

SEGMENT ELEVEN

**THEME: SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION –
BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION AND EUCHARIST**

OPENING PRAYER / SCRIPTURE READING:

Matthew 3: 13-17

John 3: 5

Romans 6: 1-11

INSTRUCTORS' SUMMARY STATEMENTS:

From the first moments of Christianity new members were received into the Christian community through sacramental rites of initiation. The *catechumenate*, developed by early Christians during the first four centuries of the Church's existence, was an extensive educational, spiritual and liturgical journey of initiation. The RCIA is a recent recovery of the ancient *catechumenate* that culminates in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist were the sacramental rites through which new members – infants, children and adults – were initiated into a new life of faith, hope and love of Christ as members of His body, the Church. Continuing the ancient tradition of initiation today new members are welcomed into the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Christian initiation.

The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist – are the *foundations* of every Christian life. Through the sacraments of initiation the faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.

By means of the sacraments of Christian initiation, we receive the unique graces that come with being in communion with God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacraments of initiation fully incorporate us into the Body of Christ, the Church.

- ❖ From the time of the apostles initiation into the Christian community took place through a journey of conversion in several stages. The *catechumenate* that was developed to initiate new members into the Church culminated at the Easter Vigil when the catechumens received the sacraments of initiation (CCC, 1229 – 1233)
- ❖ Baptism as the sacrament of faith is the basis of the whole Christian life. Through baptism we are freed from the effects of Original Sin and reborn as children of God through water and the Spirit; we become members of Christ's Body, the Church. (CCC, 1262 – 1271).
- ❖ Baptism is necessary for salvation as affirmed by Jesus, “no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being begotten of water and the Spirit.” (John 3: 5) Jesus also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28: 19-20)
- ❖ The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To baptize means to “immerse” or “plunge” into the water symbolizing the catechumens' burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as a “new creature.” (CCC, 1214). The sign of the cross, the baptismal water, the anointing with sacred chrism, the white garment and candle all signify the baptismal graces (1234 – 1245)
- ❖ “Incorporated into Christ by Baptism we are configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with an indelible spiritual mark of his belonging to Christ...Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated (CCC, 1272 – 1274)
- ❖ The sacrament of Confirmation is a spiritual seal of the Holy Spirit that completes the sacramental graces received in Baptism. The effect of Confirmation is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it was given to the apostles at Pentecost. (CCC, (1302 – 1305)
- ❖ Confirmation gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ. (CCC, 1303)
- ❖ The essential rite of Confirmation consists of anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of hands, and through the words, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. (CCC1299 – 1300; 1312 – 1314)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions may be used by RCIA teams to guide large or small group discussion during weekly RCIA meetings. They may also be given to the participants as a basis for personal reflection during the week.

1. How can you prepare spiritually for the sacraments of initiation?
2. What role does faith play in baptism? (CCC, 1253 – 1255)
3. Discuss the meaning of the sacramental symbols and rites of Baptism and Confirmation. (CCC, 1234 – 1245; CCC1297 – 1301)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES/QUOTATIONS:

Matthew 3:13; 28: 19-20

John 3:5; 20: 22-23

Acts 2: 1-12; 38

Romans 6: 3-4

Galatians 6:15; 3: 27

2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 2:12

“It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe...the catechumen or godparent is asked: “What do you ask of God’s Church?” The response is “Faith!” (CCC, 1253)

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” Romans 6:3-4

“All powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters from sin
and gave them new life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon them
To be their helper and guide,
Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of right judgment and courage,
The spirit of knowledge and reverence
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.” *Rite of Confirmation*, 25

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Universal Catechism, “The Sacraments of Initiation,” Articles 1212 - 1321

Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 64 –
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CLOSING PRAYER

Acts 2: 32-38