



# NewsLetter

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## Pope Francis Issues Apostolic Letter on Liturgical Formation

On June 29, 2022, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter on the liturgical formation of the People of God, *Desiderio desideravi*, to the entire Catholic Church. The purpose of the letter is not to treat the topic of the liturgy comprehensively but rather to offer “some prompts or cues for reflections” which invite and help “the whole Church to rediscover, to safeguard, and to live the truth and power of the Christian celebration” (nos. 1 and 16). While the document is broken up into nine subheadings, it has a basic tripartite structure (cf. no. 62). The first section treats the theological sense of the liturgy (nos. 1-26), the second liturgical formation (nos. 27-47), and the third the art of celebrating or *ars celebrandi* (nos. 48-60). The text of the Apostolic Letter is available at [Vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html](http://Vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html). This article will examine the document’s first section, and future articles of the *Newsletter* will treat its second and third parts. Since the Holy Father regards the letter as a collection of prompts for reflection, some questions follow – for clergy, those responsible for liturgical formation and preparation, and the lay faithful.

### **Christ’s burning desire and the Liturgy’s incarnational method (nos. 1-16)**

Pope Francis sets his letter in the context of a passage from the account of the Last Supper in the Gospel of St. Luke. At the very beginning of the supper – before taking the bread or the cup – Jesus says, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Lk 22:14). The Pope notes that the Supper is the unique event of triune love for us in which God reestablishes communion with us. All creation and history prepare for this event, which on the night of the Last Supper is entrusted to the Apostles so that they might bring it to all humanity through the celebration of the Eucharist: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19).

The Last Supper and the celebration of the Eucharist are gifts; consequently, each is preceded by an invitation, the burning desire of Jesus to eat with us which draws us there. This invitation is universal, and the Church’s mission is to extend that invitation to every man and woman – this is the missionary option or impulse which the Holy Father so frequently emphasizes. There is not only an invitation to the Eucharist for the first time, in Christian Initiation, but one that precedes a Christian’s every participation in the Supper. He writes, “Every time we go to Mass, the first reason is that we are drawn there by his desire for us,” and “every reception of communion of the Body and Blood of Christ was already desired by him in the Last Supper” (no. 6).

The content of the Supper is Christ’s sacrifice of obedience to the Father, and in the light of the Last Supper and the Resurrection, the Cross shines forth as the perfect and only true act of worship, pleasing to the Father. In the Eucharist, the Church participates

in this sacrifice in its incarnational fullness. Indeed, “Everything of Him had passed into the celebration of the sacraments. Here lies all the powerful beauty of the liturgy” (nos. 9-10). In the liturgy, Christ is made present not as a concept, idea or thought, not as a recollection or vague memory, not as a code of conduct. Christ is made present as alive, as an incarnate Person. Our response to Christ’s Person is not mental adhesion, assent, or recollection, but encounter. Everything of Jesus – “his every word, his every gesture, glance, and feeling” – has passed over into the sacraments. The Incarnation is the method that God has chosen to initiate us into communion with him, and the liturgy takes place according to this incarnational method, using symbols addressed to the senses, which contain and express the realities they signify. It is Baptism that first makes us participants in Christ’s Paschal Mystery and incorporates us into Christ’s Mystical Body, the Church. Since we are “sons in the Son,” the fullness of worship is possible for us, which is in fact the worship of Christ himself.

### **Contemporary challenges and liturgical remedies (nos. 17-27)**

Through his letter, Pope Francis also hopes that the liturgy “not be spoiled by a superficial and foreshortened understanding of its value or, worse yet, by its being exploited in service of some ideological vision, no matter what the hue” (no. 16). In this context, he highlights two deeply interrelated attitudes of “spiritual worldliness”: Gnosticism and Pelagianism. These temptations were also addressed in chapter two of the Pope’s 2018 Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et exsultate*. The gnostic attitude seeks “salvation” through an individual’s disembodied (and, therefore, un-symbolic) search for knowledge or feeling. The pelagian attitude rejects the necessity of grace and leads to “a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism” (*Evangelii gaudium*, no. 94). Each of these postures sometimes spoils or exploits the liturgy and liturgical participation. Worship spoiled by Gnosticism is individualistic (rather than ecclesial), disembodied (rather than symbolic), and hyper intellectual (rather than an integral encounter with mystery). Worship spoiled by Pelagianism forgets both that the gift of worship is a response to Christ’s burning desire and that Christ’s invitation is universal. In certain ways, these attitudes parallel the Holy Father’s points of emphasis in the first part of this first section: Christ’s burning desire correlates with Pelagianism and the liturgy’s incarnational method with Gnosticism.

The liturgy itself is the “antidote for the poison of spiritual worldliness” (no. 21). It challenges the gnostic attitude through the prominence of its “we,” the incarnational character of its symbols, and its expressed purpose, which is an integral encounter with the mystery of Christ and his Pasch. It challenges the pelagian attitude through its gratuitousness, ever mindful of Christ’s eager desire which invites all to each and every act of worship.

Nevertheless, this intrinsic, healing function of the liturgy can be short circuited. In the first place, this occurs when celebrations are not thoughtfully prepared and the rubrics are not carefully observed. While neither preparation nor rubrical observance are sufficient conditions for authentic liturgical participation, they are necessary ones. To do otherwise would rob the assembly of what it deserves, “namely, the Paschal Mystery celebrated according to the ritual that the Church sets down” (no. 23). After careful preparation and rubrical observance, what remains is the encounter with Christ’s Paschal Mystery, with his burning desire.

Astonishment is the necessary prelude to this encounter: “astonishment at the fact that the paschal mystery is rendered present in the concreteness of sacramental signs” (no. 24) and “marveling at the fact that the salvific plan of God has been revealed in the paschal deed of Jesus” (no. 25). Here, the Holy Father highlights two counterfeit versions of astonishment: “interiority” and “sense of mystery.” According to Pope Francis, “interiority can run the risk of reducing itself to an empty subjectivity if it has not taken on board the revelation of the Christian mystery” (no. 24). The Paschal Mystery is an event given, not a self-constructed abstraction. “Sense of mystery,” on the other hand, that is, being overcome by an obscure reality or a mysterious ritual, emphasizes the transcendence of God while not maintaining the closeness which the Incarnation intends.

**The Liturgy is the priesthood of Christ, revealed to us and given in his Paschal Mystery, rendered present and active by means of signs addressed to the senses (water, oil, bread, wine, gestures, words), so that the Spirit, plunging us into the Paschal Mystery, might transform every dimension of our life, conforming us more and more to Christ.**

- Pope Francis, *Desiderio desideravi*, no. 21

## Questions for Reflecting on *Desiderio desideravi*

*Pope Francis notes that his Apostolic Letter consists of “some prompts or cues for reflections.” In this light, the following questions are offered for clergy, those responsible for liturgical formation and preparation, and the lay faithful.*

### **Clergy**

1. Pope Francis reminds us that, “Before our response to his invitation – well before! – there is his desire for us” (no. 6). How do I recall Christ’s burning desire to eat with me which draws me to every celebration of the Eucharist? Are there practices that I can incorporate before, during, or after Mass which will help me to become more aware of this desire?
2. In what ways can I lead the people I serve to encounter Christ’s burning desire to eat with them? Keeping in mind that Christ is present in the minister who offers the Eucharist, how does my manner of celebration manifest or obscure Christ’s burning desire?
3. The Pelagian attitude forgets that the invitation to the Supper is not earned or achieved, and the liturgy itself challenges this attitude, e.g., in the Penitential Act and the showing of the host before Holy Communion. How can I renew the celebration of these actions – both personally and among the entire congregation?
4. The Gnostic attitude neglects the body in worship. How do I give appropriate attention to the non-verbal aspects of worship, such as processions, posture, gestures, silence, etc.?

### **Those responsible for liturgical formation and preparation**

1. To thoughtfully prepare the liturgy is to give the assembly “what is owed to it” (no. 23). Are there certain aspects of preparation that I neglect? Why? What is a way forward?
2. Everything of Jesus – “his every word, his every gesture, glance, and feeling” – has passed over into the sacraments. In liturgical preparation, do I give appropriate attention to both words and symbolic gestures? Is there a balance between the two or do I sometimes emphasize one over the other?
3. Thoughtful preparation is a necessary but insufficient condition for the participation which the liturgy requires. How can I foster integral liturgical encounters with the mystery of Christ and his Pasch?
4. Pope Francis notes that astonishment is the necessary prelude to an authentic encounter with Jesus in the liturgy, yet working closely and frequently with the liturgy sometimes leads our astonishment at the presence of the Paschal Mystery to diminish. How can I restore and regularly renew this astonishment?

### **Laity**

1. Why do I worship? What does this motivation reveal about the way I relate to Christ (e.g., as an idea, a memory, or code of conduct; or as an incarnate Person)?
2. Pope Francis notes in nos. 10-11 that the chief purpose of worship is an integral encounter with the incarnate Person of Jesus, much the same as Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-15), the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:5-42), and the man possessed by demons at Capernaum (Mk 1:21-28). Pray with one of these passages or with another figure that the Holy Father highlights in no. 11. What light do these encounters from the New Testament shed on our encounters with Christ in the liturgy?
3. One mark of both the gnostic and pelagian attitudes is their individualism. How do I worship in solitary or isolated ways? How can I enter into worship in more ecclesial, communal ways?
4. How do I engage my body in worship? Are there gestures and postures that the Lord is inviting me to carry out more fully?

## ***Order of Penance* Implementation Dates Established; Ritual Editions and Webinar**

Archbishop José H. Gomez, USCCB President, issued a promulgation decree on June 24, 2022 for the recently confirmed *Order of Penance*. The new translation may be used beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023, and the date for obligatory use has been set for Divine Mercy Sunday, April 16. A copy of the decree is reprinted below for the benefit of our readers.

The Secretariat of Divine Worship and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions will co-sponsor a single, 75-minute webinar on the *Order of Penance* on Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at 1:00 PM Eastern time. Rev. Andrew Menke, Executive Director of the Secretariat, and Rev. Rob Spaulding, Director of the Office of Worship in the Diocese of Cheyenne, will examine the theology of the Sacrament of Penance and the newly revised text. To register, visit [FDLC.org/penance/webinar](https://FDLC.org/penance/webinar).

Finally, four publishers will produce ritual editions for use in the United States: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., Liturgy Training Publications, Magnificat, and Midwest Theological Forum. Presales will begin on October 1, 2022, and more information on the ritual books will be included in a future edition of the *Newsletter*.

### UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS DECREE OF PROMULGATION

In accord with the norms established by the Holy See, this edition of the *Order of Penance* is declared to be the definitive approved English translation of the *Ordo Pœnitentiæ, editio typica* (1973), and is hereby promulgated by authority of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The *Order of Penance* was canonically approved for use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on June 17, 2021, and was subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See by decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on April 25, 2022 (Prot. n. 460/21).

This rite may be used in the Liturgy as of Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023, and its use is obligatory as of April 16, 2023, the Second Sunday of Easter (or of Divine Mercy). From that date forward, no other English translation of the rite may be used in the dioceses of the United States of America.

Given at the General Secretariat of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, on June 24, 2022, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

✠ José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles  
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Rev. Michael J.K. Fuller  
General Secretary

## **2024 Liturgical Calendar Available for Purchase**

The 2024 edition of the *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America* is available for purchase from the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship. The calendar lists each day's celebration, rank, liturgical color, Lectionary citations, and Psalter cycle. Calendars are on sale for \$10.00 each, payable by check only, and are available either in 8½ × 11" paperback or e-mailed in Microsoft Word or PDF format. For more information on placing an order, visit [USCCB.org/committees/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar](https://USCCB.org/committees/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar).

## Relics Accompany National Eucharistic Revival

Throughout the 2022-2025 National Eucharistic Revival in the United States, first-class relics of Saint Manuel González García and Blessed Carlo Acutis – named as heavenly patrons of the Revival – have been made available to go on pilgrimage throughout the country. Both persons had a strong devotion to the Eucharist and were inspired in different ways to spread the message of the Gospel to the people of their times: one through catechesis and the other through friendship and works of mercy.



## NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

### **St. Manuel González García: Bishop of the Abandoned Tabernacle**

Born in Seville, Spain in 1877, Manuel González García was ordained a priest in 1901. Sent to preach at a parish mission in the town of Palomares del Río, St. Manuel discovered the church building in complete disrepair and the cobwebbed tabernacle abandoned. He was moved to establish the *Unión Eucarística Reparadora*, an affiliation of groups centered on Eucharistic devotion and reparation. At his pastoral assignment in Huelva, he encountered many poor children in the streets and devoted his efforts to education and catechesis with the help of his parishioners. Ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Málaga in 1915 (and later as its bishop until 1935), St. Manuel continued to devote his pastoral ministry to promoting more fervent worship of the Eucharist and to catechetical efforts. He served as Bishop of Palencia from 1935 until his death on January 4, 1940, requesting on his deathbed to be interred at the foot of the tabernacle in his cathedral so that his remains might continue to direct the faithful toward the Blessed Sacrament. St. Manuel was beatified in 2001 and canonized by Pope Francis in 2016 during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The Eucharistic organization and related religious orders he founded continue to flourish in Spain.

### **Bl. Carlo Acutis: The Eucharist as the Highway to Heaven**

Carlo Acutis was born in London in May 1991 to Italian parents who settled the family in Milan a few months after his birth and baptism. He developed a strong religious practice early in his childhood, often praying before the Blessed Sacrament before or after Masses and going to confession weekly. Throughout his life, Bl. Carlo volunteered and performed many works of mercy toward the homeless, destitute, and among his friends and family. Applying his computer skills, he created a website to document the Eucharistic miracles throughout the centuries and all over the world (still updated and maintained at [MiracoliEucaristici.org](http://MiracoliEucaristici.org)). Upon being diagnosed with leukemia, he offered up his sufferings to God for the Church and the Holy Father. Bl. Carlo died on October 12, 2006 and was beatified in 2020, the first Catholic of the millennial generation to be so honored. His remains are venerated at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi.

### **Pilgrimage Tour of Relics**

For the second half of 2022, the relics will tour various parishes and centers in the following dioceses:

- July 1-11 – Diocese of San Angelo
- July 11-18 – Diocese of Austin
- July 18-21 – Diocese of Beaumont
- July 29-Aug. 6 – Diocese of Charlotte
- Aug. 26-Sept. 7 – Diocese of Las Cruces
- Sept. 22-23 – Diocese of Fargo
- Oct. 3-10 – Dioceses of Crookston and St. Cloud
- Oct. 11-14 – Diocese of Green Bay
- Oct. 15-19 – Diocese of Winona–Rochester
- Oct. 21-Nov. 1 – Dioceses of Sioux Falls and Rapid City
- Nov. 3-6 – Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis
- Nov. 14-23 – Diocese of Wheeling–Charleston
- Dec. 1-5 – Diocese of Columbus

Additional dioceses will host the relics throughout 2023 and during the remainder of the Revival. Those interested in hosting are encouraged to contact Marilyn Santos at the USSCB ([msantos@usscb.org](mailto:msantos@usscb.org)) as soon as possible. By the intercession of St. Manuel and Bl. Carlo, may the Christian faithful in the United States grow in devotion to the Eucharistic Lord. Healed and strengthened by Christ's merciful love, may they go forth as missionary disciples in their families and parishes, throughout the country and the world.

## Eucharistic Processions: Ecclesial, Eucharistic, Public, and Missionary Meaning

As a part of the diocesan phase of the National Eucharistic Revival, the June 2022 *Newsletter* examined the role of the Diocesan Bishop regarding eucharistic processions in his local Church and the basic form of these processions. In this second article on eucharistic processions, the meaning of eucharistic processions is explored: ecclesial, eucharistic, public, and missionary.

### Ecclesial

First, eucharistic processions on Corpus Christi have a peculiar, ecclesial meaning, particularly in their stational character. A stational Mass, which the bishop celebrates surrounded by his presbyterate, deacons, and lay ministers, and at which the People of God participate, is the preeminent manifestation of the Church. While Mass is the most common expression of stational liturgy, there are other stational celebrations, e.g., Corpus Christi processions. A defining characteristic of these events is their singularity, namely, the churches of a city or a diocese gather together for a single liturgical celebration which is not repeated. While stational liturgy, strictly speaking, takes place when the bishop presides, there are similar “stational” moments in the lives of parishes and other communities when a priest presides, e.g., the Palm Sunday Procession, the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion, and the Easter Vigil. Again, these liturgies typically occur only once in each community and are not repeated.

The purpose of stational liturgy is to build up and express the unity of a local Church, city, parish or other community. The rule against duplicating liturgies on certain occasions guards against the perennial temptation of particularism, namely, when particular groups do not consider the whole community to which they belong. Groups in a parish, parishes and communities in a city or a diocese – these may easily forget that they belong to larger bodies. Indeed, *Christus Dominus*, the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, enjoins pastors and parochial vicars to exercise their ministry so that “parish communities will truly realize that they are members both of the diocese and of the universal Church” (no. 30).

Eucharistic processions on Corpus Christi are stations of a city, and the norms governing them preserve their stational character. First, there is usually only one procession in each city on this day, except in very large cities where the Diocesan Bishop has permitted additional ones. Second, the procession usually goes from one church to another one. In these ways, the procession is more fully “a sign of common faith and adoration.”<sup>1</sup> On Corpus Christi, the Christian faithful of a city gather together in procession to build up and express the unity of the Church.

But what about the importance of the Corpus Christi procession in the life of an individual parish? *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (HCWEOM) notes that processions on this day are especially important not only in the life of a city but also of a parish (no. 102). The 1917 Code of Canon Law reconciled the goods of city and parish celebrations in an interesting way (canon 1291, §1-2). Here, too, there was to be only one procession in a place on Corpus Christi. During the feast’s Octave, however, parishes and churches were free to carry out individual processions. This canon maintained a certain order between the whole and the particular. The common celebration of the entire city brings forth other, particular celebrations. In present law, there is no limit on the number of processions in a city on other days of the liturgical year.

### Eucharistic

Eucharistic processions obviously also have eucharistic meaning. To grasp this meaning in its fullness, however, it is important to consider the procession within its usual context, i.e., following the celebration of Mass and concluding with benediction. Mass, Procession, Benediction: these acts are not successive, separate ones, but moments of a single celebration. In fact, the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* notes that benediction “is not an independent form of Eucharistic piety, but the end of a prolonged act of worship” (no. 163). In this context, there is a rich synthesis of eucharistic themes: gathering, sacrifice, and communion which are prolonged and intensified in adoration and procession and culminate in benediction. The celebration of the Mass is understood more fully in light of the adoration, procession, and benediction that follow it, and each of these is understood in

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<sup>1</sup> *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, no. 102.



light of the Mass which has preceded it. In a homily on Corpus Christi 2005, Pope Benedict XVI offered one way that adoration and procession shed light upon the meaning of communion:

The purpose of this communion, of this partaking, is the assimilation of my life with his, my transformation and conformation into he who is living Love. Therefore, this communion implies adoration, it implies the will to follow Christ, to follow the One who goes ahead of us. Adoration and procession thereby make up a single gesture of communion; they answer his mandate: “Take and eat.”

Other norms which serve this liturgy’s eucharistic meaning include HCWEOM, no. 105, which indicates that in processions following Mass, the principal celebrant may continue to wear the vestments for Mass, and no. 104, which indicates that the songs and prayers are to focus attention on the Lord alone.

### **Public**

Eucharistic processions are also public, as canon 944 twice declares: “a procession through the *public* streets is to be held as a *public* witness of veneration toward the Most Holy Eucharist.” These processions generally go from one church to another, and public squares and streets are decorated according to local custom. It is not permitted for processions to be held within the walls of the church, and if circumstances were to make an outdoor procession impossible, the most appropriate alternative is not to bring the procession inside but rather to carry out a different, public celebration in the church building. Additionally, it is not ideal for the procession to occur entirely on church property. The emphasis of liturgical law upon the procession’s public character underlines that the Church does not exist apart from the city but in it. The liturgical space of this ritual action is the city. By processing through the streets, the Church resists the temptation “to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal.”<sup>2</sup> The city’s streets, homes, life, and routines all belong to Christ, our Eucharistic Lord.

### **Missionary**

Finally, eucharistic processions have a missionary meaning. This sense is brought out in a particular way through a comparison of the processions of Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi. On each of these feasts, the Church processes with the Most Blessed Sacrament. On Holy Thursday, the Eucharist in a ciborium is carried within the church building. On Corpus Christi, the Eucharist in a monstrance is carried through the public streets. On Holy Thursday, the procession goes to an altar of repose prepared in another part of the church building or in a chapel, and it concludes in adoration during the night. On Corpus Christi, the procession normally goes from one church to another and concludes in benediction.

In a homily on Corpus Christi 2005, Pope Benedict XVI proposed that “on the feast of *Corpus Domini*, the Church relives the mystery of Holy Thursday in the light of the Resurrection.” On Holy Thursday, Jesus goes alone into the night, and the Church keeps watch with him there. On Corpus Christi, Jesus, risen from the dead, “is going before you” (Mt 28:7). Pope Benedict noted that Christ goes ahead of Christian believers in two ways. First, he goes ahead of them to the Father. As Christ tells Mary Magdalene, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (Jn 20:17). Second, Christ goes ahead of Christian believers to Galilee. As the angel commanded the women at the tomb, “Go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him’” (Mt 28:7). The Pope noted that in Israel the region of Galilee was regarded as the door to the Gentiles, and that it is in Galilee where Christ commands the eleven to make disciples of all nations. In this light, eucharistic processions are a symbolic response to Christ who goes before us to the Father and to the nations.

It is to this missionary way of life that Pope Francis frequently calls the Church. She is not an exclusive club but “the house of the Father, with doors always wide open.”<sup>3</sup> In processions, the Church gets out of the sacristy and into the streets.<sup>4</sup> She goes forth to the world like the merciful Father of the parable: “While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him” (Lk 15:20). Transformed by the Eucharist, the Church bears that Eucharist she has just received, inviting all to Christ’s sacred banquet: “Everything is ready; come to the feast” (Mt 22:4).

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<sup>2</sup> *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 64.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 47.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 49; Pope Francis, Homily, October 1, 2019.

## Dicastery Releases New Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

On June 15, 2022, the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life released “Catechumenal Itineraries for Married Life: Pastoral Guidelines for Particular Churches,” which is an answer to Pope Francis’s repeated calls for a renewal of marriage preparation modeled on the catechumenate which precedes the Sacraments of Initiation. These guidelines propose general principles and invite local Churches to consider them as they develop their own programs of marriage preparation in their concrete social, cultural, and ecclesial situations. At this time, the text is available in Italian and Spanish, along with a summary in English, at [LaityFamilyLife.va/content/laityfamilylife/en/news/amorislaetitia/-nuovi-percorsi-per-la-preparazione-al-sacramento-del-matrimonio.html](https://laityfamilylife.va/content/laityfamilylife/en/news/amorislaetitia/-nuovi-percorsi-per-la-preparazione-al-sacramento-del-matrimonio.html).

These guidelines have a threefold purpose: to prepare all the Christian faithful for the reality of marriage (remote preparation); to assist couples in discerning and preparing for the sacrament of Matrimony so that they may celebrate it validly and fruitfully (proximate and immediate preparation); and to accompany them in the early years of marriage (ongoing formation). Preparation in this style is pedagogical, gradual, and marked by rituals at various points (no. 5). Carried out by the whole Church, previously married couples have a primary role in this formation, together with a unique part played by clergy and religious (no. 10).

The guidelines see marriage preparation as something analogous to what takes place in the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* (OCIA) (no. 19). Indeed, the proposed “catechumenal itinerary of marriage preparation” loosely parallels the periods and steps of the OCIA. The following table illustrates what is described in no. 24 of the guidelines, with the phases and stages of the marriage preparation process in the left column and apparent parallels to the OCIA in the right column:

<b>Catechumenal Itinerary of Marriage Preparation</b>	<b><i>Order of Christian Initiation of Adults</i></b>
Precatechumenal Phase: remote preparation, which includes the pastoral care of children and youth	Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate
Intermediate phase (several weeks): reception of the candidates for marriage <i>Rite for Entrance into the “Catechumenate of Marriage”</i>	<i>Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate</i>
Catechumenal Phase First Stage: proximate preparation (about one year) <i>Rite of Betrothal</i>	Period of the Catechumenate  <i>Rite of Election</i>
Second Stage: immediate preparation (a few months), which begins and ends with short retreat <i>Celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony</i>	Period of Purification and Enlightenment  <i>Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation</i>
Third Stage: first years of married life (2-3 years)	Period of Mystagogy

The three liturgical rites (entrance, betrothal, and matrimony) mark the transition from one phase or stage to another (cf. no. 23). They are opportunities for the couple to renew their commitment, and each should be preceded by discernment. While the Church does not have a ritual for “Entrance into the Catechumenate of Marriage,” the guidelines suggest a simple ceremony presenting the couple to the community, with a prayer and a concrete gesture, such as the handing on of a Bible (no. 47). Likewise, the Latin Church does not have a formal rite for betrothal, although the Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple, found in the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, Appendix II, corresponds to the vision of the guidelines (nos. 59-61). The guidelines emphasize that these two pre-matrimonial rites should be used carefully, especially if a public celebration might lead to false expectations and undue pressure on the couple, which would limit their freedom and ability to discern (no. 26).