

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

RECEIVING THE CANDIDATES

73

48 The candidates, their sponsors and a group of the faithful gather outside the church (or inside at the entrance or elsewhere) or at some other site suitable for this rite. As the priest or deacon, wearing an alb or surplice, a stole, and if desired, a cope of festive color, goes to meet them, the assembly of the faithful may sing a psalm or an appropriate song.

GREETING

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49 The celebrant greets the candidates in a friendly manner. He speaks to them, their sponsors, and all present, point out that joy and happiness of the Church. He may also recall for the sponsors and friends the particular experience and religious response by which the candidates, following their own spiritual path, have come to this first step.

Then he invites the sponsors and candidates to come forward. As they are taking their places before the celebrant, an appropriate song may be sung, for example, Psalm 63: 1-8.

OPENING DIALOGUE

50 Unless the candidates are already known to all present, the celebrant asks for or calls out their given names. The candidates answer one by one, even if, because of a large number, the question is asked only once. One of the following or something similar may be used.

A The celebrant asks:

What is your name?

Candidate: N.

B. The celebrant call out the name of each candidate.

The candidate answers: **Present.**

The celebrant continues with the following questions for the individual candidates or, when there are a large number, for the candidates to answer as a group. The celebrant may use other words than those provided in asking the candidates about their intentions and may let them answer in their own words: for example, to the first questions, "What do you ask of the Church of God?" or "What do you desire?" or "For what reason have you come?", he may receive such answers as "The grace of Christ" or "Entrance into the Church" or "Eternal life" or other suitable responses. The celebrant then phrases his next question according to the answer received.

Celebrant:
What do you ask of God's Church?

Candidate:
Faith.

Celebrant:
What does faith offer you?

Candidate:
Eternal life.

51 At the discretion of the diocesan bishop, the candidates' first acceptance of the Gospel (no. 52) may be replaced by the rite of exorcism and renunciation of false worship (no. 70-72) [see no. 33.2].

CANDIDATES' FIRST ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOSPEL

52 The celebrant addresses the candidates, adapting one of the following formularies or similar words to the answers received in the opening dialogue.

- A. God gives light to everyone who comes into this world; though unseen, he reveals himself through the works of his hand, so that all people may learn to give thanks to their Creator.**

You have followed God's light and the way of the Gospel now lies open before you. Set your feet firmly on that path and acknowledge the living God, who truly speaks to everyone. Walk in the light of Christ and learn to trust in his wisdom. Commit your lives daily to his care, so that you may come to believe in him with all your heart.

This is the way of faith along which Christ will lead you in love toward eternal life. Are you prepared to begin this journey today under the guidance of Christ?

Candidates: I am.

370:1

- B. God is our Creator and in him all living things have their existence. He enlightens our minds, so that we may come to know and worship him. He has sent his faithful witness, Jesus Christ, to announce to us what he has seen and heard, the mysteries of heaven and earth.**

Since you acknowledge with joy that Christ has come, now is the time to hear his word, so that you may possess eternal life by beginning, in our company, to know God and to love your neighbor. Are you ready, with the help of God, to live this life?

Candidates: I am.

370.2

C. This is eternal life: to know the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. Christ has been raised from the dead and appointed by God as the Lord of life and ruler of all things, seen and unseen.

If, then, you wish to become his disciples and member of his Church, you must be guided to the fullness of the truth that he has revealed to us. You must learn to make the mind of Christ Jesus your own. You must strive to pattern your life on the teachings of the Gospel and so to love the Lord your God and your neighbor. For this was Christ's command and he was its perfect example.

Is each of you ready to accept these teachings of the Gospel?

Candidates: I am.

AFFIRMATION BY THE SPONSORS AND THE ASSEMBLY

53 Then the celebrant turns to the sponsors and the assembly and asks them in these or similar words.

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Sponsors, you now present these candidates to us; are you, and all who are gathered with us, ready to help these candidates find and follow Christ?

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All: We are.

With hands joined, the celebrant says:

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**Father of Mercy,
we thank you for these servants.
You have sought and summoned them in many ways
and they have turned to seek you.
You have called them today
and they have answered in our presence:
we praise you, Lord, and we bless you.**

All sing or say:

We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

SIGNING OF THE CANDIDATES WITH THE CROSS

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54 Next the cross is traced on the forehead of the candidates (or, at the discretion of the diocesan bishop, in front of the forehead for candidates in whose culture the act of touching may not seem proper – see no. 33.3); at the discretion of the celebrant the signing of one, several, or all of the senses may follow. The celebrant alone says the formularies accompanying each signing.

SIGNING OF THE FOREHEAD

55 One of the following options is used, depending on the number of candidates.

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- A. If there are only a few candidates, the celebrant invites them and their sponsors in these or similar words.

Come forward now with your sponsors to receive the sign of your new way of life as catechumens.

With their sponsors, the candidates come one by one to the celebrant; with his thumb he traces the cross on the forehead; then, if there is to be no signing of the senses, the sponsor does the same. The celebrant says:

**N., receive the cross on your forehead.
It is Christ himself who now strengthens you
with this sign of his love.
Learn to know him and follow him.**

86

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

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- B. If there are a great many candidates, the celebrant speaks to them in these or similar words.*

Dear candidates, your answers mean that you wish to share our life and hope in Christ. To admit you as a catechumens I now mark you with the sign of Christ's cross and call upon your catechists and sponsors to do the same. The whole community welcomes you with love and stands ready to help you.

Then the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over all together, as a cross is traced by a sponsor or catechist on the forehead of each candidate. The celebrant says:

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

86

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

SIGNING OF THE OTHER SENSES

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56 The signing is carried out by the catechists or the sponsors. (If required by special circumstances, this may be done by assisting priests or deacons.) The signing of each sense may be followed by an acclamation in praise of Christ, for example, "Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!"

While the ears are being signed the celebrant says:

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

While the eyes are being signed.

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

While the lips are being signed.

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

While the breast is being signed.

**Receive the sign of the cross over your heart,
that Christ may dwell there by faith.**

While the shoulders are being signed.

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

[While the hands are being signed.

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

While the feet are being signed.

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

Without touching them, the celebrant alone makes the sign of the cross over all the candidates at one (or, if they are few, over each individually), saying:

**I sign you with the sign of eternal life
in the name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.**

Catechumens: **Amen.**