

### **Information & guidance on RCIA**

Please share the Bishop's video message with the members of your RCIA group. It is now possible to schedule their baptism/reception, albeit with some restrictions in place. The baptism of adults/reception into full communion can take place once the parish priest considers it appropriate to do so. There should only be one candidate at each Mass (with an exception made for members of the same household being received). In addition, close family, the godparent/sponsor, and one of the catechists/RCIA group can be present. The Mass should not be one of the regular publicised parish Masses but should take place on a weekday, in the evening or during the day. When circumstances allow there should be a welcome of the newly baptised/newly received at Sunday Mass. The RCIA states that the Baptism of Adults should take place at the Easter Vigil or, for serious pastoral needs, on another day preferably during the Easter season. It does however also mention 'unusual circumstances' of which this is surely one. RCIA 200 reminds us that: When the celebration takes place outside the usual time, care should be taken to ensure that it has a markedly paschal character. Thus the texts for one of the Ritual Masses 'Christian Initiation: Baptism' given in the Roman Missal are used, and the readings are chosen from those given in the Lectionary for Mass, 'Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil.' (RCIA 200)

I have adapted the following guidelines from the current Guidelines in force at this time for the Baptism of Children:

- a. The font should be pre-filled with water and covered before the baptism. The prayer of blessing, as given in the Easter Vigil, should be prayed by the minister. He should sanitise his hands before the blessing of water and immediately after it, given that he has touched the water at the point indicated in the prayer. The catechumen should stand at the font and lower his/her head over the font. The godparents should stand near the font but two metres away from the catechumen.
- b. The newly-baptised should take the baptismal candle from a table by the font. The priest can hold or touch the Paschal Candle as the neophyte lights their candle from it.
- c. For (Reception into Full Communion and) Confirmation, the prayer for the laying on of hands should be by hands extended from two metres rather than by physical touching.
- d. The Anointing with the Sacred Chrism in Confirmation should be done in the traditional manner, laying the right hand on the head of the candidate and anointing their forehead with Chrism by using one's thumb. This is to preserve the connection between the laying on of hands and anointing with Chrism as key elements of the Sacrament. The minister's hands must be sanitised before and after each anointing.
- e. Holy Communion is given according to the current guidelines, and under one kind.

The initiation of adults, particularly when celebrated on Easter Night, is full of symbolic richness that speaks so powerfully. Even in these days, however, it is important to plan for the safe and dignified admission to the sacraments of our adult catechumens and candidates who have waited several weeks. It would be appropriate on a Sunday in the future, when restrictions ease further, whenever that might be, to introduce the neophytes and the newly received to the parish at Sunday Mass. You might wish to invite them to bring their Baptismal Candles. If restrictions allow, that might be the occasion to clothe them in their White Garment. If you would like any further clarification, or if you would like some suggestions for some resources for the period of mystagoga, online or in print, please contact us.