

Rite of Entrance (formerly Acceptance) into the Order of Catechumens [Adapted for Children]

Receiving the Children

The deacon, wearing an alb with stole, comes to the place where the children are waiting with their parents (or guardians or sponsors), either in the church or parish hall. They should wait near the entrance to the church.

Greeting

The deacon greets the children and community in a friendly manner. He then speaks to the children/parents (sponsors), pointing out the joy and happiness of the Church that they are present here. Next, he invites the children to come forward and stand before him.

Opening Dialogue

The deacon asks the children individually to express their intention.

Deacon: **[Child's name], what do you want to become?**

Children: A Christian

Deacon: **Why do you want to become a Christian?**

Children: Because I believe in Christ.

Deacon: **What do you gain by believing in Christ?**

Children: Eternal life.

The deacon gives a short catechesis, in words similar to these:

Deacon: Since you already believe in Christ and want us to prepare you for baptism, we welcome you joyfully into our Christian family, where you will come to know Christ better day by day. Together with us you will try to live as children of God, for our Lord has taught us: “Love God with all your heart and love one another as I have loved you.”

Affirmation by the Parents and Assembly

Deacon: Children, go and ask your parents to come here and stand with you so that they may give their permission (assent).

The children get their parents and bring them to the deacon.

Deacon: Dear parents (sponsors), your children have asked to be prepared for baptism. Do you agree to their request?

Parents (Sponsors): We do.

Deacon: Are you willing to do your part in their preparation for baptism?

Parents (Sponsors): We are.

The celebrant then questions those assembled.

Deacon: These boys and girls (children) have set out on the road to baptism. They will need the support of our faith and love. Are you, their families and friends, ready to give that help?

All: We are.

Signing of the Candidates with the Cross

Next the cross is traced on the forehead of each child, and especially if the children are somewhat older, the signing of the other senses may follow. The deacon alone says the formularies accompanying each signing.

Signing of the Forehead:

Deacon: (**Call each child by name**), Christ has called you to be his friends. Always remember him and be faithful to him.

Therefore, I mark your forehead with the sign of the cross. It is the sign of Christians; let it remind you always of Christ and how much he loves you.

Then the deacon goes to each child and in silence traces the cross on the forehead of each child.

He then invites the parents (sponsors) to trace the sign of the cross on their child's forehead.

Deacon: I also invite you, parents and our catechist, since you belong to Christ, to sign the children with the sign of the cross.

All sing or say the following or another suitable acclamation.

All: Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Signing of the Other Senses

The signing of the children may be carried out by their parents, as the deacon says the formulary in the plural over all the children at once.

[Optional: After the signing of each sense the assembly may sing or recite an acclamation in praise of Christ, for example, “Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!”]

While the ears are being signed the deacon says:

We mark your ears with the sign of the cross: hear the words of Christ.

While the eyes are being signed:

We mark your eyes with the sign of the cross: see the works of Christ.

While the lips are being signed:

We mark your lips with the sign of the cross: speak as Christ would speak.

While the heart is being signed:

We mark the sign of the cross over your heart: make your heart the home of Christ.

While the shoulders are being signed:

We mark your shoulders with the sign of the cross: be strong with the strength of Christ.

While the hands are being signed:

We mark your hands with the sign of the cross: touch others with the gentleness of Christ.

While the feet are being signed:

We mark your feet with the sign of the cross; walk in the way of Christ.

While the sign of the cross is traced above the whole group of children:

We place you entirely under the sign of Christ's cross in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: live with Jesus now and forever.

Children: Amen.

Invitation to the Celebration of the Word of God

After the signing, the deacon invites the children and their parents (sponsors) to enter the church or other place chosen for the celebration. The children enter and take their places with their parents (sponsors) [or with the baptized companions of their catechetical group], so that it is clear they are now part of the assembly. A song may be sung as the children enter.

Deacon: Now you can take your place in the Christian assembly. Come with us to listen to the Lord as he speaks and to join us in prayer.

Liturgy of the Word

Instruction

With the children in their places, the deacon speaks to them briefly, helping them to understand the dignity of God's word, which is proclaimed and heard in the Christian assembly. The Lectionary or the Bible is carried in procession and placed with honor on the ambo (or lectern if other than the church). Celebration of the liturgy of the word follows.

Readings

First Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

Catechist: A reading from the First Letter of John

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23

Catechist:

The responsorial Psalm is, The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

**In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside still waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.**

Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.**

**Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side,
with your rod and your staff
that give me courage.**

Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.**

Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for years to come.**

Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Deacon:

Gospel: John 10:11-15

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

The Gospel of the Lord

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Homily: (we will skip this part for the demonstration)

Intercessions for the Children

Deacon: Let us pray for these children, your sons and daughters, your companions and friends, as they draw nearer to God.

Catechist: That they may steadily increase their desire to live with Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Catechist: That by belonging to the Church they may find true happiness, let us pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Catechist: That they may be given the strength to persevere in their preparation for baptism, let us pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Catechist: That they may be preserved from the temptation of discouragement and fear, let us pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Catechist: That they may rejoice in the happiness of receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist, let us pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Prayer over the Children

Deacon:

Lord,

You have filled these children

with the desire to become perfect Christians.

As they grow in wisdom and knowledge,

respond to their hopes

and answer our prayers.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Dismissal

After the prayer, the children and community are dismissed. A suitable song concludes the celebration.

Deacon: Go in peace, and may the Lord remain with you always.

All: Thanks be to God.

All sing: *Now Thank We All Our God*