

“The Initial Conversation”

Period of Evangelization or Precatechumenate

The Initial Conversation (Interview)

Someone on the catechumenate team should meet with each inquirer individually. The person who conducts the initial meeting / conversation (interview) need not be a priest, but should be thoroughly familiar with the initiation process and able to put the inquirer at ease. The initial meeting / conversation (interview) should be warm and welcoming. It should take place early in the process but does not have to be the first introduction to the community.

The member of the Catechumenate team leading the conversation (interview) should have a basic knowledge of the Church's marriage laws, should questions about marriage arise. But the interviewer need not be versed in canon law, and should not make any evaluation of the marriage situation in the interview. If appropriate, the inquirer may be referred to the pastor or member of the pastoral staff who is qualified to pursue the resolution of marriage questions. The person conducting the meeting / conversation (interview) should also attend the sessions of the precatechumenate, so that he or she can introduce the inquirer to others in the group.

The purpose of the initial meeting / conversation (interview) is three-fold:

- I. To welcome and put the inquirer at ease - Welcome will be conveyed by conducting the meeting in a comfortable setting, by the warmth of the interviewer, and by the interviewer's use of good listening skills.
- II. To find out the inquirer's background - The information needed will include:
 - a. Religious Background: To what religion, if any, does the inquirer belong? Has the inquirer ever been baptized? When and in what Church?
 - b. Catechetical Background: Has the inquirer received any religious education? What are the sources of his or her understanding of the Catholic faith?
 - c. Marital History: Is the inquirer presently married? Are there any previous marriages of either the inquirer or the inquirer's spouse?
 - d. Motivations and Expectations: Why has the inquirer come forward at this time? What is he or she hoping to find?

Based on the information gathered at the initial conversation(interview), several important questions can begin to be addressed by the catechumenate team, such as:

- What does the church need to provide for a full formation?
- Who might be an appropriate sponsor?
- What religious issues might be important here, given the inquirer's background?
- Will the inquirer need to speak to a qualified member of the parish staff about any marriage issues sometime during the precatechumenate?

- III. To provide information and answer questions - Information provided to the inquirer should include the time and place of the meetings of the precatechumenate, and a general description of the process. Any questions that can be answered on the spot should be answered. Long discussions should be deferred to the group meetings.