



NewsLetter

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Administrative Assistant
Mr. David K. Ringwald
Administrative Assistant

**USCCB Secretariat of
Divine Worship**
3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel: (202) 541-3060
Fax: (202) 541-3088
www.USCCB.org

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USCCB Approves Three Liturgical Items at Plenary Meeting

The Latin Church bishops of the USCCB, at their November 2024 plenary meeting, approved three liturgical action items presented by the Committee on Divine Worship.

First, the “Gray Book” final translation of the *Order of Crowning an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, was approved 220-2 with one abstention. The diocesan bishop determines whether it is fitting to use this solemn rite for the Crowning of a particular image or statue of the Virgin Mary (and of the Lord Jesus Christ, if included in the same image/statue), and either he or another bishop or priest who are delegated by him is the celebrant. When a diocese receives permission from the Holy See to crown an image in the name of the Roman Pontiff, the indications of the Apostolic Brief are observed. Options for the crowning in the book include within Mass, during Vespers (Evening Prayer), or in a separate celebration of the Word of God. Simpler expressions of Marian piety, in which this solemn rite finds its origins, remain in various forms, for example, devotional May Crownings. These crownings are fittingly carried out by communities of the Christian faithful, though without using the texts of this ritual.

By a vote of 213-1 with nine abstentions, the bishops also approved a Spanish translation of the proper liturgical texts and adaptations for U.S. saints and blessed, intended for use alongside existing Spanish editions of the *Liturgia de las Horas*. While these texts, most of which are Second Readings for the Office of Readings, will appear in English in the forthcoming *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*, there is no U.S. Spanish edition of the *Liturgia de las Horas*. Thus, editions from Mexico, Spain, or other Spanish-speaking countries can be used in this country. The Spanish texts for proper celebrations such as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Damien de Veuster, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Independence Day, and others will be prepared as a fascicle to facilitate their use among Spanish-speaking Catholics in the United States.

Finally, bringing to completion a process that began in June 2012 (and introduced in the May-June 2012 *Newsletter*), a final revision of the *New American Bible* was approved 216-4 with three abstentions to serve as the liturgical Bible for use in the United States. The preparation of a liturgical Bible is a requirement given in the 2001 Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (cf. no. 36). Upon confirmation, the Scriptural texts can be used to prepare a new edition of the *Lectionary for Mass* and incorporated into other rituals.

The Liturgical Bible and two liturgical texts will be sent to the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the requisite confirmation.

November 2024 Meeting of the Committee on Divine Worship

The Committee on Divine Worship met in Baltimore, Maryland on November 10, 2024. Following the customary reports on liturgical updates and activities, the members processed the modifications to the Committee's two amendable action items for the November 2024 USCCB plenary meeting: the *Order of Crowning an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary* and the U.S. proper texts and adaptations for the Spanish-language *Liturgia de las Horas*.

Much of the meeting was devoted to the future edition of the *Lectionary for Mass*. First, the Committee reviewed and approved the Psalm responses for volume I of the *Lectionary*, which were drawn from the *Abbey Psalms and Canticles* translation. Members and consultants then discussed a plan to phase out the current Responsorial Psalm texts after the *Lectionary* takes effect. In general, once the new *Lectionary* is confirmed, the USCCB will no longer license the use of the current translation to produce musical settings of the Responsorial Psalms, and existing compositions must either be updated to the new text or otherwise no longer be used or marketed as Responsorial Psalms. Further information will be provided to music publishers and others as appropriate in the future.

Other items included the approval of publication plans for the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*, a review of the draft *Compendium on the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and approval of a proposal from the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions to collaborate in the updating of the Committee's 2004 resource on Eucharistic Adoration.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for June 15, 2025 in San Diego, California.

Bishop Michael G. Woost Elected Next Committee Chairman

At the November 2024 USCCB plenary meeting, Cleveland Auxiliary Bishop Michael G. Woost was elected the next Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship, for a term beginning November 13, 2025 to November 16, 2028. He was elected over Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of Portland in Oregon by a vote of 128-112. Bishop Woost, a current member of the Committee, now becomes Chairman-Elect and will appoint members and consultants to join the Committee when his term begins next year.

Bishop Woost is a native of Cleveland and was ordained a priest for that diocese in 1984. After pastoral and vocational ministry, he earned a Licentiate in Sacred Theology and joined the faculty at St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology in Wickliffe, Ohio in 2000, where he still teaches sacramental-liturgical theology. In August 2022, he was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland and joined as a Committee member that November.

Archbishop Leonard P. Blair Steps Down as Committee Consultant; Abbot Gregory J. Polan Completes Term as Benedictine Abbot Primate

Hartford Archbishop Emeritus Leonard P. Blair retired as the U.S. bishop-member to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), as was announced in the September 2024 *Newsletter*. He has now stepped down as a consultant to the Committee on Divine Worship, as his position was partially based on his role with ICEL. Archbishop Blair was a Committee member from 2013-2016 and served as its Chairman from 2019-2022.

Abbot Gregory J. Polan, OSB completed his term as the tenth Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation on September 14, 2024, having been elected eight years earlier, and has returned to his original community at Conception Abbey, Missouri. Abbot Polan has served as a consultant to the Committee on Divine Worship since 2013 and is the principal editor of both the *Revised Grail Psalms* and its current liturgical successor, the *Abbey Psalms and Canticles*. He is also a skilled musician, linguist, and Scripture scholar.

The Committee on Divine Worship and its Secretariat salute Archbishop Blair and Abbot Polan for their many years of dedicated love and service of the liturgy in our country and throughout the English-speaking world.

Implementing the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*: Order of Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age

With the publication of the revised edition of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) in English and Spanish, the Newsletter continues the series exploring this ritual, in particular, what is new and which aspects are in need of renewal in pastoral practice over the last forty years. This fourth article explores the rites of Chapter II: the Order of Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age.

While the grace of Christian Initiation is singular, the rites by which Initiation is conferred in the Roman Catholic Church differ depending upon one's condition and circumstances. Chapter I contains rites for those fourteen years of age and older who have attained the use of reason and are in ordinary circumstances.¹ Chapters II through VI contain rites for those who have attained the use of reason but whose circumstances differ or who have not yet completed the fourteenth year: unbaptized children of catechetical age, unbaptized adults for whom a lengthier preparation is not appropriate (the Simpler Order or Shorter Order in Danger of Death), Catholics baptized as infants but who are uncatechized, and validly baptized Christians entering the full communion of the Catholic Church.

The Celebration of Initiation and the Use of Reason

Those who have *not* attained the use of reason – a use which is presumed “with the completion of the seventh year,” i.e., on the seventh birthday (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 97 §2) – are initiated using the *Order of Baptism of Children*. In these cases, since infants have not yet reached the age of discretion and catechesis, it is the parents and godparents who are prepared so that they may understand the sacrament of Baptism and its attendant obligations (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 851, 2). For those who have attained the use of reason but not yet completed the fourteenth year, the rites of Chapter II are used, “Order of Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age.” While the rites differ from those of Chapter I, “the prescripts of the canons on adult baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 852 §1). Among other things, this norm requires that children of catechetical age receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist in a continuous rite within the Eucharistic Celebration unless “there is a grave reason to the contrary” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 866), for example, a lack of Chrism, of a proper minister of Confirmation, or of the time and materials needed for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Manner and Length of Preparation for Children of Catechetical Age

While the *manner* of preparation of children of catechetical age for the sacraments of Initiation differs in some respects from adults (cf. OCIA, nos. 252 and 253), the *length* of preparation corresponds to that of adult Initiation: “As with adults, therefore, their Initiation is also extended over some years, if necessary, before they may approach the Sacraments” (no. 253). Norm Four of the *National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults* further specifies the length of this period, a norm which applies not only to those 14 and older but also to children of catechetical age (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 852 §1). This time of preparation includes periods and steps which correspond to those of adult Initiation – with one exception. While the second step in the Initiation of adults is always the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names, the second step in the Initiation of children varies. In the Latin *editio typica*, the Scrutinies or Penitential Rites are the sole second step for children. Nevertheless, the approved U.S. edition provides an optional Rite of Election, which, when it occurs, constitutes the second step (cf. OCIA, no. 256). In renewing pastoral practice in this country, it is important to underline that all rites within this Order for children – with the exception of Election – are obligatory. To neglect them is to withhold certain treasures of the Church from these children, for example, the obligations and prerogatives they receive through Entrance into the Catechumenate.

¹ While the ritual text does not explicitly demarcate an age at which the transition is made from being a child of catechetical age to an adult, other sources show the age of fourteen to be a reasonable estimate. For example: “The baptism of adults, at least of those who have completed their fourteenth year, is to be deferred to the diocesan bishop so that he himself administers it if he has judged it expedient” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 863).

Non-Normative Celebrations of the Initiation of Children

In addition to the omission of obligatory rites, it is important to address and work to remediate other forms of celebration that depart from canonical and liturgical norms. First, there are times when the *Order of Baptism of Children* – an Order for use with children who have *not* attained the use of reason – is inappropriately used for children of catechetical age who *have* attained the use of reason. Older children who are capable of assenting to the mysteries of the faith are not given the opportunity to do so and treated by ministers as if they were still infants, since only the parents and godparents make the profession of faith on the children’s behalf. While illicit celebrations of this kind are not necessarily invalid, there are instances where they may be, for example, if an older child is baptized despite his or her personal wishes to the contrary. The surest way to confer valid sacraments is to observe the ritual form of Christian Initiation handed down by the Church.

Second, the sacraments of Initiation are sometimes conferred immediately upon children of catechetical age or after extremely abbreviated periods of formation. While infants are to be baptized “in the first few weeks” after birth (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 867 §1), the norms for the Initiation of adults – which apply to children of catechetical age – differ. These children are capable of a “personal conversion of a maturity suitable to their age” and a “spiritual journey” (OCIA, no. 253); therefore, their formation is rightly “extended over some years, if necessary” (no. 253; cf. *National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults*, Norm 4). This formation disposes the children to receive the grace of the sacraments fruitfully and equips them to live the obligations which they incur through Christian Initiation. Sometimes, the immediate celebration of Baptism for children of catechetical age is well-intentioned, namely, to assure these children of the grace of salvation which comes from the sacrament. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that: “For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1259). When the children show the first signs of faith and the beginnings of repentance, they are to be received into the Order of Catechumens without delay, but their preparation for the sacraments of Initiation should be of an appropriate length, one which does not jeopardize their entrance into eternal life.

Finally, despite canonical and liturgical norms, the sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist are frequently separated from the Baptism of children of catechetical age. According to the *Code of Canon Law*, “The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Most Holy Eucharist are interrelated in such a way that they are required for full Christian initiation” (canon 842 §2). Because of this theological truth, unbaptized persons who have obtained the use of reason are to receive Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist in a continuous rite in the Eucharistic Celebration “unless there is a grave reason to the contrary” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 866), some of which were noted above. Elsewhere, the Code describes certain rights to the sacraments and the duties of pastors to administer them:

- “The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 213);
- “Sacred ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 843 §1);
- “A presbyter who possesses this faculty [to confirm] must use it for the sake of those in whose favor the faculty was granted” (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 885 §2).

When Confirmation and the Eucharist are separated from the Baptism of those who have attained the use of reason, ministers fail to respect the right of the neophyte to the other sacraments of Initiation, neglect their duty to administer the sacraments, and deny the faithful sacramental grace which they need to live the Christian life. This approach to Christian Initiation also diminishes the primacy of Baptism, making it seem like greater maturity and readiness is required for Confirmation and/or the Eucharist. A child suitably prepared to be baptized is, by definition, mature enough to be confirmed and receive the Eucharist. As with the immediate conferral of Baptism, this approach is also frequently motivated by good intentions, namely, to ensure that these children become deeply rooted in the faith and life of the Church. Nevertheless, as canonist John M. Huels notes, “It must be stressed that it is not a sufficiently serious reason to delay confirmation merely to allow children to have more catechesis for confirmation or to enable them to be confirmed with older classmates.”²

² *The Catechumenate and the Law: A Pastoral and Canonical Commentary for the Church in the United States* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 34.