Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Purpose
The candidate (enquirer) publicly states their desire to move forward to full membership of the Church and the faith community accepts them and offers prayerful support for their journey.

What is required?
During the period of the pre-catechumenate the enquirer has begun to know Christ and to experience the life of the Christian community.
‘That the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates. (42)’
The enquirer is ready to make a commitment, and those accompanying him/her also discern that readiness.

When does it take place?
At a Sunday Mass. This is the first formal rite and it should happen in the presence of the gathered community.

What happens in the Rite?
20 The reception of the candidate.
   Welcome and names called.
   Questions and statement of desire.
21 Acceptance of the Gospel of Christ.
22 Affirmation by the sponsors and community.
23 Signing with the cross on the forehead and senses.
24 Concluding prayer.
25 Invitation to the celebration of the Word of God. All take their place in the assembly.
26 Proclamation of the Word and homily.
27 Presentation of the Word of the God to the candidates.
28 Intercessions for the catechumens, and prayer over the catechumens.
29 Dismissal.

What do we need to organise?
Let the community know that this is coming up – announcement, newsletter etc.
Presentation of the Scriptures – a bible or a book of the Gospels.
Preparation of the questions and answers at the time of reception and welcome.
Refreshments.
Microphones.

The Period of the Catechumenate.
The catechumen is now a Christian and member of the Church. This period is a time of deepening their knowledge of Christ through Scripture and the witness of others. They move more deeply into the life of the Church through prayer, participation in liturgy, and the social life of the parish community.
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Example

30 The reception of the candidate.
Outside or at the door.
Welcome.

What is your name.
Cand: Claire Mary Robinson.

Questions:
What are you asking of God's Church?
Cand: Personal answer: e.g. Faith in Christ and to belong to his Church.

Why do you want this?
Cand: Personal answer: e.g. I feel Christ is calling me to fullness of life by following him.

31 Acceptance of the Gospel of Christ.
God is our Creator and in him all living things have their existence. He enlightens our minds, so that we may come to know and worship him. He has sent Jesus Christ to announce to us what he had seen and heard, the mysteries of heaven and earth. Since you acknowledge with joy that Christ has come, now is the time to hear his word, so that you may possess eternal life by beginning, in our company to know God and to love your neighbour. Are you ready with the help of God to live this life.
Cand: I am.

32 Affirmation by the sponsors and community.
Sponsors, you now present this candidate to us; are you and all who are gathered here with us ready to help her to find and follow Christ?
All: We are.
Father of mercy,
We thank you for your servant Claire.
You have sought and summoned her in many ways
And she has turned to seek you.
You have called her today and she has answered in our presence:
We praise you Lord and we bless you.

All: We praise you Lord and we bless you. (said or sung)

33 Signing with the cross on the forehead and senses.
Come forward now with your sponsors to receive the sign of your new way of life as a catechumen. Claire, receive the cross on your forehead. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know him and follow him.
All: Blessed be God.
(Signing of the senses carried out by sponsors while the president prays these words.)
(ears):
Receive the sign of the cross on your ears that you may hear the voice of the Lord.
All: Blessed be God.
(eyes):
Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes, that you may see the glory of God.
All: Blessed be God.
(lips):
Receive the sign of the cross on your lips, that you may respond to the Word of God.
All: Blessed be God.
(breast):
Receive the sign of the cross over your heart that Christ might dwell there by faith.
All: Blessed be God.
(shoulders):
Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.
All: Blessed be God.
(hands):
Receive the sign of the cross on your hands, that Christ may be known in the work you do.
All: Blessed be God.
(feet):
Receive the sign of the cross on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ.
All: Blessed be God.
(making the sign of the cross over the candidate)
I sign you with the sign of eternal life in the name of the Father and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit.
Cand: Amen.

34 Concluding prayer.
Let us pray:
Lord we have signed this catechumen with the sign of Christ’s cross.
Protect her by its power, so that, faithful to the grace which has begun in her, she may keep your commandments and come to the glory of rebirth in baptism. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

35 Invitation to the celebration of the Word of God.
Claire, come and share with us at the table of God’s Word.
36 Proclamation of the Word and homily.
(When seated the president explains to the candidates the dignity of God's Word which is proclaimed and heard in the Church. The Liturgy of the Word follows.)

37 Presentation of the Word of the God to the candidates.
Receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.
Cand: Amen.

38 Intercessions for the catechumens, and prayer over the catechumens.
(These intercessions can be combined with the general prayer of the faithful.)
This catechumen who is our sister has already travelled the journey of faith. We rejoice with her in the gentle guidance of God who has brought her to this day. Let us pray that she may press onwards, until they come to share fully in our way of life.

Reader:
That Christ may be revealed to her more and more with each passing day.
Lord hear us.

That she may undertake with a generous heart whatever God may ask of her.
Lord hear us.

That Claire may have the heartfelt support and prayer of all of us in this parish community.
Lord hear us.

That she may find among us real unity and love.
Lord hear us.

That she may be found worthy to celebrate the baptism of new birth and renewal in the Holy Spirit.
Lord hear us.

Pres: (hands outstretched)
God of creation,
You have made us in your image.
Welcome with love, Claire who comes before you today.
She has listened to the Word of Christ;
By its power renew her, and by your grace refashion her,
So that in time she may assume the full likeness of Christ who lives and reigns forever and ever, Amen.

39 (Dismissal or) Invitation to remain.
Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord's Eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God's children will eat and drink with the Lord, and work with his Spirit to re-create the face of the earth.