

“What about the Easter Vigil”

The Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist normally are conferred at the Easter Vigil. The Easter Vigil must be a worthy celebration in every way, especially in its full and lavish use of symbol, both in the celebration of the sacraments themselves, and in the preceding services of light and word. A generous use of water is especially important. Baptism by immersion is preferred as “the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament” (National Statutes no. 17), and should be encouraged.

The elect do not carry lighted tapers as the baptized do during the service of light, because Christ in Baptism has not yet enlightened them. The candidates however do carry lighted tapers, because they are baptized. After the elect are baptized, they may be clothed in a baptismal garment. Traditionally, this is a simple, white, flowing garment that clothes the whole person. The alb is a baptismal garment. Full-length, poncho-like garments are sometimes used. The baptismal garment should not be decorated with "symbols." It is itself the symbol, and anything added to it will detract from its effectiveness. Stoles are not baptismal garments. If the newly baptized are to receive a baptismal garment, it is appropriate that the candidates who will complete their Christian initiation at that celebration (but have already "put on Christ" in their Baptism) be clothed in such garments from the beginning of the liturgy.

Priests who exercise a pastoral office in the Archdiocese of New York are automatically granted faculties by the Archbishop to baptize adults and children of catechetical age, and they receive from the law the faculty to confirm them (Canon 883.2).

When the elect are baptized, the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist must be conferred immediately thereafter, unless a grave reason prevents it (canon 866, cf. RCIA no. 215, NCCB Statutes no. 14). The absence of a bishop does not constitute a grave reason (cf. NCCB Statutes no. 13-14); nor does the personal preference of the celebrant or candidate for Baptism. A grave reason may arise in emergency situations or missionary situations where the minister of Baptism is a deacon, or the oil of chrism is not available.

It is not permissible at one celebration for one priest to baptize and another to confirm. The faculty to confirm is only granted to the one who baptizes. For the same reason, it is not permissible for a deacon to baptize and a priest to confirm. If there are a large number to be confirmed, the presiding minister may invite other priests to assist him in the anointing (RCIA no. 14). When an ordinary minister of Baptism is available, a layperson is not authorized to baptize. Nor is it appropriate for anyone except the baptizing minister to question the catechumen for the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith prior to Baptism.

Priests who exercise a pastoral office in the Archdiocese of New York are automatically granted faculties by the Archbishop to receive into the full communion of the Catholic Church adults and children of catechetical age, and they receive from the law the faculty to confirm them (Canon 883.2). Those who have the faculty to confirm are bound to exercise it (Canon 885.2; see also NCCB Statutes no. 35).

In the Archdiocese of New York, the faculty to confirm those candidates in the catechumenate who were baptized as Catholics and who have not celebrated Confirmation and Eucharist has been given to pastors, administrators, and to any priest that a pastor or administrator sub-delegates, under the following conditions:

- to be used only for baptized Catholics who have fully participated in the process and catechesis of the 1988 Rite of Christian Initiation,
- when the celebration of Confirmation takes place during a Eucharistic Liturgy either at the Easter Vigil, or at celebrations held during the Octave of Easter, or during the Saturday of or at the Vigil of Pentecost, or on Pentecost Sunday.

If any of these conditions are not met, then the faculty to confirm must be specifically requested from the Vicar General. Since questions of validity may arise when the Sacrament of Confirmation is administered by a priest, (Canon 882), a notation should be made in the Parish Confirmation Register that the faculty to confirm under the above-listed conditions is expressly delegated, i.e., "*delegatus.*"

The neophytes and the other newly initiated may take up the gifts at the preparation of the altar. Communion should be offered under both forms.