

CHRISTIAN INITIATION – Adults, Children, Infants/babies

Gratefully acknowledging Liturgy Brisbane resources.

OUR TRADITION – Initiation is more than just Baptism

Christian Initiation is completed through the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, in which we are incorporated into Christ, made sons and daughters of God, and initiated fully into the church community. The responsibility for the welcome and initiation of new members lies on all the baptised.

The practice and celebration of Christian Initiation has changed over time. Following the Second Vatican Council:

- a unique rite for the initiation of **infants/babies** was introduced (in the 1970's), and
- the ancient rite of the initiation of Adults was restored. This rite now provides the **norm** for the initiation of **adults**, and of **children of catechetical age (who have reached an age of awareness and self-understanding)**.

THE PRACTICE OF THE COMMUNITY

The Catholic Church is **manifested locally** as the Sunday eucharistic community of the local parish. It is here that we participate in the Easter event of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is in the **midst of this community** of the Church that initiation is best celebrated; and preferably during the **Sunday eucharistic gathering**; unless significant pastoral reasons suggest otherwise.

Additionally, the Vatican Council strongly called for the restoration of the ancient practice of '**immersion**', whereby the ones being initiated go 'into the waters' of baptism (the waters of the font in the community's permanent baptistery). This is the renewed practice for adults, children and babies/infants.

Adults and Children of Catechetical Age

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age (RCICCA) calls for a steady formation over time, a period of preparation, which is called the 'catechumenate'; that can last several months to several years depending on the circumstances of each candidate. After this time of formation, the candidate is welcomed into full membership through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist; preferably at Easter time.

This **new approach to initiation** for adults and children of catechetical age links the practice of initiation with the experience of the first Christian communities; outlining a hopeful vision for the church in the contemporary world. Christian Initiation is essentially seeker-centred, God-driven, and focused on conversion rather than knowledge. The process is gradual and public. It involves the whole community, includes both catechesis and ritual, and requires prayerful discernment at various stages.

The process of initiation is now understood to be a gradual journey, 'well-suited' to the needs of families and tailored to the needs of the individual and community. No 'one-size-fits-all' any longer.

Infants/babies

Christian parents who choose to present their **infants/babies for baptism**, receive initial instruction (together with their sponsors, where possible) to assist their obligations for their child's future faith journey. They are also instructed that the other Sacraments of Initiation (Confirmation and Eucharist) will be celebrated once their child has reached a suitable age of understanding.

Parishes usually have an annual program of preparation and formation for these final sacraments; through which the children take on full communion with the eucharistic community of church.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The circumstances of individuals, families and Eucharistic communities differ greatly these days. It is best to call the parish and enquire about the most suitable process of initiation; particularly if enquiring about an adult or about a child older than an infant or baby.