RCIA: Common Canonical Questions

I Baptismal Validity

Before beginning the RCIA process, it is important to determine whether the inquirer has been baptised. The baptismal status of the inquirer will inform the ritual process that the person will follow in becoming Catholic.

Non-Baptized Persons

The Code of Canon law presumes that someone who identifies as a Christian is baptized. However, some denominations delay baptism so it is possible to encounter someone who calls themselves Christian but is not baptised.

Baptized Christians

Eastern Churches (Orthodox)

There is no question about the validity of these baptisms. It is sufficient to establish that the baptism occurred.

Other Christian Denominations

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has prepared a list of ecclesial communities/churches that indicates whether the baptism is to be considered valid, invalid, or questionable (either not uniform or not regulated).

https://catholicottawa.ca/documents/2015/10/Baptism_Guidelines_web.pdf

Questionable Circumstances

Concerning valid baptisms, further inquiry should be made only if there are serious reasons for doubting that the minister followed the regulations of his or her own Church or Community. If this occurs, refer the case to the Chancellor of the Diocese of Calgary.

If the baptism falls under the category of "questionable", you must refer the case to the Chancellor of the Bishop of Calgary for investigation.

Absence of the Certificate of Baptism

In the absence of a certificate of baptism, refer the case to the Chancellor of the Diocese of Calgary. The individual may be eligible to go through the affidavit process.

II Marriage, Divorce, and Validation of Marriage

Divorced Individuals

If your inquirer has ever been divorced, refer that individual to the pastor or person responsible for marriage issues in your parish. It is important to make this referral at the beginning of the process. You want to be sure there is ample time for any marriage issues to be regularized before the person is ready to be initiated. Marriage law is complex. You should refrain from giving the individual information about marriage law as different processes apply in different circumstances. Your Pastor or designate will submit the necessary documentation to the appropriate diocesan office, which will provide the individual with accurate information for their situation.

Validation of Marriage

Although there is a blessing as part of the Catholic marriage rite, the term "blessing" should not be used in relation to validation of invalid marriages.

Catholic(s)

Validation of marriage only applies in the case of someone, who was a Catholic at the time of the marriage, who married outside of the Catholic church without receiving the proper dispensations.

Non-Catholics

A first marriage between two non-Catholics is presumed to be valid. Such a marriage does not need to be validated because the parties were not obliged to follow the laws of the Catholic Church at the time of the marriage. However, if a Christian of another denomination did not follow the marriage laws of their own denomination, the case should be referred to the chancery to check for validity.

III Confirmation

Eastern Christians/Orthodox

When Eastern Christians become Catholic they should make the Profession of Faith only. They have already received the sacrament of Confirmation validly with their baptism.

Other Christians

Validly baptised Christians from other denominations must receive the sacrament of Confirmation as part of their reception into the Catholic Church (RCIA no. 441 -448). Although their baptism may be valid, any "confirmation" given in these communities is not.

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