

## Understanding the Period of the Catechumenate

The Rite of Acceptance and the Rite of Welcome begins the formal period of formation called the Period of the Catechumenate. This is when you start counting, officially, their time in the Catechumenate process.

Go to **RCIA # 75 – 80**, to see what the Rite says about the Period of the Catechumenate. Notice that in **RCIA # 76**, the rite says that the duration of this period is not predetermined. It could last at minimum one liturgical year for the (unbaptized person) Catechumen or several years (as long as it takes) until the goal of CONVERSION is evident. We do not automatically pass them through with their group. Each person's individual faith journey must be respected.

Notice that the Rite in **RCIA # 75** states that a "*suitable catechesis....accommodated to the liturgical year and solidly supported by celebrations of the word*", are to be offered to those in the Catechumenate.

Many parishes offer the "*suitable catechesis*" on Sundays, connected to a Sunday Mass.

- Remember that when we are teaching adults, we need to offer hospitality, a comfortable adult learning environment, respecting their own questions and concerns, and offering opportunities for personal reflection and observation. Catechists are never to lecture or treat their adult learners in any way that would make them feel uncomfortable. The goal would be to connect the adult learner to the message / topic presentation. Time for storytelling and reflection is always important. Remember that the Catechumens and Candidates are always learning in and outside the session. Don't expect to answer all their questions at the sessions. Help them to learn from the worshipping community in various ways... through service, fellowship and liturgical celebrations. The Catechumens and Candidates are to be offered many opportunities to engage in the life of the parish. They are invited to journey along with their fellow parishioners in a variety of parish activities, projects, prayer experiences in order to better understand what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ within the Catholic Church.

The Catechumen / Candidate is called to reflect more deeply on the Word of God. This is the curriculum on the Catechumenate Period....the WORD OF GOD as proclaimed by the Church, liturgically, every Sunday of the year.

Note that in **RCIA # 75.3** the Catechumens are to be "*kindly dismissed before the liturgy of the Eucharist begins*". They are to be dismissed BEFORE THE CREED (Prayer of the Faithful) is said by the worshipping community. The Dismissal Catechesis (Breaking Open of the Word) is the opportunity for them to continue with the Sunday Mass in another place, keeping the focus on the WORD OF GOD. RCIA Candidates are not normally dismissed from the Mass.

They are learning in many different ways with many different people. They are learning through the various liturgical experiences (the Liturgy of the Word, the minor rites), the dismissal catechesis experiences, the extended catechesis experiences, their involvement in parish activities and other apostolic service experiences. They are learning from their weekly conversations with their RCIA Sponsors and from just watching and listening to their fellow parishioners. The Catechumens and Candidates are to be offered, at all times, what they need to grow in their understanding and love for our Lord, Jesus Christ and His Church. If time is not given, much will not be accomplished. It takes time to see evidence of true CONVERSION in mind, body and soul.

Before the Pastor accepts the Catechumens and Candidates for Christian initiation, there must be a **time of discernment**. Go to **RCIA # 120 - 121** for more clarification.