



ARCHDIOCESE OF
CINCINNATI

Policy on Catholic High Schools and Initiation Ministry

ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI POLICY

EFFECTIVE

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“As a general rule, the preparation of catechumens for the Sacraments of Initiation takes place in a parochial setting or its equivalent. Catechumens prepared at a center, school, prison, or other institution are to be introduced into the Christian life of a parish or similar community, insofar as possible from the very beginning of the catechumenate, so that after their Initiation and Mystagogy they will not find themselves isolated from the ordinary life of the Christian people” (*National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults*, Norm 5).

- The norm above is the guiding principle for the ministry of Catholic high schools to students who wish to become Catholic.
- While a Catholic high school can provide a valuable faith community for young people, and the role that campus ministers and religion teachers can play in a young person’s faith life is very important, preparation for and celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation normally takes place in a parochial setting so as to fully integrate the new Christian into the life of the parish.
- A strong partnership between pastors and high school campus ministers will facilitate continuity in the initiation process. The enthusiastic support of a high school campus minister or religion teacher should be welcomed but cannot substitute for the proper role of the parish pastor and his delegate in the formation of those seeking Christian initiation.
- This means that every parish should be ready to welcome young people seeking to become Christians (and young non-Catholic Christians seeking to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church). High school students should be embraced by the parish community and accompanied by the same on their journey of faith.¹
- Furthermore, the pastor or his delegate (e.g., the *OCIA* Coordinator, Director of Evangelization, Director of Religious Education, etc.) should identify the religious education and Christian formation that is provided by the high school and develop a plan for how this would augment the religious education and formation received at the parish so that the child is receiving a complete initiation process in accordance with the *OCIA* text (see the introductions to each period and step of the process for guidance on appropriate ministry to catechumens and candidates, and the priorities of each period and step of the process).

¹ The parish that provides the primary context for initiation for the student should be either the parish in whose boundaries the student lives or the parish of which the student’s family is a member. If, for reasons that should be rare, these parishes are truly not an option, then the student may be initiated or received at any parish that is open to and well-equipped for the task.

- A fellow student can be a sponsor for a catechumen or candidate as long as the fellow student is a fully initiated Catholic.² This sponsor can also become the godparent for a catechumen as long as this new role is approved by the pastor, and the prospective godparent fulfills the requirements for a godparent (see “Christian Initiation: General Introduction,” 10 and *OCIA* 11).
- Minors require the permission of parents to participate in the formal initiation process and to receive the sacraments (cf. *OCIA* 252, 254). In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, permission is sufficiently granted if at least one parent or legal guardian grants it. Parents also play an important role in the formation of their children (cf. *OCIA* 254). Therefore, the permission of parents must be solicited before high school students can receive formal education or formation *towards Christian initiation*, and parents should be involved in the religious education and formation of their children as much as possible.
- For children of “catechetical age” (which includes high schoolers who are not yet 18), Baptism normally takes place, as it does for adults, at the Easter Vigil in their parish. Likewise, the Scrutinies – which are normally celebrated on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent – take place at Sunday Mass in the parish. These rites should be celebrated at the appointed times, except in cases of serious pastoral need (cf. *OCIA* 17-31).
- Fellow students should be invited to participate in parish liturgies up to and including the Easter Vigil, to support their classmates being initiated. Campus ministry leaders in each school should facilitate the invitations to fellow students, faculty, and school officials.
- Schools with students who desire to become Catholic should encourage these students’ participation in all the normal religious education and Catholic activities (devotions, prayers, bible studies, sacramental prep, retreats, etc.) of the school, since it is recommended that children of catechetical age be formed in the faith alongside their Catholic peers (cf. *OCIA* 254).
- It is also good for students who wish to become Catholic to learn and be formed together as a group (cf. *OCIA* 255). This means that, beyond the group of catechumens and/or candidates that each student would join at his/her parish (where formation for initiation primarily occurs), they would also benefit from receiving religious education and formation together at the school.

See the next page for a checklist for Catholic high school campus ministers regarding ministry to students interested in becoming Catholic.

² For the qualifications and responsibilities of sponsors for catechumens, see *OCIA* 10, 43, 45, 46, 75.2, 80. For the qualifications and responsibilities of sponsors for candidates, see *OCIA* 404, 420, 440, 452, 464, 483, 486, 490.

Checklist for Catholic High School Campus Ministers Regarding Ministry to Students Interested in Becoming Catholic

Receive permission from at least one parent or legal guardian to involve the student in formal formation opportunities that have the purpose of preparing the student to become Catholic.

Find a suitable parish for the student to begin the initiation process.

Connect the student with the pastor and the coordinator of the initiation process.

Schedule a meeting with the pastor and/or his delegate, the student, and the parents to create a plan for working together to form, prepare, and support the student for initiation.

Identify what the parish requires of the student and desires of the school.

Look for ways to involve the parents in the student's formation opportunities.

Invite this student to an OCIA formation group at your school, if you have one available.

Connect the student with Catholic students from the parish where initiation will occur and invite these students to the support group.

Include the student in all of the regular Catholic activities of the school.

Collaborate with the parish to invite the student's friends, family, fellow students, and school teachers/staff to the important steps and rites of the initiation process, such as the Rite for Entrance, the Rite of Election, the Scrutinies, and the Easter Vigil.

Find ways to celebrate as a school with students who are taking steps to join the Church (perhaps in school liturgies, other celebrations, and announcements or news at school).



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