

Blessings (catechumens and candidates)

Anointings (catechumens only)

In general, blessings in the period of the catechumenate are given in the same context as described for minor exorcism, that is, at the conclusion of a Liturgy of the Word (RCIA 96) by a priest or deacon. Blessings within the catechumenate “are a sign of God’s love and of the Church’s tender care [which] are bestowed on the catechumens so that, even though they have not yet received the grace of the sacraments, they may still receive from the Church courage, joy, and peace as they proceed along the journey they have begun” (RCIA 95).

Although the ritual book does not include them, blessings within the period of the catechumenate are also appropriate for candidates. The blessings for catechumens (RCIA 97 A – I) can be adapted for those already baptized. As with minor exorcisms, when catechumens and candidates receive these blessings, each group must be called forward and prayed over separately. For example:

Prayers of Blessing (catechumens)

97 The celebrant, with hands outstretched over the catechumens, says one of the following prayers. After the prayer of blessing, if this can be done conveniently, the catechumens come before the celebrant, who lays hands on them individually. Then the catechumens leave.

A. Let us pray.

Lord,
form these catechumens by the mysteries of the faith,
that they may be brought to rebirth in baptism
and be counted among the members of your Church.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(blessing for candidates – an example)

Let us pray.

Lord,
continue to form these candidates by the mysteries of the faith,
that they may come to the table of the Lord and the anointing of the Holy Spirit
and complete their initiation in your Church.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

During the catechumenate, the Church also offers the unbaptized a Rite of Anointing of the Catechumens (RCIA 98 – 103). It may be celebrated “whenever this seems beneficial or desirable” (RCIA 98). Since it specifically calls for using the Oil of Catechumens, this rite is only for catechumens, since the Oil “symbolizes their need for God’s help and strength so that, undeterred by the bonds of the past ... they will forthrightly take the step of professing their faith and will hold fast to it unfalteringly throughout their lives.” (RCIA 99).

Only a priest or deacon may anoint catechumens (see RCIA 98), and such anointings usually take place in the context of a Liturgy of the Word – though an anointing can also be celebrated privately for an individual catechumen in special need. Anointings can also be given more than once during the catechumenate (RCIA 100).

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