the rite of reception of already baptized Christians into full communion with the Catholic Church (RCIA409). But reception into full communion can be celebrated on any Sunday, preferably a Sunday of Easter (especially when there are catechumens that are to be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil). A priest who receives a validly baptized Christian into full communion with the Catholic Church by law has the faculty of confirming the candidate within the rite of reception (RCIA481). Delegation to confirm candidates seeking reception into full communion in the Catholic Church is not to be sought. In any case, pastoral decision-making about parish scheduling of the rite of reception has to be guided by the principle that in its actual arrangement the celebration itself must reflect the status of the candidates for reception into full communion. Such candidates have already been incorporated into Christ in baptism and

Staff

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Design/Layout:

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Contributors:

Sr. Sandra DeMasi, SSJ ,

Joan Rovere,

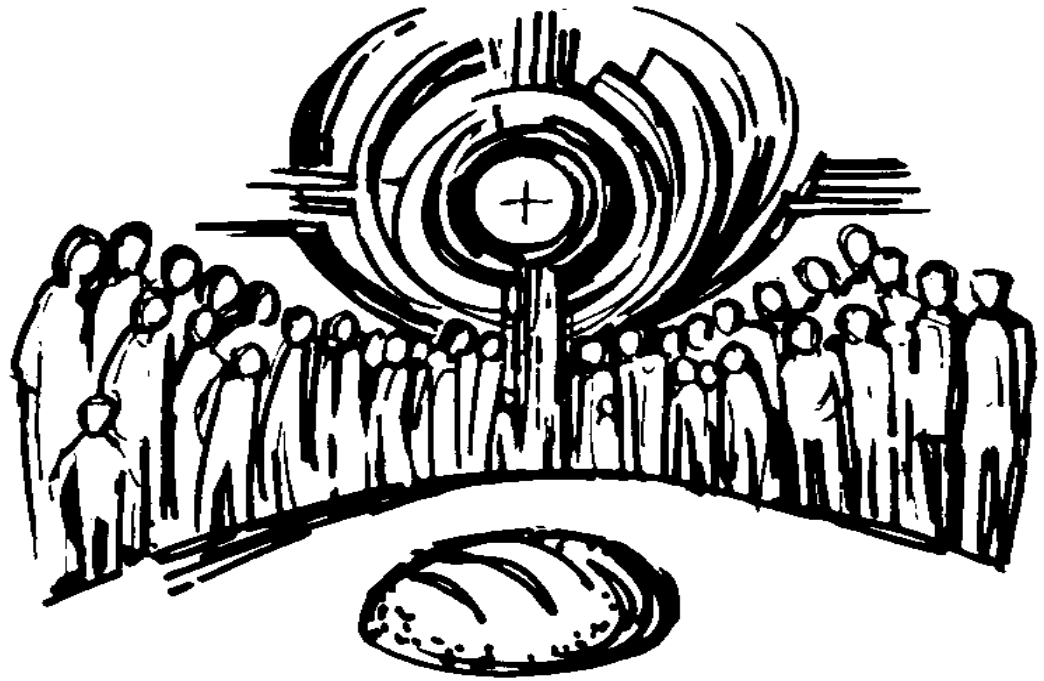
Rev. Michael J. Sheehan
and the staff of the Worship Office

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anything that would equate them with catechumens is to be absolutely avoided (RCIA477, 565).

BAPTIZED CATHOLIC ADULTS SEEKING CONFIRMATION (AND EUCHARIST)

In the case of baptized Catholics seeking to complete their initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and/or eucharist, the Easter Vigil

has become the opportunity for these candidates to **catch up** on their sacraments. The arrangement for the celebration of the sacraments of confirmation and/or eucharist for baptized Catholics **with** the celebration of full initiation for catechumens can often give the impression that these celebrations are just “add on’s.” Such pastoral praxis again calls into question our concern for the

dignity of the baptized and integrity of the Easter Vigil. In order to address this concern with some vision, it will be the practice in the Archdiocese of Newark that adult Catholics seeking confirmation will participate in an Archdiocesan celebration in the Cathedral Basilica on June 11, 2000, the Solemnity of Pentecost. The faculty will not be given to priests to confirm baptized Catholics at the Easter Vigil, 2000.

Who is a catechumen?

A catechumen is one who is not baptized and is preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

Who is a candidate?

A candidate may be one who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who is now preparing to be received into full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of full reception, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed, and receive Eucharist. N.B. The Catholic Church accepts the validity of confirmation in the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

A candidate may be a baptized Catholic who is being prepared to receive the sacrament(s) of confirmation and/or eucharist.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is entering its twelfth year of implementation in the Church in the United States. As the implementation continues, questions will continue to occur. As answers to the questions continue to be sought, understanding will deepen, appreciation will grow, and growth in the Church will continue!

Sr. Sandra DeMasi, SSJ
Director of the Worship Office

Reverend Michael J. Sheehan
Director of the Catechumenate

UNBAPTIZED! UNCATECHIZED! THERE IS A DIFFERENCE?

During the month of September, Reverend Michael Sheehan, director of the catechumenate for the Archdiocese of Newark, gathered the coordinators of the rite of Christian initiation of adults (RCIA) from all the parishes to discuss a further implementation of the Rites. Father Sheehan initiated conversation encouraging parish coordinators to begin reflecting on RCIA400:

“... Even though uncatechized adults have not yet heard the message of the mystery of Christ, **their status differs** (*emphasis added*) from that of catechumens, since by baptism they have already become members of the Church and children of God. Hence their conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop.”

On the Archdiocesan level this reflection will be evidenced in the decision to separate the rite of election (catechumens) from the call to continuing conversion (candidates). In addition, the rite of confirmation celebrated for baptized Catholic adults (**only**) will be separated from the Easter Vigil and moved to the Solemnity of Pentecost. Realizing that in most parishes, the process is

ongoing and already well planned, parishes were encouraged to at least begin distinguishing candidates from catechumens ritually, that is **un-combining** some of the combined rites. Parishes were urged to move in this direction by separating the rite of welcoming (candidates) from the rite of acceptance (catechumens) and that the ritual dismissal of Catholic candidates from the Sunday assembly should cease. In addition, parish coordinators were asked to begin a conversation concerning the difference in catechesis **for** baptism (catechumens) and catechesis **from** baptism (candidates).

What became apparent from these gatherings is that much more conversation is needed. There seems to be a prevailing notion that unbaptized persons seeking initiation into the Roman Catholic Church and baptized Catholics seeking confirmation should be ministered to in the same way especially if they are uncatechized. It is as if an unbaptized person seeking initiation into the Roman Catholic Church is of the same status as a baptized Catholic seeking confirmation, solely because the latter has not had any formation since first communion! It is as if an unbaptized person seeking initiation into the Roman

Catholic Church and a baptized **uncatechized** Catholic seeking confirmation both belong in the RCIA process! What surfaced at those September meetings of the RCIA parish coordinators is a misguided concept that an unbaptized adult and a baptized Christian could be of the same status simply because both are **uncatechized**. Unbaptized! Uncatechized! There is a difference!

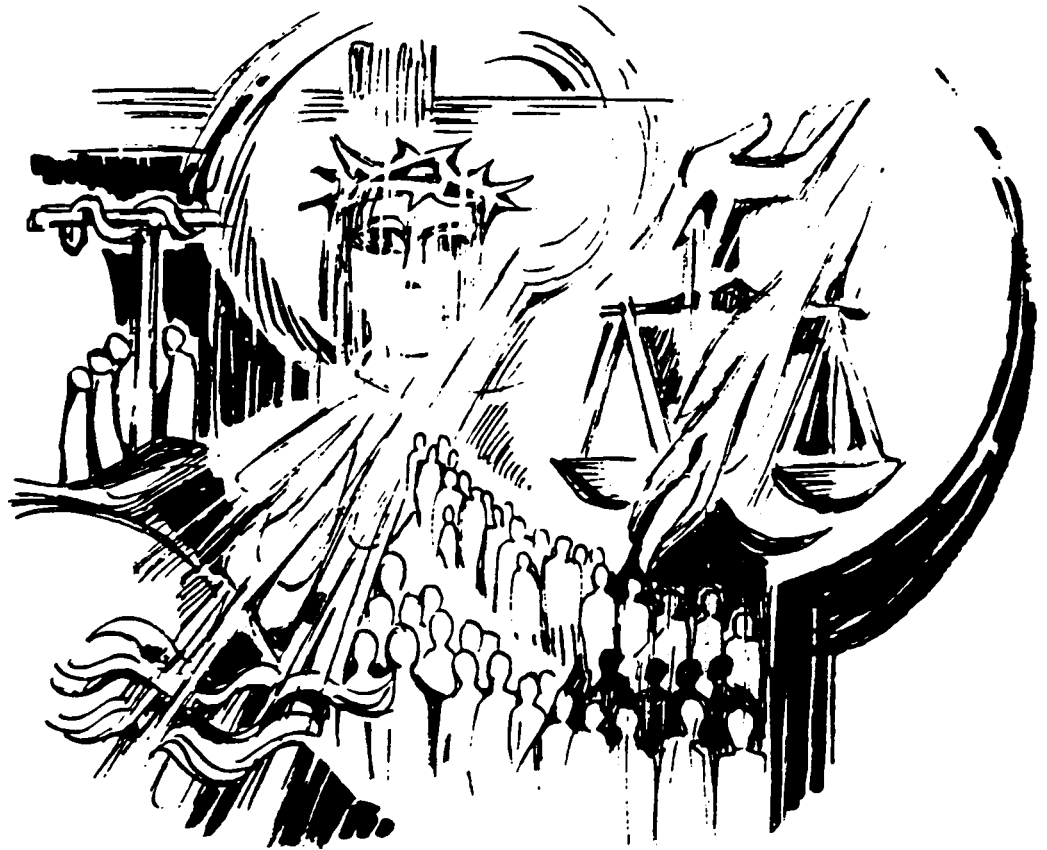
DIFFERENT IN STATUS

Even though uncatechized, baptized adults have not yet heard the message of the mystery of Christ, their status is different from the status of catechumens (unbaptized adults) by virtue of their baptism. It goes against the theology of sacrament to entertain the notion that a person **just happens to be baptized!** Although it appears that a person has only had a momentary sacramental encounter in infancy, it does not follow that nothing has happened, that nothing has changed, that the sacrament did not take effect. Sacraments act *ex opere operato* by the very fact of the action being performed.¹ “The sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the **recipient**, but the power of God.”² *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is consistent in noting that the status of the baptized is

*Receive
the sign of
the cross on
your
forehead.
Christ
himself
strengthens
you with
this sign of
his love.
Learn to
know him
and follow
him.*

(From Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens)

Receive
the sign of
the cross on
your
forehead as
a reminder
of your
baptism
into
Christ's
saving
death and
resurrection.



(From Rite of Welcoming Baptized
Uncatechized Adults)

special,³ that from the moment that baptism is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it. Something **has happened!** The baptized are claimed by Christ! And because baptism is a Spirit-laden mystery, the source of new life, and not a static reality, something is **happening!**

DIFFERENT IN CATECHESIS

What a baptized, uncatechized adult has in common with a catechumen is that, for the most part, both are adults who “have not yet heard the message of the mystery of Christ.”⁴ Perhaps this is the reason that *Catechesi tradendae* refers to baptized candidates as **quasi-catechumens**.⁵ Both the baptized adult and the catechumen need catechesis but catechesis that is

suitable.⁶ Catechumenal catechesis introduces the catechumen to the Christian identity, the new creation, and sets the catechumen on a journey to the waters of baptism, on a course forming patterns of life that are Christ’s.⁷ The catechesis of the baptized adult seeking confirmation is based on the baptism he or she has already received. One must be baptized to receive confirmation.⁸

Adult candidates for confirmation and/or eucharist have received the sacrament of faith, baptism.⁹ Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them. The pastoral formation of baptized adults must be such that the faith infused at baptism grows and takes root.¹⁰ Catechesis for baptized, uncatechized adults begins with the mystagogy of baptism.¹¹

Post-baptismal catechesis should be attentive to that which is going to strengthen them in the Christian life: attentiveness to the word of God; contact with the community; Christian witness; attentiveness to mission; all that cultivates a genuine desire to participate in the eucharist. Baptized, uncatechized adults are often the **blind Bartimaeuses** of our parishes who recognize Jesus as the Savior and are crying out, “Lord, I want to see!”¹² Their faith formation must lead to an **Emmaus** recognition.¹³

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS

The spiritual journey of baptized adults seeking to complete their initiation is different from the spiritual journey of catechumens seeking full initiation in the Catholic Church. The starting point of catechesis for baptized adults is their

baptism, the effects of which they must develop, while the catechesis of the catechumens pushes them to and through the waters of baptism to a promised-life lived! Though different, both are journeys of sacramental preparation that should be modeled on the baptismal catechumenate. All sacramental preparation should draw its inspiration from the baptismal catechumenate but for the most part the process should take into account that these adults have a special status because they are already baptized.¹⁴ The catechumenate and its rites are for the unbaptized! Catechesis and rites for baptized candidates take place in the midst of the community to strengthen faith, drawing them around the font for the renewal of the baptismal promises surrounded by a community singing a resounding AMEN!

CONCLUSION

What needs to be remembered is that

combining the rites for the baptized with the rites for the unbaptized was driven by the reality that in the United States there were large numbers of candidates and a considerably smaller number of catechumens. The Church in the United States at that time was struggling with the promulgation and implementation of a brand new series of rites in the RCIA. What was most important was that the spirit and dynamism of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* be implemented. Nevertheless, with the use of these additional combined rites came the reminder that care must always be taken to maintain the distinction between the catechumen and the baptized candidate.¹⁵ God leads people by various paths to oneness in faith. Care must always be taken to respect the unique faith journey of each!

Sr. Sandra DeMasi, SSJ
Director, Worship Office

Joan Rovere
Deputy Director, Catechetical Office

¹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1128.

² *Summa Theologiae III*, 68,8.

³ See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 402.

⁴ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 400.

⁵ *Catechesi tradendae*, 44.

⁶ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 75, 401; *Rite of Confirmation*, 12.

⁷ See *Philippians 2*.

⁸ See *Rite of Confirmation*, 12.

⁹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1253.

¹⁰ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 401.

¹¹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1234 – 1245.

¹² See *Mark 10:46 ff*.

¹³ See *Luke 24:13 ff*.

¹⁴ See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 402; *General Directory of Catechesis*, 59.

¹⁵ See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 549.

A Look Ahead!

March 12, 2000 • Rite of Election (for catechumens)
Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart • Newark
2:30 PM

Call to Continuing Conversion (for candidates)
Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart • Newark
March 11, 2000 • Hudson and Bergen Counties (4:00 PM)
March 12, 2000 • Essex and Union Counties (4:30 PM)

June 11, 2000 • Archdiocesan Celebration of Confirmation for Adult Catholics
Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart • Newark
3:00 PM

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A TIME TO LISTEN... A TIME TO HEAL: A RESOURCE DIRECTORY FOR REACHING OUT TO INACTIVE CATHOLICS

On November 15, 1998, the Bishops' Committee on Evangelization approved the release of *A Time to Listen ... A Time to Heal: A Resource Directory for Reaching Out to Inactive Catholics*. This directory is divided into four parts: (1) three articles on the evangelization of inactive Catholics, (2) parish, diocesan, and national models presenting twelve diverse approaches for reaching out to inactive Catholics, (3) five faith-sharing guides, which can be used for small group reflection on the gospel stories of reconciliation during Lent and at other times of the year, and (4) a bibliography of resources. This directory is one way of implementing the call of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* to *Open Wide the Doors to Christ!*



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