



Diocese of Westminster

Sacramental Policy

For detailed information on individual sacraments, please refer to the Evangelisation section of the diocesan website, '[Sacraments](#)' and '[Resources for Parish Ministry](#)'

Baptism of Children (0 to 6)

- a) For the first child there should be a minimum of two pre-baptism sessions. Where possible, this should be done by a team which includes lay people.
- b) Where practice is strong in a family, it is not always necessary for the parents to re-attend a baptism course, though their presence can help other parents.
- c) Baptism should never be refused but might have to be delayed for pastoral reasons.
- d) Where there are children aged 4 to 6, some preparation should also be given with them, such as explaining and showing what will be happening on the day of baptism.

Baptism of Adults (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – RCIA)

The norm for adults seeking baptism is to follow the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults in their local parish and to be baptised at the Easter Vigil when it is discerned they are ready, following the scrutinies of the RCIA.

RCIA and Children (Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age - CICC)

- a) Children presented for baptism or seeking baptism between the ages of seven and thirteen are regarded as children of catechetical age. They should be prepared for the sacrament following the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Children, part 2 of the RCIA.
- b) Young people over the age of thirteen should be prepared for the sacrament following the normal RCIA process – (see policy for Baptism of Adults)

Confirmation

Teenagers

Catechesis for Confirmation should normally take place within the parish community, which has an obligation to participate in the catechetical preparation of those to be confirmed.

- a) The policy is that teenagers be prepared for the sacrament from a minimum of Year 9 of secondary school. Where there are older year groups also being presented, it is good practice to prepare them separately.
- b) Where there is a small number of candidates, parishes should consider joining with each other. A deanery celebration ought to be considered where appropriate.

Adults

- a) Adults who are being baptised at the Easter Vigil may also be confirmed by a priest at the same ceremony. The faculty to confirm at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter season must be requested in advance via the Chancery Office. *
- b) Those who are to be received into full communion with the Church may be confirmed at the Easter Vigil or during the parish's normal celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation with the bishop. The faculty for a priest to confirm at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter season must be requested in advance via the Chancery Office. *
- c) Adult Catholics who, for some reason, were not confirmed as teenagers, should be prepared in the parish and may be confirmed at one of the regular Cathedral celebrations or during the parish's normal celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation with the bishop.* Whenever possible, particularly for catechised adults, preparation for adult confirmation should be not be as part of RCIA
- d) Candidates who present themselves for reception into the Catholic Church from an Eastern Orthodox Church, should be received into the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church. (RCIA 474). Reception into the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church requires a request of transfer of rite from the Apostolic See.

** the RCIA form (2018) from the Chancery Office covers all four of the above situations.*

First Communion/Eucharist

- a) It is diocesan policy for the children to be prepared for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in the parish. This preparation should be offered from school Year 3 (the

year in which the child turns 8 years old). Parents are expected to attend a number of sessions; firstly, so that they can understand the process of preparation that the parish is providing for the children and secondly, to understand their own particular and important role in helping prepare their children for their first and continuing reception of these sacraments. This involvement of the parents in the catechesis, and in witnessing to the place of the sacraments in the life of Catholics is regarded as a critically important element in the parish-based preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

- b) In accordance with the mind of the Universal Church, First Reconciliation precedes First Holy Communion. Holy Communion should be offered under both kinds at Mass *. This includes the First Holy Communion Mass, including those children receiving Holy Communion for the first time. The catechesis provided for children should always be adequate ensuring that the children appreciate that Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. *

* *current circumstances (Covid 19) do not allow for Communion under both kinds*

Eastern Catholic Churches

"The Catholic Church affirms repeatedly that "the members of the Eastern churches have the right and the duty to preserve them [liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and established standards of the Christian life], to know them and to live them, doing all they can to avoid losing their identity. (DfC 290)... Therefore, it is urged that the catechetical process of the individual Eastern Catholic Churches concretely have as a starting point their own specific liturgical celebrations. (DfC 291) (cf CCEO c621 #2)

Christian initiation in Eastern Catholic Churches links the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation) and First Communion at the same time. Care should be taken when approached by members of these churches to respect their practice, liturgy and culture. Ideally, they should be encouraged to be prepared in the Eastern Church into which they have been initiated and/or permission sought for such candidates to be included in any Latin Church (Roman Catholic) preparation, particularly that of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Should these sacraments be celebrated in the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church, a note should be made of the Eastern Catholic Church to which they belong.

Under no circumstances should Confirmation be conferred again.

Eucharistic hospitality

As is indicated in Bishops' Conference teaching document *One Bread, One Body*, permission may be sought by non-Catholic Christians to receive Holy Communion at a Catholic Mass on special occasions. *One Bread One Body* gives good teaching on the framework, theology and pastoral practice in this area. For the present, permission for Eucharistic hospitality should be sought from the Archbishop by the parish priest, or another priest where he is more directly involved in the celebration in question. Orthodox Christians who seek Eucharistic hospitality may be admitted without application to the Archbishop though one must be sensitive to their own ecclesial disciplines in this matter.