

LITURGY CORNER: Why do we do that?

PART 4: Dismissing candidates of RCIA

RCIA stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is a process of forming Christians or, for the uncatechized baptized person, deepening a relationship with Christ. It is a process to convert a non-believer into a believer and disciple of Jesus. The rites are arranged toward bringing the unbaptized through one period of conversion after another leading to their Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. While it is true that presently the Church has combined rites for marking the journey of both the unbaptized and those from another faith tradition, most rites are intended for the unbaptized.

Should baptized Christians seeking communion with the Catholic Church be dismissed from Mass while preparing for the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist? At St. Hubert, why are you not seeing those who went through the Rite of Acceptance and Welcome this spring being dismissed from Mass after the homily?

The Rite makes it clear that the baptized have status as full members of the worshipping assembly. Our creed confesses “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins,” and all we do in the RCIA must honor this belief. We acknowledge that a person who was baptized in another Christian faith tradition already has a relationship with Jesus, and may be a hymn-singing, church-going, catechized individual. In these situations, a suitable catechesis on Catholic teachings and beliefs is all that is required and sufficient to those who wish to become a Catholic.

So, how does all this weigh on our decision regarding the dismissal of candidates at Mass? Those already baptized have a rightful place at Mass and are not in need of lengthy catechesis or profound conversion. At dismissal the unbaptized catechumens gather to break open the Word of God to learn how God has acted throughout history, to meet the person of Jesus, to be altered by the gospel, and figure out what it means for them to be a disciple.

Our candidates this year (those already baptized) though they may benefit from this experience, are simply not in the same place spiritually or lacking in catechesis. The purpose of the dismissal rite is not appropriate to their place on the journey toward full communion.

The Parish Liturgy Board