The Rite of Acceptance / The Rite of Welcoming

Basic Definitions:

Catechumen: A non-baptized individual who has made the decision to be baptized and enter the Church.

Candidate: Previously baptized individual who seeks full communion with the Roman Catholic Church through the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

Catechumenate: The stage where those who have decided to enter the Church are being trained for a life in Christ.

In the Rite of Acceptance there is a change in identity where those previously known as inquirers become catechumens and candidates. The Church will officially welcome the catechumens and candidates as disciples, members (albeit not yet full members) of the household of faith.

This rite is the “first consecration by the Church” for those seeking Christian initiation. You will literally be marked with the cross of Christ as God’s own.

Before the Rite of Acceptance, it is crucial that there has been a sufficient period for each inquirer, and that discernment has taken place to ready one for this step. Each individual needs to move along this journey at his/her own speed. This cannot and should not be rushed. When you feel you are ready to move forward... it is time.
Criteria for Readiness:
- Evidence of first faith
- Intention to change your lives and enter into a relationship with Christ
- Evidence of the first stirrings of repentance
- A Start to calling upon God in prayer
- A sense of Church
- Some experience of the company and spirit of Christians

The Rite of Acceptance/Welcome symbolizes your decision to move forward on your journey as a catechumen (not baptized) or candidate (previously baptized).

The choice to go on marks your “Exodus” from the Stage of Inquiry into a new way of life. This new life will be an answer to God’s earlier call to follow Him.

You will now be a part of this community of the faithful, the family of God, for He has called you by name.

You may be wondering why all the pomp and circumstance to become a member of the Church, but it is a necessary part of your initiation process. This has been a part of the Church since the early days when the Christians were persecuted for their faith.

As a community of faithful we accept you into our midst and help you to follow in the footsteps of Christ. This welcoming and acceptance occurs through your sponsors, representatives of our faith community, who speak for all of us when they come before the assembled people of God.
During this Rite you will be marked with the cross, the sign of Christ’s love for us. You will also be asked to “embrace the Word of God”.

This action has a twofold meaning:
- First is that you will “embrace” God’s word in the scriptures and make this your way of life from now on.
- Secondly, it means that you are “embracing Jesus Christ”.

During this rite you will express your intent to respond to God’s call to follow the way of Christ and the Church accepts your intention.

The full name of the combined rite of acceptance and welcome is:
- Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens
- Rite of Welcoming Baptized But Previously Uncatechized Adults Who are Preparing for Confirmation and/Or Eucharist

Summary of the Rite

The Rite begins following the Opening Prayer

I will call you each by name, first the Catechumens, then the Candidates
When your name is called please stand
When all are standing you will come forward to the altar
As you face the altar, catechumens will be to the right and candidates to the left
The Rite will be celebrated as you stand before the altar
You will be seated for the Liturgy of the Word and the Homily
Following the Homily you all be asked to stand for a final blessing and dismissal

**Greeting**

Greeting

Dear friends, today the Church joyfully welcomes those who will be received into the order of catechumens. Since September they have been exposed to the truths and beliefs of our Catholic faith and over the next several months they will continue to prepare for their initiation into the Christian faith by Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

We also greet those who, already one with us by baptism, now wish to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

For all of these, we give thanks and praise to the God who has led them by various paths to oneness in faith. My dear catechumen and candidates, you are welcomed in the name of Christ.

*Opening Dialogue with Candidates for the Catechumenate*

Celebrant: What do you ask of God’s Church?
*Catechumen: Faith*

Celebrant: What does faith offer you?
*Catechumen: Eternal life*

*Opening Dialogue with Candidates for Post-Baptismal Catechesis*
Celebrant: What do you ask of God’s Church?  
Candidate: To be accepted as a candidate for catechetical instruction leading to Confirmation and Eucharist.

Celebrant: What does this period of formation offer you?  
Candidate: A fuller sharing in the life of the Church.

**Catechumen’s First Acceptance of the Gospel**

God is our Creator and in him all living things have their existence. He enlightens our minds, so that we may come to know and worship him. He has sent his faithful witness, Jesus Christ, to announce to us what he has seen and heard, the mysteries of heaven and earth.

Since you acknowledge with joy that Christ has come, now is the time to hear his word, so that you may possess eternal life by beginning, in our company, to know God and to love your neighbor.

Are you ready, with the help of God, to live this life?  
Catechumen: I am.

**Candidates Declaration of Intent**

Those of you who seek to complete your Christian initiation, are you prepared to listen to the apostles’ instruction, gather with us for prayer, and join us in the love and service of others?

Candidates: I am
Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly

Celebrant: Sponsors, you now present these candidates to us; are you, and all who are gathered with us, ready to help these candidates find and follow Christ?

All: We are

Celebrant: Father of Mercy, we thank you for these your servants. You have sought and summoned them in many ways and they have turned to seek you. You have called them today and they have answered in our presence:

We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.
All say: We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.

Signing of the Catechumens with the Cross

Signing of the Forehead

Celebrant: Catechumens, receive the sign of your new way of life as catechumens.

Receive the cross on your forehead. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know him and follow him.

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

Signing of the Candidates with the Cross
Celebrant: Candidates for Confirmation and the Eucharist, Receive the cross on your forehead as a reminder of your baptism into Christ’s saving death and resurrection.

**All say: Glory and Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

**Concluding Prayer**

Let us pray,
Almighty God, by the cross and resurrection of your Son you have given life to your people.
Your servants have received the sign of the cross: make them living proof of its saving power and help them to persevere in the footsteps of Christ.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen

Following the Concluding prayer you will be given a Bible and Cross
- The Bible symbolizes your intent to embrace the Word of God
- The Cross symbolizes your commitment to follow the way of Christ

Following the Homily will be the Final Prayer over the Catechumens and Candidates

You will be asked to stand along with your sponsors

    Almighty God, source of all creation, you have made us in your image.
Receive with love those who come before you. Lead our catechumens to the baptism of new birth, and our candidates to a deeper share in the paschal mystery, so that, living a fruitful life in the company of your faithful, they may receive the eternal reward that you promise. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen

Dismissal of the Catechumens

Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord’s Eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God’s children will eat and drink with the Lord and work with his spirit to recreate the face of the earth.

Response: Thanks be to God