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RITE OF RECEPTION
OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS
INTO FULL COMMUNION
WITH THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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THE ROMAN RITUAL

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**RITE OF RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS
INTO FULL COMMUNION
WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States by the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops of America and
Confirmed by the Apostolic See

English Translation Prepared by the International Commission
on English in the Liturgy

1976

Publications Office
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

The English translation of this rite, taken from the appendix of the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* (January 6, 1972), was approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for use in the dioceses of the United States of America and was confirmed on March 11, 1975 by the Congregation for Divine Worship (prot. no. 408/75).

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CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	1
Introduction	5
Chapter I. Rite of Reception within Mass	9
Chapter II. Rite of Reception outside Mass	13
Chapter III. Texts	15
I. Biblical Readings	15
II. Sample General Intercessions	17
Appendix Responsorial Psalms	19



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FOREWORD

In its constitution on the liturgy, the Second Vatican Council treated two somewhat analogous cases in a single article: (1) children who had been baptized in emergency circumstances and who should later be ritually welcomed into the parish church to signify that they "have already been received into the Church" by baptism, and (2) adults who had been baptized in other churches and ecclesial communities and who are to be ritually welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church: "And a new rite is to be drawn up for converts who have already been validly baptized; it should indicate that they are now admitted to communion with the Church" (no. 69).

The first mandate was satisfied by a chapter in the *Rite of Baptism for Children* (1969): "Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church." The present rite deals with the second case and was published as an appendix to the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* (Congregation for Divine Worship, January 6, 1972). In the interval between the constitution on the liturgy and the publication of this ritual, however, it had become evident that the term "convert" or *neo-conversus* may not be appropriately applied to baptized Christians on the occasion of their entering into full Catholic communion.

The term "convert" properly refers to one who comes from unbelief to Christian belief. Although conversion of life is the continuing imperative of Christian believers, the concept of Christian conversion is applied only in reference to Christian initiation—through baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist—rather than to a subsequent change of Christian communion.

The conciliar decree on ecumenism, moreover, employs the expression, "imperfect communion," when speaking of Christian communities "separated from full communion with the Catholic Church." "Men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though the communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees . . . do indeed create many obstacles, some serious ones,

to full ecclesiastical communion. . . . All who have been justified by faith in baptism are members of Christ's Body and have a right to be called Christian and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church" (no. 3).

Thus the name of the present rite and its contents have been chosen to express, not conversion to Christian faith, but rather admission, reception, and welcome into the fullness of Catholic communion. This is the reason also that the present rite is to be kept entirely distinct from the catechumenate of Christian initiation: "Any confusion between catechumens and candidates for reception into communion should be absolutely avoided" (Introduction, below, no. 5). The rites of the catechumenate and Christian initiation are for unbelievers who come to Christian faith; the present rite is for Christian believers who have been baptized in another church or ecclesial community and who now seek to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Changed Discipline

For the United States, the new rite replaces the discipline in effect since July 20, 1959 (Instruction of the Holy Office; see also decrees of the Plenary Councils of Baltimore: II, no. 242; III, no. 122). This provided, in the case of the reception of already baptized persons, for the abjuration of error by making the profession of faith and for absolution from excommunication; thus admitted to communion, the person could be absolved from his or her sins.

Besides altering the terminology of conversion, the revised rite replaces the discipline described above with one in accord with the directory on ecumenism (May 14, 1967). This includes two substantial changes:

(1) The requirement of absolution from excommunication is now suppressed, and no abjuration of heresy is to be made (see nos. 19-20).

(2) The previous norm concerning the conditional baptism of the doubtfully baptized has been changed to say that a conditional baptism, "if after serious investigation it seems necessary because of reasonable doubt," is to be celebrated privately (nos. 14-15; see Introduction, below, no. 7).

Elements of the Rite

The revised rite takes place within the eucharistic celebration, after the homily (in which the priest may appropriately speak of the significance of the reception into full communion). It has the following elements:

(1) profession of faith by the community and by the person (or persons) to be received into full communion;

(2) declaration of reception by the bishop or by the priest who takes his place;

(3) sacrament of confirmation (unless the person has been confirmed);

(4) general intercessions;

(5) sign of peace (which need not be repeated before communion);

(6) liturgy of the eucharist, in which the person receives communion for the first time with the members of the Catholic community.

The rite is clearly described in the rubrics (Chapter I, below). It is expected that the reception take place within the Sunday eucharistic celebration of the local church—either with the bishop presiding or, in the ordinary parish or other community celebration, with the priest presiding in the place of the bishop (see Introduction, below, no. 8). Such a celebration gives the full significance of entrance into communion and permits the whole Christian community to express its welcome and unity.

In some personal or family circumstances, the individual may not wish to be received into communion at the public Sunday eucharist. Even then, however, the reception should be part of a eucharistic celebration of some few members of the local community, including friends and others who have helped the baptized person to come into full communion. If even this is impossible, Chapter II describes the rite of reception outside Mass, in the context of a liturgy of the word.

Readings

In most cases it may be appropriate to take the biblical readings from the Mass of the day and to base the homily, with suitable reference and application to the occasion of reception into full communion, upon these readings. If other readings are desired, they may be taken from the *Lectionary for Mass*:

(1) Mass for the unity of Christians (nos. 811-815);

(2) Mass for Christian Initiation (nos. 752-756);

(3) Readings listed in Chapter III, below. The text of these readings is not reprinted, but the references in the *Lectionary for Mass* have been added for convenience.

INTRODUCTION

1. The rite for the reception of one born and baptized in a separated ecclesial community into full communion with the Catholic Church,¹ according to the Latin rite, is arranged so that no greater burden than necessary is demanded for reception into communion and unity² (See Acts 15:28).

2. In the case of Eastern Christians who enter into the fullness of Catholic communion, nothing more than a simple profession of Catholic faith is required, even if they are permitted, upon recourse to the Apostolic See, to transfer to the Latin rite.³

3. a) The rite should be seen as a celebration of the Church, with its climax in eucharistic communion. For this reason the rite of reception is generally celebrated within Mass.

b) Anything which has the appearance of triumphalism should be carefully avoided, and the manner of celebrating this Mass should be precisely defined. Both the ecumenical implications and the bond between the candidate and the parish community should be considered. Often it will be more appropriate to celebrate the Mass with only a few relatives and friends. If for a serious reason Mass cannot be celebrated, the reception should take place where possible during a liturgy of the word. The person to be received into full communion should be consulted about the form of reception.

4. If the reception is celebrated outside Mass, the connection with eucharistic communion should be made clear. Mass should be celebrated as soon as possible, so that the newly received person may participate fully with his Catholic brethren for the first time.

5. The baptized Christian is to receive both doctrinal and spiritual preparation, according to pastoral requirements in individual cases, for his reception into full communion with the Catholic Church. He should grow in his spiritual adherence to the Church where he will find the fullness of his baptism.

During the period of preparation the candidate may share in worship according to the norms of the Directory on Ecumenism.

Any confusion between catechumens and candidates for reception into communion should be absolutely avoided.

6. No abjuration of heresy is required of one born and baptized outside the visible communion of the Catholic Church, but only the profession of faith.⁴

7. The sacrament of baptism may not be repeated, and conditional baptism is not permitted unless there is a reasonable doubt about the fact or validity of the baptism already received. If after serious investigation it seems necessary—because of such reasonable doubt—to confer baptism again conditionally, the minister should explain beforehand the reasons why baptism is conferred conditionally in this instance, and he should administer it in the private form.⁵

The local Ordinary shall determine, in individual cases, what rites are to be included or excluded in conditional baptism.

8. It is the office of the bishop to receive baptized Christians into full communion. But the priest to whom he entrusts the celebration of the rite has the faculty of confirming the candidate during the rite of admission,⁶ unless the latter has already been validly confirmed.

9. If the profession of faith and reception take place within Mass, the one to be received—with due regard to the individual case—should confess his sins beforehand. He should first inform the confessor that he is about to be received into full communion. Any confessor who is lawfully approved may receive the confession.

10. At the reception, the candidate should be accompanied if possible by a sponsor, that is, the man or woman who has had the chief part in bringing him to full communion or in preparing him. Two sponsors may be permitted.

11. In the eucharistic celebration or, if the reception takes place outside Mass, in the Mass which follows, communion may be received under both kinds by the one received into communion, by his sponsors, parents, and spouse, if they are Catholics, by lay catechists who have instructed him, and also by all Catholics present, if the numbers or other circumstances suggest this.

12. Episcopal conferences may accommodate the rite of reception to various circumstances, in accord with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (no. 63). The local Ordinary, moreover, may adapt the rite, enlarging or shortening it in view of special personal or local circumstances.⁷

13. The names of those received into full communion should be recorded in a special book, with the date and place of baptism also noted.

NOTES

- ¹ See II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 69b; Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 3; Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, *Directorium*, no. 19: AAS, 59 (1967) 581.
- ² See II Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 18
- ³ See II Vatican Council, Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium ecclesiarum*, nos. 25 and 4.
- ⁴ See Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, *Directorium*, nos. 19 and 20: AAS, 59 (1967) 581.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 14-15: AAS, 59 (1967) 580.
- ⁶ See *Rite of Confirmation*, Introduction, no. 7.
- ⁷ See Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, *Directorium*, no. 19: AAS, 59 (1967) 581.

CHAPTER I

RITE OF RECEPTION WITHIN MASS

14. a) If the reception into full communion takes place on a solemnity or on a Sunday, the Mass of the day should be celebrated. On other days the Mass for the unity of Christians may be used.

b) The reception takes place after the homily. In this the celebrant should express gratitude to God and should speak of baptism as the basis for reception, of confirmation to be received or already received, and of the eucharist to be celebrated for the first time by the newly received Christian with his Catholic brethren.

c) At the end of the homily the celebrant gives a brief invitation for the candidate to come forward with his sponsor and to profess his faith with the community. He may use these or similar words:

N., of your own free will you have asked to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church. You have made your decision after careful thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I now invite you to come forward with your sponsor and profess the Catholic faith in the presence of this community. This is the faith in which, for the first time, you will be one with us at the eucharistic table of the Lord Jesus, the sign of the Church's unity.

15. The one to be received then recites the Nicene Creed with the faithful. The profession of faith is always said in this Mass.

Afterwards, at the celebrant's invitation, the one to be received adds:

I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God.

16. The celebrant then lays his right hand upon the head of the one to be received, unless confirmation follows, and says:

N., the Lord receives you into the Catholic Church. His loving kindness has led you here so that, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, you may have full communion with us in the faith that you have professed in the presence of his family.

17. If the one to be admitted has not been confirmed, the celebrant next lays his hands upon the candidate's head and begins the rite of confirmation with the prayer.

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your son (daughter) from sin and gave him (her) new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon him (her) to be his (her) Helper and Guide. Give him (her) the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill him (her) with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

The sponsor places his right hand upon the shoulder of the candidate.

The celebrant dips his right thumb in the chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the one to be confirmed, as he says:

N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

The newly confirmed responds:

Amen.

The celebrant says:

Peace be with you.

The newly confirmed responds:

And also with you.

18. After the confirmation the celebrant greets the newly received person, taking his hands as a sign of friendship and acceptance. With the permission of the Ordinary, another suitable gesture may be substituted depending on local and other circumstances.

If the one received is not confirmed, this greeting follows the formula of reception (no. 16).

19. The general intercessions follow the reception (and confirmation). In the introduction, the celebrant should mention baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist, and express gratitude to God. The one received into full communion is mentioned in the first of the intercessions (see no. 30).

20. After the general intercessions the sponsor and, if only a few persons are present, all the congregation may greet the newly received person in a friendly manner. In this case the sign of peace before communion may be omitted. Finally the one received into communion returns to his place.

21. Then Mass continues. It is fitting that communion be received under both kinds by the one received and by the others mentioned in no. 11.

CHAPTER II

RITE OF RECEPTION OUTSIDE MASS

22. If for a serious reason the reception into full communion takes place outside Mass, a liturgy of the word is to be celebrated.
23. The celebrant vests in an alb (or at least in a surplice) and a stole of festive color. First he greets those present.
24. The celebration begins with (an appropriate song and) a reading from scripture on which the homily is based (see no. 14b).
25. The reception follows, as described above (nos. 14c-19).
26. The general intercessions are concluded with the Lord's Prayer, sung or recited by all present, and the priest's blessing.
27. Then the sponsor and, if only a few are present, all the congregation may greet the newly received person in a friendly way. Then all depart in peace.
28. If in exceptional circumstances the liturgy of the word cannot be celebrated, everything takes place as above, beginning with the introductory words of the celebrant. He should start with a quotation from scripture (for example, in praise of God's mercy which has led the candidate into full communion) and speak of the eucharistic communion which will soon follow.

CHAPTER III

TEXTS

29.

I. BIBLICAL READINGS

The biblical readings for Mass or for the liturgy of the word may be taken in whole or in part from the Mass of the day, the Mass for the unity of Christians (see *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. 811-815), or the Mass for Christian initiation (see *ibid.*, nos. 752-756).

When the rite is celebrated outside Mass, the following texts may be used:

NEW TESTAMENT READINGS

1. *Rom 8:28-39* He predestined us to become true images of his Son. (*Lectionary for Mass*, 110, 482)
2. *1 Cor 12:31-13:13* Love never ends. (*Lect.*, 73)
3. *Eph 1:3-14* The Father chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless in love. (*Lect.*, 105)
4. *Eph 4:1-7, 11-13* There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, the Father of all. (*Lect.*, 477-478)
5. *Phil 4:4-8* Fill your minds with everything that is holy. (*Lect.*, 9, 140)
6. *1 Th 5:16-24* May you all be kept blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Lect.*, 8)

RESPONSORIAL PSALMS

1. *Ps 27:1, 4, 8b-9abc, 13-14*
R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.
2. *Ps 42:2-3; 43:3,4*
R. (42:3a) My soul is thirsting for the living God.
3. *Ps 61:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 9*
R. (4a) Lord, you are my refuge.
4. *Ps 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9*
R. (2b) My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.
5. *Ps 65:2-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6*
R. (2a) It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

6. *Ps 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8*
℞. (2a) Our help is from the Lord.

GOSPELS

1. *Mt 5:2-12a* Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven. (*Lect., 71*)
2. *Mt. 5:13-16* Let your light shine before men. (*Lect., 74*)
3. *Mt. 11:25-30* You have hidden these things from the learned and the clever and revealed them to children. (*Lect., 101*)
4. *John 3:16-21* Everyone who believes in him will have everlasting life. (*Lect., 269*)
5. *John 14:15-23, 26-27* My Father will love him, and we will come to him. (*Lect., 56, 285, 58*)
6. *John 15:1-6* I am the vine and you are the branches. (*Lect., 54*)

30. II. SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Brothers and sisters: our brother (sister) **N.** was already united to Christ through baptism (and confirmation). Now, with thanksgiving to God, we have received him (her) into full communion with the Catholic Church (and confirmed him (her) with the gifts of the Holy Spirit). Soon he (she) will share with us at the table of the Lord. Rejoice with the member we have just received into the Catholic Church. With him (her), let us seek the grace and mercy of our Savior.

That **N.** may have the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit to persevere faithfully in the choice he (she) has made, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That all Christian believers and the communities to which they belong may come to perfect unity, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That the Church (Communion) in which **N.** was baptized and received his (her) formation as a Christian may always grow in the knowledge of Christ and proclaim him more effectively, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That all whom God's grace has touched may be led to the fullness of truth in Christ, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That those who do not yet believe in Christ the Lord may enter the way of salvation by the light of the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That all men may be freed from hunger and war and live in peace and tranquillity, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That we who have received the gift of faith may persevere in it to the end of our lives, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Prayer

**God our Father,
hear the prayers we offer.
May our loving service be pleasing to you.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.**

R. Amen.

31. If the reception is celebrated outside Mass, the transition from the general intercessions to the Lord's Prayer (see no. 26) can be expressed in these or similar words:

Celebrant:

**Brothers and sisters,
let us join our prayers together
and offer them to God
as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray.**

All:

Our Father . . .

If the person received into full communion is accustomed to the final doxology *For the Kingdom*, etc., it should be used in this place.

APPENDIX

RESPONSORIAL PSALMS

1. Ps. 27: 1, 4, 8b-9abc, 13-14

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

**The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?**

**The Lord is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid? *R.***

**One thing I ask of the Lord;
this I seek:**

**To dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,**

**That I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord
and contemplate his temple. *R.***

Your presence, O Lord, I seek.

**Hide not your face from me;
do not in anger repel your servant.**

You are my helper: cast me not off. *R.*

**I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord
in the land of the living.**

**Wait for the Lord with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord. *R.***

2. Ps. 42: 2-3; 43: 3, 4

R. (42: 3a) My soul is thirsting for the living God.

**As the hind longs for the running waters,
so my soul longs for you, O God. *R.***

**Athirst is my soul for God, the living God.
When shall I go and behold the face of God? *R.***

Send forth your light and your fidelity;
they shall lead me on
And bring me to your holy mountain,
to your dwelling-place. *R̥.*

Then will I go in to the altar of God,
the God of my gladness and joy;
Then will I give you thanks upon the harp,
O God, my God! *R̥.*

3. Ps. 61: 2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 9
R̥. (4a) Lord, you are my refuge.

Hear, O God, my cry;
listen to my prayer!
From the earth's end I call to you
as my heart grows faint. *R̥.*

You will set me high upon a rock; you
will give me rest,
for you are my refuge,
a tower of strength against the enemy.
Oh, that I might lodge in your tent forever,
take refuge in the shelter of your wings! *R̥.*

You indeed, O God, have accepted my vows;
you granted me the heritage of those
who fear your name.
So will I sing the praises of your name forever,
fulfilling my vows day by day. *R̥.*

4. Ps. 63: 2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
R̥. (2b) My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God whom I seek;
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts
like the earth, parched, lifeless and
without water. *R̥.*

Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary
to see your power and your glory,
For your kindness is a greater good than life;
my lips shall glorify you. *R̥.*

Thus will I bless you while I live;
lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.
As with the riches of a banquet shall
my soul be satisfied,
and with exultant lips my mouth shall
praise you. *R̥.*

You are my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me. *R̥.*

5. Ps. 65: 2-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R̥. (2a) It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

To you we owe our hymn of praise,
O God, in Zion;
To you must vows be fulfilled,
you who hear prayers. *R̥.*

To you all flesh must come
because of wicked deeds.
We are overcome by our sins;
it is you who pardon them. *R̥.*

Happy the man you choose, and bring
to dwell in your courts.
May we be filled with the good things
of your house,
the holy things of your temple! *R̥.*

With awe-inspiring deeds of justice you answer us,
O God our savior,
The hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the distant seas. *R̥.*

6. Ps. 121: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
R̥. (2a) Our help is from the Lord.

I lift up my eyes toward the mountains;
whence shall help come to me?
My help is from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth. *R̥.*

May he not suffer your foot to slip;
may he slumber not who guards you:
Indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps,
the guardian of Israel. *R̥.*

The Lord is your guardian; the Lord
is your shade;
he is beside you at your right hand.
The sun shall not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night. *R̥.*

The Lord will guard you from all evil;
he will guard your life.
The Lord will guard your coming
and your going,
both now and forever. *R̥.*

