

Adult Confirmation Program or the RCIA?

Archdiocese of New York

As you know, as stated in both the *Code of Canon Law* and in the 1988 *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, priests have the faculty and the obligation to administer the sacrament of Confirmation to all the adults and children of catechetical age (seven or older) they baptize or receive into full communion with the Church.

As well, since 1988, the Ordinaries of the Archdiocese of New York, through the Office of the Vicar General, have granted to our pastors, administrators, and any priest subdelegated by their pastor or administrator the faculty to administer the sacrament of Confirmation to baptized Catholics who are seeking the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion and are enrolled in the Catechumenate (RCIA).

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in part 2, Chapter 4, directs us to offer preparation to uncatechized baptized adults seeking Confirmation and Eucharist. (See **RCIA 400 – 410**)

Our understanding has been that baptized Catholic adults who have **not** made their first holy communion and Confirmation are uncatechized and are so like the unbaptized in their catechetical status that the RCIA permits them to participate in most of the Catechumenate process of formation outlined in RCIA Part 1. They are called candidates, not catechumens. When the baptized Catholic candidates are ready, faculty is granted to our priests to administer the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist on any day during the Easter season.

On the other hand, baptized Catholic adults or teenagers who have already made their first holy communion and are seeking preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation do not belong in the Catechumenate (RCIA). They are to be enrolled in a preparation program for the reception of Confirmation in which they receive an appropriate catechesis and are confirmed by a bishop. Faculty is not granted to our priests to administer the sacrament of Confirmation.

Although these adults may have received only a rudimentary catechesis during the Catholic upbringing, they are nonetheless different for the “*Baptized but Uncatechized Adults*” who have received no Christian formation.

Because of the variety of ages at which the sacrament of Confirmation is administered in the Church at present, and because of the mobility of our society, an increasing number of young Catholics “fall through the cracks” of the sacramental system and reach adulthood without having been confirmed. Their lack of Confirmation frequently goes unnoticed until they prepare for marriage or are asked to serve as a godparent.

When large numbers of unconfirmed Catholics are introduced into the Catechumenate (RCIA), they alter the focus of the process and create time pressures that are not appropriate for catechumens and uncatechized candidates. What usually happens is that the parish Catechumenate process turns into an adult Confirmation program, which is not sufficient pastoral formation for most of our catechumens or uncatechized candidates.

Currently, more and more parishes are beginning to offer both the Catechumenate (RCIA) and an adult Confirmation program. As well, with pastor's permission, adult Catholics whose parish does not offer an adult confirmation program can enroll in the Archdiocesan Adult Confirmation Program.

The norms described here are general expectations of the Archdiocese of New York. Individual cases may arise in which a pastoral decision to include in a Catechumenate process someone who has already made their first holy communion may be the best solution available at the time. Pastors and Administrators should use their judgment in such special cases, keeping in mind the general concerns outlined here. With a special case as this, a request for delegation to administer the sacrament of Confirmation needs to be presented to the Office of the Vicar General.