



NewsLetter

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Secretariat Consultation on *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*

The Committee on Divine Worship is in the early stages of preparing a new English edition of the RCIA, to be titled the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Although the Latin *editio typica* has not changed, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy has completed a new translation of the Latin text. The publication of a new book will provide an opportunity to review and evaluate the various distinctive features of the current English edition. These include its rearrangement of the Latin *editio typica*, the adaptations approved for the United States, and additional material composed and confirmed for use in this country.

The Committee and its consultants have had preliminary discussions on the current ritual book and the RCIA process. There has been a general agreement in these meetings that the book in its present form is effective, and that difficulties that have arisen in the RCIA process have more to do with implementation than with the liturgical book itself. The Committee has also received the results from two surveys on the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, both conducted in 2014: one by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate that looked specifically at how the statutes were being implemented, and the other a consultation conducted by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions that suggested ways that the statutes could be improved.

As a complement to these discussions and expert consultations, the Secretariat of Divine Worship would also like to hear from our readers about their experiences with the RCIA, both the process in general and, in particular, the ritual book and the *National Statutes*:

- What have you found helpful and effective?
- What difficulties have you encountered?
- What changes would you recommend?
- Do you have other feedback concerning the RCIA (book and/or process)?

In your reply, please tell us a little bit about yourself:

- How have you been involved in RCIA ministry? In what capacity and for how long?
- Have you gone through the RCIA process yourself? What was your experience like?

Through December 31, 2018, responses can be e-mailed to RCIA@usccb.org or sent by regular mail to: USCCB – Divine Worship, 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017, ATTN: RCIA Consultation.

Extended Vigil of the Office of Readings

“[S]tay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come” (Mt 24:42; cf. Mk 13:32-37, Lk 12:40). Both Scripture and the teaching of the Church stress the importance of being ready for the coming of the Lord, whether in one’s personal life at the hour of death, or in the world at large. Saint Paul also counsels the Church in Thessalonica: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). These words of advice are heeded by the Church in its liturgy, especially in the Liturgy of the Hours.

The first hour of each day has long been celebrated at night, called Matins in the Extraordinary Form, or the Office of Readings since the Second Vatican Council. To facilitate the praying of the Office of Readings for those clergy and faithful engaged in the apostolate, the Council directed that it be “adapted so that it may be recited at any hour of the day; it shall be made up of fewer psalms and longer readings” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 89c). Its nocturnal origins, however, are reflected in some of the ways this hour may still be prayed.

Great honor has also been paid to the celebration of longer, more solemn vigils on the nights before great feasts, such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The Easter Vigil, in particular, is the “mother of all Vigils,” in which the faithful recall the saving power of God throughout the span of history (*Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil, no. 20; cf. St. Augustine, Sermon 219). In fact, the Office of Readings on that night is simply a shortened form of the Liturgy of the Word from that Mass and is prayed only by those who do not attend the Easter Vigil Mass itself. The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* (GILH) provides context for the celebration of vigils: “As with the Easter Vigil, it was customary to begin certain Solemnities (different in different Churches) with a vigil. Among these Solemnities Christmas and Pentecost are preeminent. This custom should be maintained and fostered, according to the particular usage of each Church. Whenever it seems good to add a vigil for other Solemnities or pilgrimages, the general norms for celebrations of the word should be followed” (no. 71).

Although vigils from the Divine Office are perhaps more likely to be celebrated by contemplative communities in monasteries and convents, the average parish can also make use of them to begin the celebration of a great solemnity or other diocesan feast, strengthen devotion to its patron saint, or foster a deeper spirit of prayer and community among parishioners. The GILH specifies the format of vigils:

First, the Office of Readings is to be celebrated as in *The Liturgy of the Hours* up to the end of the readings. After the two readings and before the *Te Deum* canticles should be added from the special appendix of *The Liturgy of the Hours*. Then the Gospel should be read; a homily on the Gospel may be added. After this the *Te Deum* is sung and the prayer said. On Solemnities and Feasts the Gospel is to be taken from the *Lectionary for Mass*; on Sundays, from the series on the Paschal Mystery in the appendix of *The Liturgy of the Hours*. (no. 73)

This vigil may take place on the night before a Sunday or solemnity/feast, “after Evening Prayer has been said” (GILH, no. 59), or even at a pre-dawn hour. The extended vigil of the Office of Readings is made up of five parts:

1. Invitatory Antiphon and Psalm*; Hymn
2. Psalmody
3. First and Second Readings with their Responsories
4. Canticles; Gospel and optional Homily
5. *Te Deum*; Concluding Prayer

In a parish setting or in a religious community, the vigil could incorporate an appropriate amount of music throughout the liturgy: “As much as possible, communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours with singing is to be preferred to private recitation... The Psalms and canticles should be sung whenever possible” (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, nos. 231-232). Following the usual psalmody and two readings of the Office of Readings, the additional texts necessary for celebrating a vigil are found in Appendix I of each volume of the

* When the extended vigil takes place between Vespers and Compline, pastoral judgment may be used regarding whether to include or omit the Invitatory Antiphon and Psalm.

Liturgy of the Hours and are arranged in three sections: Proper of Time, Proper of Saints, and Commons. The particular vigil being celebrated determines where the appropriate canticles and Gospel reading are to be found. Since the Proper of Saints only includes major solemnities and feasts, the requisite canticles and rubrics for most diocesan or parish patron saints will be drawn from the Commons (whether of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Apostles, Martyrs, or Holy Men and Women).

Once the canticles have been prayed, a Gospel reading follows. For the vigil of a Sunday, the breviary provides pericopes from a rotating series centered on the resurrection of Jesus or the events immediately afterward; a different cycle is given for the Sundays of Lent. On the vigil of a solemnity or feast, the Gospel is usually taken from one which is not read at Mass that year and drawn from the *Lectionary for Mass*. (For example, the Gospel for the vigil of a solemnity celebrated in Year B is taken from Year A or C in the *Lectionary*.) The rubrics in Appendix I provide instructions for other circumstances.

A priest or deacon may then preach a homily after the Gospel to help situate the psalmody, readings, and canticles of the vigil in the context of the celebration. The extended vigil concludes with the singing of the *Te Deum* – whether in Latin or in the vernacular (even perhaps using an approved poetic translation, such as the hymn “God, We Praise You”). The concluding prayer can be taken from the *Liturgy of the Hours* or from the new translation of the oration as it appears in the *Roman Missal*.

Various times of the year might provide good opportunities to celebrate an extended vigil. As mentioned above, Christmas is one of the great feasts that is particularly appropriate. “On Christmas Eve it is fitting that by means of the Office of Readings, a solemn vigil be celebrated before Mass” (GILH, no. 215). After a program of devotional Christmas carols, for example, a parish celebration of Christmas Eve could feature the Office of Readings with extended vigil, transitioning to the Mass by singing the *Gloria* instead of the *Te Deum*, and, omitting the Introductory Rites, proceeding to the Collect prayer and Lectionary readings of the Christmas Mass during the Night (cf. *Liturgy of the Hours*, vol. I, December 25, Office of Readings).

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12 presents another opportunity to celebrate such a vigil, as many parishes and Hispanic/Latino groups throughout the United States remain awake during the night praying for the Blessed Virgin Mary’s intercession. An extended Office of Readings – whether in English, in Spanish, or in a bilingual format – in the pre-dawn hours could be followed by the traditional *mañanitas* and conclude with a Mass at dawn.

Another appropriate application of the vigil would be on the night before the dedication of a new church or altar. Although the dedication solemnity begins earlier that evening with First Vespers, the *Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar* recommends the celebration of a vigil “in the presence of the relics of the Martyr or Saint that are to be deposited under the altar” (ch. II, no. 10; cf. ch. IV, no. 11). The canticles and Gospel reading found in the Common of the Dedication of a Church from Appendix I of the *Liturgy of the Hours* are used; instead of the concluding prayer options given, however, the Collect in the *Roman Missal* corresponding to the ritual Mass for the dedication of a church or an altar is used instead. Such an extended vigil in celebration of the new church or altar may be celebrated even if no relics are to be deposited.

Prayer at night, whether before bedtime or when roused before the first light of the day, helps keep one’s eyes fixed on God and his ever-present care. On the nights before the great feasts of the Church, the liturgy provides a beautiful way for the People of God to join together in prayer and praise “before the Lord, our maker. For he is our God and we are his people, the flock he shepherds” (Ps 95:6-7, Invitatory).

The Order of the Blessing of a Chalice and a Paten

Included in the *Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar* (ODCA) is “The Order of the Blessing of a Chalice and a Paten” (chapter VII). Blessings are an example of sacramentals, sacred signs that “signify effects,

particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 60). Sacramentals dispose the faithful “to receive the chief effects of the sacraments” and make holy “various occasions in life” (no. 60). The blessing of a chalice and paten is reserved to a priest according to the principle that “the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons)” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1669). The Introduction stipulates that the chalice and paten must conform to the norms given in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 327-332. It also allows for the adaptation of the texts if only a chalice or paten is to be blessed.

“The celebration of the Eucharist is the most important rite, and the only necessary one, for the dedication of a church” (ODCA, ch. II, no. 15). The Prayer of Dedication of a Church (chapter II) speaks eloquently of the centrality of the Eucharist. God is implored to send forth his “sanctifying power upon this church and upon this altar, to make this for ever a holy place with a table always prepared for the Sacrifice of Christ... Here may your faithful, gathered around the table of the altar, celebrate the memorial of the Paschal Mystery and be refreshed by the banquet of Christ's Word and his Body” (ODCA, ch. II, no. 62). Given the essential role of the Eucharist in the dedication of a church, it is very appropriate to include the “Order of the Blessing of a Chalice and a Paten” in the *Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar*.

The Introduction to the “Order of the Blessing of a Chalice and a Paten” notes that “the chalice and paten... are reserved exclusively and permanently for the celebration of the Eucharist, and so become ‘sacred vessels’” (ODCA, ch. VII, no. 1). This exclusive and permanent reservation “is made manifest before the community of the faithful by a special blessing which is appropriate to impart during Mass” (ODCA, ch. VII, no. 2). Although the preference, as indicated here, is to impart the blessing during Mass, the ODCA also provides an order of blessing to be used outside Mass within the celebration of the Word of God and with a different blessing formula.

Both orders of blessing (within and outside Mass) are in the *Book of Blessings* (nos. 1360-1387), and the order of blessing within Mass is also found in the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*. While the version in the *Book of Blessings* (1989) is an older translation and so differs from the translation in the ODCA and the *Roman Missal*, it may still be used. New to the ODCA are musical settings for Psalm 116 (115):10-19 and its accompanying antiphon based on verses 13 and 17. In both orders of blessing, the antiphon is recommended to accompany the priest’s movement to the altar after the chalice and paten are placed on it in preparation for the blessing. The antiphon with the psalm verses is recommended as the Offertory Chant for the blessing within Mass and as the Entrance Chant for the blessing outside Mass.

The blessing formulae for both orders have the same structure. They begin with a reference to the chalice and paten joyfully placed on the altar: “With joy, Lord God, we place on your altar this chalice and paten for the celebration of the sacrifice of the new covenant” (ch. VII, no. 11, blessing within Mass). They conclude with a petition for a fruitful reception of the Body and Blood of Christ: “may we who are renewed by your Sacraments on earth be filled with the divine Spirit, until we come to delight with the Saints in your banquet in the Kingdom of Heaven” (ch. VII, no. 21, blessing outside of Mass). They differ, though, in the conferral of the blessing itself. For the blessing within Mass, the chalice and paten are blessed when they receive the Body and Blood of Christ in that Mass: “may the Body and Blood of your Son, offered and received by means of these vessels, make them holy” (ch. VII, no. 11). However, since the chalice and paten that are blessed within the celebration of the Word of God will receive the Body and Blood of Christ at a subsequent Mass, the blessing formula asks, “May these vessels which, by the consent of your people, are intended for the celebration of the sacrifice of the new covenant, be made holy ✠ by your blessing” (ch. VII, no. 21).

The intercessions from the order of blessing outside Mass offer a prayerful catechesis on different aspects of the eucharistic mystery. The Priest of the Most High, “present yet hidden,” is petitioned to “grant that we may discern by faith what is veiled from our eyes.” The Good Shepherd is asked to “grant that we who are nourished by you may be transformed into you.” The Lamb of God is implored to “grant that the memorial of your Passion and Resurrection may be for all the faithful the summit and source of the spiritual life.” Finally, the Son of God is asked to “grant that we may draw from the mystery of the Eucharist a love for you and for all people” (ch. VII, no. 22).