
MEMO

TO: Pastors, Administrators and Parish Staff

FROM: Chancery

Please note the following when dealing with **non-Catholic Eastern Churches (Orthodox)**:

(A) Canonical form for marriages of one Latin Catholic and one Eastern non-Catholic (Orthodox)

1. A marriage between a Latin Catholic and an Eastern non-Catholic (Orthodox) that has been celebrated in the Orthodox Church is considered to be valid. In order for this celebration to be licit (lawful), however, a dispensation from canonical form must be granted from the local ordinary. It is forbidden, either before or after the celebration of the marriage in the Eastern non-Catholic church, to have another religious celebration of the same marriage in the Catholic Church.

(B) The validity of Orthodox Sacraments.

1. The Catholic Church recognizes the validity of all the Sacraments conferred by the Orthodox Churches. Orthodox Christians receive Chrismation (Confirmation) and Holy Communion at the time of baptism.

When an Orthodox Christian is received into the Catholic Church they make a profession of faith. They are not confirmed since they have received valid confirmation at the time of baptism. They should also be received into the Catholic Church by the equivalent Catholic Eastern Church. For example, a member of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church should be received by the Ukrainian Catholic Church. If there is no equivalent Eastern Catholic Church covering our archdiocese, then the Latin pastor receives the Orthodox Christian but notes in his register that the person is ascribed to the proper Eastern Catholic Church. For example, there are no Russian Catholic Eastern Churches in Canada. If a Russian Orthodox individual is received into the Catholic Church, then the Pastor is to ascribe the person as a Russian Catholic. Obviously, he or she would be free to worship in any Catholic Church after reception.

2. Parents of children who were baptized in an Orthodox Church must be educated about the validity of their child's sacraments if they approach a Catholic pastor regarding baptism in the Catholic Church. It happens sometimes that Orthodox parents, or one parent who

is Catholic and the other Orthodox, want their child to be Catholic and insist he or she be “re-baptized” in the Catholic Church. Education by the pastor, or another pastoral agent at the parish, has to be provided to the parents to make them understand that their child is baptized and it is not to be repeated. Also, if someone provides two certificates of baptism, that is, one from a Catholic Church and one from an Orthodox Church, the older one is the valid one.

(C) Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic (Orthodox) child and confirmation

1. Another circumstance that demands attention is the instance of an Eastern Catholic or Orthodox child who is in a Catholic school where most of the children belong to the Latin Church. The Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic (Orthodox) child does not prepare like his or her classmates for confirmation. Since the Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic child was already chrismated (confirmed) along with baptism (unless there is proof to the contrary), the Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic child is not to be reconfirmed. Those preparing the children for confirmation should explain that the Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic child has been confirmed at baptism. The child can be given a special liturgical responsibility at the confirmation of his or her classmates by doing a reading, reading the petitions, ushering, handing out pamphlets, or serving at the celebration. Ideally, the Eastern Catholic or non-Catholic child would not come forward for a “blessing” from the bishop but if for pastoral reasons, this is permitted, then it should be made clear to both the child and the confirming bishop that the child is not being confirmed but simply receiving a blessing.