

History of the Roman Catholic Christian Initiation Process

History of the Catechumenate

Early Church	Small communities that took individuals into their company and introduced them to their way of life. Religious persecution prevailed and so a strong faith was demanded in the face of possible martyrdom.
100 – 200 AD	Initiation began to take on formal shape and requirements – the beginnings of a “Catechumenate” as we know it. The conversion of Gentiles called for a more comprehensive formation in the Judeo-Christian tradition.
Third – Fourth Centuries	Most developed structure (at least 3-year process). The peace of Constantine in 315 AD made Christianity legal; now there were large numbers of candidates, but poor quality control. Although this was the time of the most developed structure, during this period there were a variety of models of Christian initiation developed in the various local communities.
Fifth Century	Disintegration of the catechumenate occurred because large numbers of people were being baptized and the practice of infant baptism became normative. In the West, confirmation and Eucharist were separated from Baptism.
Twelfth Century	Catechumenate no longer existed. Elements of its transition into religious community formation and seminary training existed during the intervening centuries.
Sixteenth Century	Dominicans and Augustinians tried to counteract the mass baptisms. In 1538 an Episcopal conference urged pastors to return to missionary principles of Alcuin and establish a catechumenate.
Twentieth Century	Revival of catechumenal structures in Africa and France. In France great problems arose because of the large numbers of non-practicing Catholics. In Africa, the “White Fathers” recognized the need to build the Church from the grass roots.
VATICAN COUNCIL 2	Called for reinstating the CATECHUMENATE.Bishops’ vote on restoration of the catechumenate: “YES” = 2,165 “NO” = 9 “NULL” = 1
POST VATICAN COUNCIL 2	1966 - provisional ritual distributed 1969 - second draft distributed for experimentation 1972 - PROMULGATION of the order of Christian Initiation of Adults (Paul VI) 1974 - provisional English translation available titled: RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA) 1986 - U.S. Bishops approved U.S. additions to the RCIA and The National Statutes and a national plan for implementation 1987 - Canadian Bishops published the RCIA for use in Canada. 1988 - SEPTEMBER.... U.S. Bishops MANDATE IMPLEMENTATION of final translation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)