

2nd Century AD

THE EARLY CHURCH

The earliest writings of a formalized initiation come from the 2nd century. Called the Catechumenate, it was a guided process of initiation, some times as long a three years, leading to baptism and ultimately the Eucharist. The focus was on developing Christian virtues and living the Christian life. Children and parents fully initiated in the same ritual.



3rd-5th Century AD

6th-12th Century AD ABANDONED

This time saw the development of sacramental theology and catechesis, but the disintegration of the Catechumenate. First by the separation of confirmation from baptism and Eucharist, then by the separation of Eucharist from baptism.



THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE

Constantine legalizes Christianity bringing a great influx of converts to the Faith. The length of the Catechumenate shortened and no longer focused on the development of a moral lifestyle, but on teaching theology and truths of the Faith. Baptism and confirmation continue to be received in a single celebration leading up to the reception of the Holy Eucharist..

13th-17th Century AD

ANCIENT ORDER RESTORED

By the late Middle Ages, the sacraments of initiation had developed into three separate events in the West. As Christianity grew the administration of baptism was no longer reserved to the bishop, and infant baptism became the norm. The sacrament of Confirmation was ordinarily reserved to the bishop and administered at the age of reason (7 years). Children would continue in their religious formation and finally receive the Eucharist around the age of 11 or 12 years. The sacraments of initiation were restored to their ancient order and liturgical practices in the Latin Church were standardized particularly with the Council of Trent.,



18th-19th Century AD

FRANCE AND LEO XIII

In the mid 1700's some dioceses in France beginning with Toulon, focused catechetical instruction on the reception of the sacraments of initiation. What developed was an educational model based on age rather than a sacramental model based on sanctifying grace and Christian formation. It was a practice rejected by Rome and Pope Leo XIII in 1897 praised the French bishops who put an end the practice.

20th Century AD & Today

PIUS X

In 1910 with the decree *Quam singulari* Pope Pius X lowered the aged of receiving 1st Eucharist to about the age of 7. The norms issued in the decree united the terms 'age of discretion' and 'use of reason' and set them at the same age. The primary motivation of lowering the age was to suppress the Jansenist influence on the sacrament of the Eucharist, which saw the Eucharist as a reward rather than remedy. The common practice in Rome at the time was to receive confirmation before 1st Eucharist, and because the document made no mention of Confirmation, most scholars agree the thought that it would change was not even considered. Ironically, the Jansenist influence simply transferred from one sacrament to another. When Benedict XV later promulgated the 1917 Code begun under Pius X, it confirmed that the ancient order of receiving the sacraments of initiation should be maintained. Most all modern Church documents call for the ancient order of the sacraments including the documents of Vatican II, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and the Catechism.

