

# Christian Initiation News and Notes

July 2020

**“The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. In it is found the high point both of the action of God by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him, through Christ the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit.”** [Liturgy Documents, Vol One, Fourth Edition, LTP, 2004. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 10)]

*Praise God that we are able to celebrate full Eucharistic Liturgy again!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! To the parishes who received the gift of Inquirers during these months too!*

## **RITE OF ELECTION AND ENROLLMENT OF NAMES OF CATECHUMENS AND THE CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION OF CANDIDATES:**

*Thank you God that we were able to celebrate the Rites at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral in Johnstown and the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona on the First Sunday of Lent, March 1, 2020, before we had to begin shuttering in place after the second week of March due to the COVID 19 Pandemic.*

## **CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION OF ADULTS.**

I have been sincerely praying for all the Elect and Candidates during the Lent, Easter and now Ordinary Time Seasons. I have also been inspired by the many parishes who have continued to journey with the Elect and Candidates during these weeks of waiting and anticipating the Sacrament celebration during COVID19 shut-downs. What a wonderful Spirit-filled day it will be when we can all be one family feasting at the Eucharistic Table. TeamRCIA has a wonderful Blessing for Catechumens and Candidates in the case they are still waiting.

The Canons regarding the celebration of who, and to whom, should confer and receive the sacrament of Confirmation remain in full effect.(885.2) In order to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation for **baptized Catholic adult age candidates** Pastors and Sacramental Ministers must specifically request the faculty from the local ordinary (Explicit request, Canon 884.1). Parishes with Deacon Administrators and Sacramental Ministers must be mindful to note the specific information for the priest who will be Confirming and send the appropriate letters in their name to the Bishop. Adults can be included in the parish celebration for Confirmation with the youth if desired as they will be celebrating the same Sacrament of Initiation!

Priests who will be receiving Candidates (the already baptized Christians) into Full Communion of the Catholic Church do not have to request faculty to Confirm as they are given permission through the fullness of Holy Orders into the Priesthood. (883.2)

## **Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Liturgical Directives:**

As soon as Mass celebration began June 13-14, 2020, in compliance with the continuing CDC required standards as defined by Bishop Mark in *New Directives June 1, 2020*, adults who had been preparing to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation were able to be baptized, fully initiated and received in to the Catholic Church using the Rites that would have been used at the Easter Vigil. The celebrations of sacraments may occur during a weekday Mass if need be to allow for families to be present and celebrate with them.

Many Pastors and Sacramental Ministers have chosen the Sunday Mass setting when the community is present as numbers allow. The goal is still for the sacraments to be celebrated within the parish community as much as possible. It is absolutely imperative that you have this discussion with the pastor or administrator of your parish before planning.

Family inclusion is always encouraged. Please look up all directives issued by Bishop Mark on the diocesan website [www.dioceseaj.org](http://www.dioceseaj.org) to be fully informed.

## **THE FORMS FOR EACH ELECT AND CANDIDATE STILL NEED TO BE COMPLETED:**

### **PASTOR INVESTIGATION FORM**

It is the policy of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown that a form for every Catechumen and Candidate needs to be submitted to the Office of Christian Initiation when their intent becomes serious. It is an information gathering tool at the parish level and for the review of the office of the Tribunal if it becomes necessary to begin completion of forms for dispensations or the process of an Annulment.

### **TESTIMONY FOR BAPTISM DETERMINATION**

Candidates for full communion and candidates for completion of the initiation sacraments may not receive the sacraments of Confirmation and the Most Holy Eucharist without supplying a certificate of proof of a valid baptism. This form is to be used in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown as proof of baptism in the circumstance when no formal documentation can be found after a thorough search has been made. This can avoid the need for a “conditional baptism.”

The form is to be completed by the candidate, their witness, and the pastor or administrator. It is to be imprinted with the parish seal and mailed to the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in care of the Chancellor, Mrs. Teresa M. Stayer at 2713 West Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601-1720. The form will be approved, stamped with the official seal of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown and then returned to the parish for the parish sacramental registries.

The *Testimony for Baptism Determination Form, Pastor Investigation Form, Valid and In-Valid Baptism Lists, and the sample letter for the Request for Faculty to Confirm* can be downloaded for print from [www.dioceseaj.org](http://www.dioceseaj.org). Printed copies can be obtained by contacting the Office of Christian Initiation. As of last week Mrs. Teresa Stayer had not received many requests for Faculty.

### **On Another Note...**

***Beacon of Hope: Journey of Grace Articles:*** In the Fall of 2019 a series of articles highlighting Neophytes and new members of the Catholic Family who had become fully initiated Catholics through the RCIA process in our diocese in the past three years were published in the printed Catholic Register Proclaim Newspaper eNews, and one family in the Lenten 2020 Proclaim Magazine. With your help Tony DeGol and I were able to share personal journey stories of men, women, youth and family. We wanted to share their stories to give concrete examples of the continued growth in our Church amidst troubled times. We are in an even deeper and different degree of the need to give people HOPE now. I am asking that if you are able, with their permission, if you would please share a story of person/persons who have entered the Church in current years. A part of their journey could also be how they continued to grow in faith during the quarantine. Ask: How did their faith help them to grow in their relationship with the Lord while not being able to participate in the Eucharist and only receive Holy Communion spiritually? If you share their contact information with us, after explaining what we are looking for, then Tony and I will do the rest of the leg work. Thank you to the directors who have already shared in this on-going endeavor.

**CATECHUMENATE TEAM MINISTRY COURSE:** We will be offering the annual 16 week course through the Lay Ecclesial Ministry and Adult Formation Office. It will be held in Altoona this year: 8 weeks at the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Pastoral Center beginning on the Second Thursday of September on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Eight weeks will be held at Saint Rose of Lima Church, Altoona. Please read the attached/enclosed schedule and registration information. We will always take into consideration the health of all the participants and CDC guidelines. I am also exploring and investigating on-line training that is **affordable**. Please keep in mind that online can never replace in-person faith sharing.

## **RESOURCES:**

**Liguori Publications:** *Catholic Updates* (Liguori.org/Catholic-Update) continue to be an ongoing, user friendly, catechetical and liturgical resource for the Church. Quantity discounts are available. The July 2020 monthly published update is very timely: *Voting with a Catholic Heart* (Stephen P. White). This article gives a non-political framework for why Catholics need to exercise their vote as a right and responsibility as faithful citizens.

**2021 Liturgy Training Publication (LTP) product orders:** Information and order sheets for the popular annual liturgical and scripture resources will be posted on the website mid-July and be sent to you by email. Pastors/Administrators will be receiving the information too. You are **always welcome** to order from the complete LTP catalog and still receive the discount of 40% on any non-sale item. The Liturgy Office must process any order for the parish to receive the 40% discount (**www.LTP.org**).

**TeamRCIA:** I strongly suggest you sign-up for the FREE Newsletter on their website. Many basic teachings and liturgical practices of the Church in regards to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* are explained thoroughly such as **On-going Inquiry and Year Round Catechumenate**. Free downloadable resources are made available. I do pass some of them on to you as I see them. Team Memberships are also available by the month and year.

## **YOUTH PROTECTION**

Do you think it may be time to renew your clearances? Please call the office at 814-695-5579 and ask for Justin Kirkland. He will be able to give you specific information from your records.

**ZOOM Meetings:** I would like to schedule a virtual meeting specific to **Christian Initiation**. I am looking at **Tuesday, July 7, beginning at 6:00 pm**. I did receive 4 replies since the Newsletter went out on **June 26/27** that helped me narrow down a date and day of the week. **Directors and Coordinators for Sacrament Preparation for 2<sup>nd</sup> thru 11<sup>th</sup> grades** are encouraged to join the meeting as I am the **Diocesan Coordinator for both**.

***If you would like a paper copy of forms please call the office and I will send them to you ASAP.***

**WEBSITE:** **Diocesan News and Calendars** for all special events, adult catechetical and formation offerings, and registrations for diocesan-wide events can be downloaded from this valuable communication tool. The Christian Initiation site can be found under Ministries. *Christian Initiation New and Notes*, etc., are posted as part of the administration diocesan mailing on the website.

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