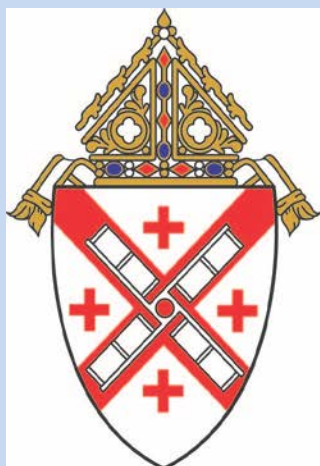


# R.C.I.A. CATECHUMENATE HANDBOOK

*The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the official ritual text of the Church which directs, supports and sustains the way of faith and conversion by which adults (and children who have reached the age of reason) are initiated into the Catholic Church. Although many Catholics are not familiar with it, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was restored to the Church in 1972 at the request of the Second Vatican Council as the normative way by which adults (and children who have reached the age of reason) are to be initiated into the Catholic Church. In 1988, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops published the ritual text we now use. The RCIA is normative for the Christian initiation of adults and children of catechetical age. The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful.*



ARCHDIOCESE  

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of  
NEW YORK

# Archbishop Calls RCIA A 'Gift' to the Church

By JULIANN DOSSANTOS

Addressing participants at an institute by the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, Archbishop Dolan stressed the impollance of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the life of the Church. Welcoming the participants in the forum, he said, "It is one of the singular blessings and gifts to the Church after the Second Vatican Council."

Some 90 people from around the country gathered for the July 10-12 institute held at the Passionist Spiritual Center in Riverdale, including pastors, deacons, coordinators and directors of religious education, catechists, and others interested in the process.

The archbishop, in a welcome filled with both laughter and gratitude, expressed his deep admiration for those involved in RCIA. He discussed four aspects of RCIA in particular: Its promotion of a personal relationship with Christ, its stress on the quest for holiness, its emphasis on interior conversion and its ecclesial dimension.

He said that RCIA shows that people are "part of a family."

He said, "We meet Jesus and sense him in and through his Church."

The institute combined workshops and learning with reflective experiences, faith sharing and retreat elements.

Institute Coordinator Rita Ferrone, an author and speaker on liturgy, catechesis and Church renewal, told CNY that an important aspect of the institute was to have participants walk through all the steps and stages of the RCIA process and to learn by doing. She hoped they would "grasp the importance of ongoing conversion for the whole community, and develop their skills for their ministry to people who are searching and looking for a community of faith."

One participant, Robert Fitkin of St. John the Evangelist parish in White Plains, said that he thought it was important to attend to learn from others involved in RCIA. At St. John's, the RCIA program is in its first year and already some 15

## RCIA...

*(Continued from Page 1)*

or 20 people have shown an interest.

"I have a desire to know the correct way to approach the ministry," he said. "It's an amazing ministry, and I want to be there to welcome people who come to church with an inking about their faith as a good servant." He said that since all inquirers into the faith are different, he wanted to learn as much as he could to "see what everybody else does."

Christopher Castagnoli of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan, knows first-

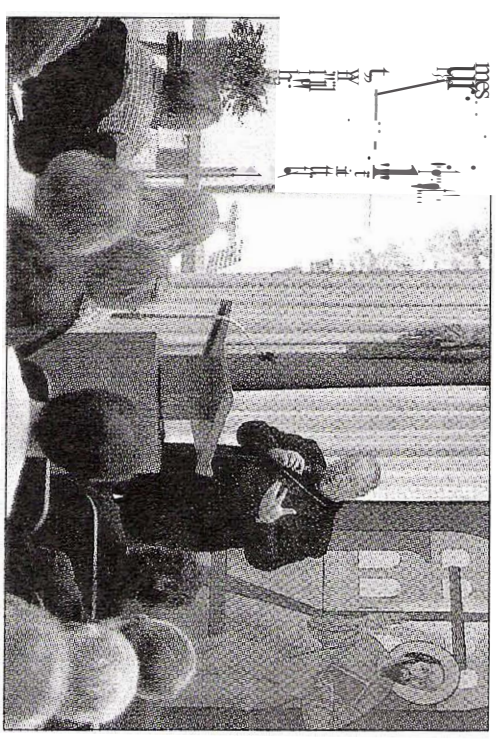
hand how RCIA can change someone's life—he was baptized in 1999 at the cathedral. He said that being on the other side of the program has been a great experience for him. He said he tries to approach those in RCIA with "enthusiasm and knowledge," adding, "I want them to say, 'this is incredible.'"

Oscar Cruz, director of adult catechesis for the archdiocese, told CNY that he hopes "participants gain a better sense of the importance of the catechumenate and how to fully implement it in their parish."

### WELCOME-

Archbishop Dolan speaks to participants July 10 at The North American Forum on the Catechumenate at the Passionist Spiritual Center of Riverdale.

Chris Sheridan



## Order of Christian Initiation of Adults For the UNBAPTIZED

Period	Name	Aim	Content	Time	Rites
<b>1-FIRST:</b> Period of the Precatechumenate	Inquirers	Awakening Initial Faith  <b>EVANGELIZATION</b>	Time to build trust to share personal stories, questions; time to proclaim the message of salvation, foster initial conversion, introduce into parish life.	As long or as Short as necessary...	No specific Rites suggested
<b>CELEBRATION</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>THE</b>	<b>RITE</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCE</b>
<b>2-SECOND:</b> Period of the Catechumenate	Catechumens (UNBAPTIZED)	Deepening initial conversion and passing on Catholic tradition  <b>PASTORAL FORMATION</b>	Time to deepen faith / conversion within the living community through: - Catechesis based of the Liturgy of the Word. - Participation in the life of the community. - Prayer and Worship - Introduction to the apostolic life	One to a few years  (one year = Liturgical Year)	<b>Major Rite:</b> -Celebration of the Word of God. (Liturgy of the Word) with Dismissal  <b>Minor Rites:</b> - Blessings - Anointing - Exorcisms - Presentation of the Creed - Presentation of the Lord's Prayer - Rite of Sending
<b>CELEBRATION</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>THE</b>	<b>RITE</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>ELECTION</b>
<b>3-THIRD:</b> Period of the Purification and Enlightenment	Elect (UNBAPTIZED)	Eliminate what is weak and sinful; Affirm what is holy. <b>SPIRITUAL FORMATION</b>	Time for spiritual reflection / recollection, retreats.	Lent	<b>Major Rites:</b> -Celebration of the Word of God. (Liturgy of the Word) -Scrutiny 1 -Scrutiny 2 -Scrutiny 3  <b>Minor Rites:</b> - Presentation of the Creed - Presentation of the Lord's Prayer - Preparation Rites for Holy Saturday
<b>CELEBRATION</b>	<b>OF THE</b>	<b>SACRAMENTS</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>CHRISTIAN</b>	<b>INITIATION</b>
<b>4-FOURTH:</b> Period of Mystagogy	Neophytes	Celebration of faith & mission. <b>ONGOING FORMATION</b>	Time for ongoing formation.	Easter to Pentecost / anniversary of initiation	-Sunday Mass  -Sacrament of Reconciliation

## Order of Christian Initiation of Adults For the BAPTIZED

Period	Name	Aim	Content	Time	Rites
<b>1-FIRST:</b> Period of the Precatechumenate	Inquirers	Awakening Faith <b>ONGOING EVANGELIZATION</b>	Time to build trust to share personal stories, questions; time to proclaim the message of salvation, foster initial conversion, introduce into parish life.	As long or as Short as necessary...	No specific Rites suggested
<b>CELEBRATION</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>THE</b>	<b>RITE</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>WELCOME</b>
<b>2-SECOND:</b> Period of the Catechumenate	Candidate (BAPTIZED)	Deepening initial conversion and passing on Catholic tradition <b>PASTORAL FORMATION</b>	Time to deepen faith / conversion within the living community Through: - Catechesis based of the LITURGY OF THE WORD - Participation in the LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY - PRAYER and WORSHIP - Introduction to the APOSTOLIC LIFE	As long or as Short as necessary...	+ Sunday Mass + Sacrament of Reconciliation
<b>CELEBRATION</b>	<b>OF THE</b>	<b>RITE</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>CALLING TO</b>	<b>CONTINUING CONVERSION</b>
<b>3-THIRD:</b> Period of the Purification and Enlightenment	Candidate (BAPTIZED)	Eliminate what is weak and sinful; Affirm what is holy. <b>SPIRITUAL FORMATION</b>	Time for spiritual reflection an recollection, retreats, and reconciliation.	For the Protestant: <b>anytime</b>  For the Catholic: <b>LENT</b>	+ Sunday Mass + Sacrament of Reconciliation
<b>CELEBRATION</b>	<b>OF THE</b>	<b>SACRAMENTS</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>CONFIRMATION</b>	<b>AND EUCHARIST</b>
<b>4-FOURTH:</b> Period of Mystagogy	Newly Confirmed	Celebration of faith, ministries, "Missioning" AND <b>ONGOING FAITH FORMATION</b>	Time for deepening of sacramental life. - Eucharist - Reconciliation And Ongoing Formation	For the Protestant: <b>anytime</b>  For the Catholic: <b>EASTERTIME</b>	+ Sunday Mass + Sacrament of Reconciliation

## **SOME RCIA REMINDERS**

"The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts." **(RCIA # 1)**

"The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful." **(RCIA # 4)**

"As a general rule, the pastors should make use of the rite of initiation in such a way that the sacraments themselves are celebrated at the Easter Vigil and the rite of election takes place on the First Sunday of Lent." **(RCIA # 17)**

"The catechumens is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. ...This is achieved in **four ways**:  
- suitable catechesis, ...become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community, ....suitable liturgical rites, ...work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build the Church by the witness of their lives."  
**(RCIA # 75)**

"The time spent in the catechumenate **should be long enough** - several years if necessary - for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong." **(RCIA # 76)**

"During the period of the catechumenate there should be celebrations of the word of God that accord with the liturgical season and that contribute to the instruction of the catechumens..."  
**(RCIA # 81)**

"Gradually the catechumens should be admitted to the first part of the celebration of the Sunday Mass. After the liturgy of the word they should, if possible, be dismissed..." **(RCIA #83)**

"Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (canon 852:1), their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual." They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens." **(National Statutes for the Catechumenate #18)**

"After the immediate mystagogy or postbaptismal catechesis during the Easter season, the program for the neophytes should extend until the anniversary of Christian initiation, with at least monthly assemblies of the neophytes for their deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community." **(National Statutes for the Catechumenate # 24)**

**RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS**

Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by National Conference of Catholic Bishops  
and Confirmed by the Apostolic See - 1988

## History of the Roman Catholic Christian Initiation Process

### **History of the Catechumenate**

<b>Early Church</b>	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.
<b>100 – 200 AD</b>	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.
<b>Third – Fourth Centuries</b>	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.
<b>Fifth Century</b>	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.
<b>Twelfth Century</b>	Catechumenate no longer existed. Elements of its transition into religious community formation and seminary training existed during the intervening centuries.
<b>Sixteenth Century</b>	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.
<b>Twentieth Century</b>	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.
<b>VATICAN COUNCIL 2</b>	Called for reinstating the CATECHUMENATE. ...Bishops’ vote on restoration of the catechumenate: “YES” = 2,165      “NO” = 9      “NULL” = 1
<b>POST VATICAN COUNCIL 2</b>	1966 - provisional ritual distributed 1969 - second draft distributed for experimentation 1972 - <b>PROMULGATION</b> 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. <b>1988 - SEPTEMBER.... U.S. Bishops MANDATE IMPLEMENTATION of final translation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)</b>

## A Paradigm Shift in Christian Initiation Formation

### Sacramental Catechesis for Christian Initiation

	<b>PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS OR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS</b>	<b>CATECHUMENATE</b>
<b>MODEL</b>	Teaching	Apprenticeship
<b>GOAL</b>	Knowledgeable Catholic	Active member of a Missioned Community
<b>REACHES FULLFILLMENT</b>	Intellectual Assent	Life of Prayer and Action leading to justice
<b>SETTING</b>	Classroom	Liturgy / Community / Service / Sessions
<b>TIMING</b>	Academic Year	Liturgical Year
<b>PRIMARY TOOL</b>	Textbook (Catechism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunday Scriptures</li> <li>• Liturgy / Rites</li> <li>• Apostolic Service</li> <li>• Community Life</li> </ul>
<b>IS PART OF</b>	School Ministry	Parish Ministry
<b>IS COUSIN TO</b>	Studying	Living
<b>WHO DOES IT</b>	Catechist	Community Catechist, Sponsors, Clergy, Parishioners
<b>PEOPLE INVOLVED</b>	Few	Many
<b>STYLE OF RELATIONSHIP</b>	Teacher to Student	Community to new member

## WHO BELONGS IN THE CATECHUMENATE?

**1) List of various groups that are addressed by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults:**

**THEY BELONG IN THE CATECHUMENATE:**

**A. Unbaptized Adult Converts (RCIA Part I):**

Unbaptized adults are normally led through the full catechumenate described in Part I of the rite. The combined duration of the catechumenate period and the period of purification and enlightenment is expected to be twelve months or more (NCCB Statutes no. 6). Although a shorter period of time may be pastorally acceptable for certain individuals, parishes should set a standard of twelve months or more, and take care not to create the expectation that a shorter period of preparation will usually be sufficient. In exceptional cases, an abbreviated catechumenate (RCIA Part II, chapter 2) may be used with the bishop's permission (RCIA no. 331, NCCB Statutes no. 20). In danger of death, the sacraments can be celebrated immediately (RCIA Part II, chapter 3; see also the Pastoral Care of the Sick, chapter 8). These adults receive the three sacraments of initiation together at one time, normally at the Easter Vigil celebration.

**B. Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age (RCIA Part II, chapter 1):**

Unbaptized children of catechetical age are normally accepted into a catechumenate for children, catechized in a way that is appropriate for their age level, celebrate a penitential rite (scrutiny) or rites, and receive the three sacraments of initiation together at one time (RCIA Part II, chapter 1). In exceptional cases and in danger of death, the same options outlined above for adults apply also to children of catechetical age.

**C. Baptized Catholic but Uncatechized Adults Preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist (RCIA Part II, chapter 4):**

Baptized but uncatechized (Catholic) adults preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist are so similar to the unbaptized in their catechetical status that the rite permits them to participate in most of the full process of formation outlined in RCIA Part I (see RCIA Part II, chapter 4). They are called candidates, not catechumens (NCCB Statutes no. 2). They are never referred to as converts (NCCB Statutes no. 2). Clear distinctions between catechumens and candidates must always be kept in the celebration of the rites (NCCB Statutes no. 31). In the Archdiocese of New York, it is highly recommended that they are confirmed and given first Communion at any Mass during the Easter Season. For pastoral reasons such candidates may complete their sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil (RCIA no. 409).

- The sacrament of Penance is celebrated with baptized candidates at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist (NCCB Statutes no. 27).

**D. Baptized Christian (Non-Catholic) Candidates for Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA Part II, chapter 5):**

Baptized Christian (Non-Catholic) adults and children candidates for Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church who are not described in item C above, are normally received into the Catholic Church at any Sunday Eucharist throughout the liturgical year (NCCB Statutes no. 32), at which they make their profession of faith, are confirmed and receive Communion. For pastoral reasons such candidates may have their reception, Confirmation and Eucharist take place at the Easter Vigil (NCCB Statutes no. 35).

- The sacrament of Penance is celebrated with baptized candidates at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist (NCCB Statutes no. 36).



## WHO DOES NOT BELONG IN THE CATECHUMENATE?

**2) List of various groups that are not addressed by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and thus belong in a Process Other Than the Catechumenate (RCIA):**  
**THEY DO NOT BELONG IN THE CATECHUMENATE:**

The (RCIA) catechumenate is a process of initiation and conversion centered on the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Its steps and periods are designed for the welfare of catechumens and candidates proper, whose progress in faith it is meant to serve. Although its principles and structure may give inspiration to other processes and programs in the Church, the catechumenate itself must maintain a clear identity, and should not be asked to take on tasks for which it was not intended.

The implementation of the catechumenate comes at a time when the Church is increasingly aware of the pastoral and catechetical needs of many of its members. These needs are real and important, but should be addressed by other means.

- A. **Fully Initiated Alienated Catholics** who are interested in exploring the possibility of a return to the Church and the practice of their faith do not belong in a catechumenate. Their experiences of the Church, their questions, and their pastoral needs are different from those of catechumens and candidates, and require a different pastoral response on the part of the Church.
  
- B. **Fully Initiated Adult Catholics Seeking Updating** or a deeper knowledge of their faith belong in a parish adult faith formation program or a faith renewal process, not the catechumenate. Adult faith formation programs should be available through the local parish. If Catholics who want to deepen their faith are also interested in becoming involved in the catechumenate through a particular ministry, such as hospitality or sponsorship that is another matter and should be decided based on the person's gifts and desire to serve.
  
- C. **Adult Catholics Seeking Confirmation Only** belong, not in the catechumenate, but in a program of preparation for the reception of Confirmation. Although these adults may have received only a rudimentary catechesis during their Catholic upbringing, they are nonetheless different from the "Baptized but Uncatechized Adults" who have received no Christian formation, and typically have never participated in the Eucharist. Normally adults seeking Confirmation only should receive an appropriate catechesis and be confirmed by the bishop.

Because of the variety of ages at which the sacrament of Confirmation is administered in the Church at present, and because of the mobility of our society, an increasing number of young Catholics "fall through the cracks" of the sacramental system and reach adulthood without having been confirmed. Their lack of Confirmation frequently goes unnoticed until they prepare for marriage. When large numbers of unconfirmed Catholics seeking marriage are introduced into the catechumenate, they alter the focus of the process and create time pressures that are not appropriate for a conversion journey. Therefore it is especially important that the needs of such candidates be considered separately.

## **Who Ministers in the Catechumenate (RCIA)?**

### **1. The Community**

The community is the primary minister of the catechumenate. RCIA no. 9 describes this ministry in detail. Consistent effort should be made to enable the parish community to be aware of and undertake their responsibility for the new life that God is giving the Church through its converts. The people of the parish should pray for the catechumens and candidates, socialize with them, and give them good example of the Christian life. The ongoing ministry of preaching and catechesis in the parish should build up the sense of the faithful that it is important and necessary for the community to care for catechumens and candidates in the process of initiation.

### **2. The Catechumenate (RCIA) Director or Coordinator**

It is expected that in addition to the pastor there is one person who is responsible for overseeing the work of the catechumenate in the parish. This person may be called the Catechumenate Director, or the Catechumenate Coordinator. A person in this position should have experience working in the catechumenate, as well as appropriate educational preparation for this ministry. The director or coordinator is responsible for working with the pastor and the catechumenate team to see that the ministries of the catechumenate are carried out, and that the norms and directives of the rite are observed. The director or coordinator also insures that the archdiocesan norms and directives are carried out. The director or coordinator arranges for the team's training and ongoing development, and serves as contact person for the Archdiocese.

### **3. Catechists**

The catechist in the catechumenate must have a thorough knowledge of and love for the teachings of the Church, as well as the practical skills necessary to work effectively with adults and/or children. Catechists who work with adults should understand the principles of adult learning, and those who work with children should apply pedagogical skills that are appropriate to the age group of the children. Because the catechumenate is intimately bound up with the liturgical life of the Church, and draws substantially on the scriptures proclaimed in the Sunday assembly, catechists in the catechumenate need to be solidly grounded in good principles of liturgy and scriptural interpretation, as well as theology, morality, spirituality, and so on.

### **4. Sponsors and Godparents**

Any fully initiated and practicing adult Catholic who is willing to assist in the process of initiation and is able to set a good example of the life of faith may be a sponsor for a catechumen. The sponsor's role is described in RCIA no. 10. The godparent of a catechumen should also assist in the initiation process and set a good example. The godparent's role is described in RCIA no. 11. The godparent must be a fully initiated Catholic in good standing. The same person usually fills the roles of sponsor and godparent, although two different people may fill them.

- Having a spouse or fiancé serve as a sponsor, though permissible, is not generally recommended. It is better to recruit a member of the parish who will enlarge the circle of support for the catechumen or candidate, rather than to rely on a spouse or fiancé who by nature of their relationship already has a central but different role in the person's life.

The sponsor of a candidate accompanies the candidate through the entire process of initiation, and assists in all the liturgical rites with the candidate. (No "new" or additional godparents are permitted, since the candidates are already baptized.)

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### **Core Ministries in the Parish Catechumenate (RCIA) Team:**

- Director / Coordinator of the Catechumenate (RCIA)
- Catechist / Facilitator
- Sponsor / Godparent
- Liturgy / Music
- Hospitality
- Spiritual Direction

## **WHAT IS A RCIA SPONSOR?**

*As the Father has sent me, so I send you!*  
*We share in the life of Christ by our baptism. By that same baptism:*  
*-we are called to share that life with others*  
*-we are empowered by the Spirit of God to do so.*

### **What is a RCIA Sponsor?**

The Sponsor is a co-traveler in this journey of faith who commits himself or herself to accompany a Catechumen or RCIA Candidate along the way.

The Sponsor is a person who is willing to be a friend, witness, a guide for the Catechumen or Candidate. ....**according to the Rite.**

*A Sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention. (RCIA 10)*

-The Sponsor is often chosen as the godparent. **The rite continues...**  
*Godparents are person chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest. It is the responsibility of godparents to show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness and to guide the candidates in moments of hesitates' progress in the baptismal like. (RCIA 10)*

### **What does a Sponsor do?**

Some activities in relation to the candidates might be:

- participate in gatherings: Ask questions, encourage discussion
- invite them to Sunday liturgies, parish activities...come with them if possible.
- invite them over for coffee and talk.
- listen to them.
- pray with them about personal needs and concerns.
- share faith experiences
- encourage and affirm their growth in faith.
- introduce them to parish member.

### **What might Sponsors expect from the Catechumen or Candidate?**

- Some anxiety or nervousness
- enthusiasm or hesitancy
- withdrawal from the program
- problem marriages.

### **What might Sponsors expect for themselves?**

- renewal or deepening of their own faith relationship with God
- some good and lasting friendship
- a strong experience of community and belonging.

### **Sponsors Represents the Church**

This may mean you will introduce the catechumen or candidate to other parishioners, to the activities of the church and to the organization of the community. The catechumen or candidate will probably catch the spirit of the community.

**Sponsors Are Witnesses** ...If you make that experience a constructive and hospitable one, the positive impression will be lasting. You help the individual to feel at home among Catholics by your support.

**Sponsors Are Companions**

## What does it mean to be a RCIA Sponsor?

Consultant

Companion

Source of  
Information

*What Does It  
Mean to Be a  
Sponsor in the Catechumenate?*

Guide

Participant  
In Liturgies / Rites

**As a sponsor you are the Parish representative to the catechumen or candidate.**

Being a sponsor means that you serve as a companion or guide.

You will be asked to walk along with the catechumen or candidate throughout the formation period.

As a guide you may at times have to help refocus the goal of the initiation journey.

You'll need to keep a healthy and realistic perspective on life and the purpose of conversion. The way of the Lord—not your way or anyone else's—is the destination of the journey. "For it is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5)

## What is the Period of the Pre-catechumenate?

### The Inquiry Period

WHAT DOES THE RITE SAY?	Core topics for discussion	SCRIPTURE RESOURCES
<p><b>“It is a time of evangelization:</b> faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all” <i>RCIA 36</i></p>	<p>Our God is a living God who holds in being the world he has created, and is present to us, his creatures. <i>40-41, 198, 290, 293, 295, 300-301</i></p> <p>God sent Jesus Christ for our salvation. Born of Mary, he is true God and true man. <i>422-423, 456-460, 463-464, 483, 519</i></p> <p>Jesus came proclaiming God's kingdom of justice, love, and peace. All people are called into that kingdom. <i>CCC 542-543, 546-547, 764</i></p> <p>Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church continues the mission of Jesus. <i>CCC 142, 144, 153-155</i></p>	<p>Creation Genesis 1:1–2:3 Psalm 139:1-18 Psalm 148</p> <p>Mystery of the Incarnation John 1:1–5, 10–14, 16 Luke 1:26–38 1 John 4:9–12</p> <p>Parables of the Kingdom Matthew 13:31–32 Matthew 13:44–47 Luke 15:1–10</p> <p>Mystery of the Church Acts 2:43–47 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 2 Corinthians 5:17–20</p>
<p>“Thus, those who are not yet Christians, their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to him.” <i>RCIA 36</i></p>	<p>God calls a people. <i>CCC 30, 59-60, 220, 781</i></p> <p>God is ever faithful. <i>CCC 205-208, 211-214</i></p> <p>We are invited to share God's life and love by becoming followers of Jesus. <i>27, 158, 160, 733, 781</i></p> <p>God's invitation calls for a free response of faith and trust. <i>142, 144, 153-155</i></p>	<p>The Call of Abraham Genesis 12:1–4a</p> <p>The Burning Bush Exodus 3:1–8, 13–14</p> <p>The Call of the First Disciples Matthew 4:18–22 John 1:35–50</p> <p>The Storm at Sea Mark 4:35–41</p>
<p>“From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love.” <i>RCIA 37</i></p>	<p>Our response to God's call entails conversion of heart and life. <i>CCC 545, 720, 1428, 2595, 2608</i></p> <p>Through prayer, we experience God's love for us, and draw closer to him. <i>CCC 2561-2564, 2567, 2591, 2613</i></p> <p>The power of God delivers us from evil and sin, and enables us to live a life that is holy and good. <i>CCC 1427, 1719, 1723, 1848, 2850</i></p> <p>Through his cross and resurrection, Jesus has overcome sin and death, and offers us life that never ends. <i>CCC 272, 420, 604-605, 654-655, 981, 2852</i></p>	<p>John the Baptist Luke 3:1–18</p> <p>Parables on Prayer Luke 11: 5–13 Luke 18: 1–8 Luke 18: 9–14</p> <p>The Crossing of Red Sea Exodus 14:15–31</p> <p>The Paschal Mystery John 11:25–27 Romans 6:3–5</p>

“Starts with Evangelization”  
Understanding the Precatechumenate

# STARTS WITH **Evangelization**

(Proclaiming, telling the Good News of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection)

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## IN THE PRECATECHUMENATE

### INQUIRERS

ARE PEOPLE WHO ASK:

1. Ultimate Questions  
Human Life Questions
  - “where have I come from?”
  - “where am I going?”
2. Personal Questions
  - “what is involved?”
  - “will I be accepted?”
3. Faith Questions
4. Catholic Questions
5. Parish Questions
6. No Questions / Voice no questions
  - shy, wounded, afraid

### BRING

Personal Life stories,  
Personal Life experiences

### INITIATING COMMUNITY

ARE PEOPLE WHO:

1. KNOW OWN STORIES  
HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS  
DO NOT HAVE IT ALL  
TOGETHER.
2. ARE WELCOMING
3. KNOW SCRIPTURE  
STORIES
4. KNOW THE CHURCH  
STORY
5. KNOW THE PARISH  
STORY
6. ARE GREAT LISTENERS  
ARE HOSPITABLE

## LEADS TO DIALOGUE

*This is a two-part story. Evangelization is telling/ proclaiming/ witnessing / listening to the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

## “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?

The Initiation Questionnaire can begin to be used at this time. The interviewer, not the inquirer, fills out the questionnaire. Based on the information gathered at the initial 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.

- Are the Inquirers ready for the next step?
  - Are the Inquirers ready for the Period of Pastoral Formation?
  - Are the Inquirers ready for the Period of the Catechumenate?
    - **Is there evidence of Initial Conversion?**

Reflection Questions before celebrating the:

- *Rite of Acceptance /Enrollment into the Order of Catechumens (unbaptized)*
- *Rite of Welcome of the Candidates (baptized)*

**These questions can be used for group discussion topics or individual meetings (conversations):**

- *Do you recognize that you need other people to become a full human person?*
- *Do you recognize a need for Jesus Christ in your life?*
- *Why do you want to become a member of this parish?*
- *How have you experienced God in this parish?*
- *How is your life beginning to change?*
- *Are you willing to accept the challenge of the cross in your life?*
- *How can you welcome the word of God in your life?*
- *What is it that you ask of God at this time of your life?*
- *What do you ask of us as a church?*
- *What do you need to help you in your journey of faith?*
  
- *Are you prepared to begin the journey toward eternal life under the guidance of Jesus Christ?*
- *Are you ready to hear the word of God so that you may possess eternal life?*
- *Are you ready to hear the word of God in our company, to know God and love your neighbor?*
  
- ***Are you prepared to listen to the apostles' instruction (word of God), gather with us for prayer, and join us in the love and service of others?***



## What is the Period of the Catechumenate About?

### **The Period of the Catechumenate**

The catechumenate period is the lengthiest period of the whole initiation process. "The length of the catechumenate period will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances . . . Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori [that is, beforehand]. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough—several years if necessary—for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong." (RCIA no. 76). In the dioceses of the United States the catechumenate period is to be at least one full liturgical year.

The USCCB National Statutes state that this period should extend from Easter to Easter (see National Statutes no. 6). Preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year.

### **Pastoral Formation During the Period of the Catechumenate**

The four ways in which the catechumenate period brings to maturity the initial faith that is manifested in the Rite of Acceptance and Welcome are:

- (1) suitable catechesis**
- (2) liturgical rites,**
- (3) community life,**
- (4) apostolic works**

(RCIA no. 75).

Experience has shown that the Word of God proclaimed in the Sunday assembly is the most effective basis for weekly catechesis in the catechumenate. The lectionary readings not only contain material for instruction, but they also foster prayer and formation in the common liturgical life of the faithful.

Participation in the liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass is an integral part of the catechumenate. After the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass, the catechumens are kindly dismissed, together with a catechist, to reflect on the Word they have just heard. Candidates may be dismissed with them, if this is felt to be pastorally helpful. After the dismissal catechesis, a longer catechetical session may follow, in which particular issues are explored in depth and the Church's tradition may be presented more fully. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other resources can be helpful to catechists in preparing for these sessions.

With the help of the sponsor, the catechumen or candidate should be introduced to other members of the parish community, and take part in parish activities to the extent that they are able. The development of the catechumens' and candidates' active participation in the mission of the Church should not be deferred until after their sacramental initiation, but should begin during the catechumenate period, under the guidance of the sponsor. Catechumens and candidates should be encouraged to share their newfound faith with others.

## **Sample: Sunday Morning Catechumenate Experience**

- 10:00 am      **LITURGY OF THE WORD**  
...gathering with community of the faithful for the Liturgy of the Word during the Mass.      Sunday after Sunday  
...as long as they are Catechumens/ Candidates.
- 10:30 am      **DISMISSAL OF CATECHUMENS**      RCIA # 67, 75.3  
...after the homily only the catechumens are dismissed with a catechist.  
...the candidates & sponsors remain at Mass for the Liturgy of the Eucharist
- BREAKING OPEN THE WORD (Prayer and Reflection)**  
**(Dismissal Catechesis)**  
...a time for the Catechumens to reflect on the Sunday Mass Scripture Readings and their personal faith journey.
- 11:00 am      **FELLOWSHIP (Hospitality)**  
...after the end of Sunday Mass, Candidates, the Sponsors, Family and Friends join the Catechumens for hospitality for a few minutes.
- 11:15 am      **CATECHETICAL SESSION**  
**(Extended Catechesis)**  
...a time for the Catechumens and Candidates to hear and understand Catholic Teaching and their personal faith journey.
- 12:15 pm      **CONCLUDING PRAYER & DISMISSAL**  
...it is also possible to conclude with one of these Minor Rites:  
- Blessings (RCIA #95)  
- Minor Exorcisms (RCIA #90)  
- Anointing (RCIA #98)  
... these Minor Rites are only offered to the Catechumens.

Dismissal Catechesis – Outline

## **BREAKING OPEN OF THE WORD SESSION GENERAL OUTLINE**

**Step 1:** After the Homily, the priest celebrant picks up the Lectionary and invites the catechumens to come forward with the dismissal catechist (facilitator). The priest celebrant then dismisses the catechumens and catechist with appropriate words.

**Step 2:** All process to where the dismissal catechesis session will take place.

**Step 3:** Upon reaching the place where the dismissal catechesis will take place, the following is done:

1. Simple prayer is offered to refocus the group.
2. Some or all of the Sunday Mass Lectionary readings are proclaimed again...
3. Reflection questions are offered one at a time, giving each catechumen a chance to respond:
  - a. **What did you hear in these readings? Why?**
  - b. **How can you respond in your personal life?**
  
  - c. **Additional questions** based on a particular theme that you might want to focus on may be given.

### **The dismissal catechist:**

- hears the reflective responses of each catechumen to the questions offered
- makes sure no one catechumen manipulates the faith sharing experience
- responds to the questions as well
- offers any necessary commentary/ clarification - that is appropriate

**Note..** that this is NOT a bible class nor a theology class....

.. it is a prayerful faith sharing experience.

Any semblance of a catechetical session should be avoided.

## *Catechesis before the Easter Vigil*

### **INQUIRY PERIOD** *(before the Rite of Acceptance / Welcome)*

...this is the time for **INFORMAL CATECHESIS**: **EVANGELIZATION**

...Goal: + help the Inquirer prepare for the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome  
+ Initial conversion

...Effective Tools:

- + **STORYTELLING / WITNESSING** – personal stories / bible stories / Church & parish stories
- + Church Tour
- + Introduction to the Liturgical Year and life of prayer
- + Hospitality

...Topics:

- + the “*Jesus Story*” - the “*Christian Way of Life*” (informal introduction)

### **CATECHUMENTE PERIOD** *(after the Rite of Acceptance / Welcome)*

...this is the time for **FORMAL CATECHESIS**: **PASTORAL FORMATION**

...Goal: + help the Catechumen / Candidate prepare for the Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion  
+ Enliven / mature their Initial conversion

...Effective Tools:

- + **Liturgy of the Word** at Sunday Mass
- + **Breaking Open of the Word** ...reflecting on the Sunday Reading (**Faith Sharing**)
- + **Catechetical Session** ..Presentation of Catholic Doctrine based on the Sunday Readings
- + **Minor Rites and Apostolic Service**
- + **Reflection with Appointed RCIA Sponsor**

...Topics – from the **LITURGICAL YEAR** – Weekly Sunday Liturgy of the Word.

*Some major topics that will arise throughout the Liturgical Year: comes from NCD: Sharing the Light of Faith, Chapter 5*

- + Mystery of the One God (Holy Trinity)
- + Creation (God as Father)
- + Jesus (nature, mission, salvation)
- + Holy Spirit (presence, mission)
- + The Church (origins, titles, mission)
- + The Sacraments (general meaning, the 7 sacraments)
- + Life of Grace (original sin, personal sin, grace, conversion, repentance)
- + The Moral Life (call to holiness, conscience, Ten Commandments, the beatitudes, the sermon on the mount)
- + Mary and the Communion of Saints
- + Death, Judgment and Eternity

### **ENLIGHTENMENT/ PURIFICATION PERIOD (LENT)** *(After the Rite of Election / Rite of Calling)*

...this is the time for more Formation in Spiritual Life: **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

...Goal: + help the Elect / Candidate prepare for the Easter Vigil Celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist  
+ Deepen Conversion

...Effective Tools:

- + **Liturgy of the Word** at Sunday Mass
- + **Breaking Open of the Word** ...reflecting on the Sunday Reading (**Faith Sharing**)
- + **Catechetical Session** ..Prayerful reflection on Catholic Doctrine based on the Sunday Readings
- + **Scrutinies or Sacrament of Reconciliation and Apostolic Service**
- + **Retreat / Day of Prayer and Reflection**

...Topics:

- + Sin and Forgiveness, Mercy, Compassion, Spiritual Renewal, Prayer, Examination of Conscience
- + Presentation of the Creed (Nicene or Apostle)
- + Presentation of the Our Father

## Year-Round Doctrinal Formation from the Liturgical Year

The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** calls us to offer the catechumens: “A **suitable catechesis**, provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful, planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, **accommodated to the liturgical year**, and **solidly supported by celebrations of the word**. This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.” **RCIA # 75**

**Consider the following overview of possible doctrinal material through the Cycle of the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year:**

**ADVENT / CHRISTMAS:**

Fall and Redemption; Eschatology; Prophets;  
Incarnation, Jesus fully Divine and Human  
Mary, Mother of God, Model of Discipleship  
Holy Family; Jesus’ Mission to all People;  
Repentance, Social Justice

**LENT / EASTER:**

Covenant; Paschal Mystery; Sin & Grace;  
Conversion; Moral Life;  
Penance: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving;  
Baptism; Eucharist; Forgiveness  
Priesthood; Jesus’ Resurrection and Ours;  
Ascension; Spirit; Church’s Foundation and Mission;  
Reconciliation; Evangelization: God’s Humility/Power

**ORDINARY TIME:**

Trinity; Eucharist; Jesus’ Miracles; Commandments;  
Discipleship; Witness to Faith; Personal and Social Ministry;  
Heaven and Hell; Suffering; Sacraments and Sacramental Life;  
Creed; End of Time; Last Judgment

**FEASTDAYS:**

Virtues; God’s Mercy and Justice; Beatitudes;  
Vocation; Witness; Justice and Peacemaking;  
Sacrificial Living; Martyrdom; Communion of Saints

The possibilities are rich and breathtaking in scope.

The Rite reminds us that: “As they become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self renunciation” **RCIA # 75**

## “Ready for Lent” – “The Ministry of Discernment”:

### How do we know when the goals of the Catechumenate Period have been accomplished?

Before celebrating the Rite of Election (celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent) and after having spent a year or more of formation in the Catechumenate Period, the catechumens are expected:

- to have undergone a *conversion in mind and action*
- to have developed a *sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching*
- to have developed a *spirit of faith and charity*. (RCIA 120)

The discernment which takes place before the Rite of Election is concerned with all three aspects of the catechumen's readiness:

- (a) *Reorienting their life according to the Gospel*,
- (b) *Understanding Christian teaching*,
- (c) *Appropriate spiritual development*.

“With deliberate will and enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church” the rite explains in summary form (RCIA 120).

The discernment before Election, like the one carried out before the Rite of Acceptance, looks for outward indications that these interior changes have taken place (conversion, adequate understanding, spiritual development). The Affirmation by the Godparents in the Rite of Election itself summarizes these outward signs of readiness:

- they have *faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church*;
- they have *responded to that word and begun to walk in God's presence*; and
- they have *shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined with them in prayer* (RCIA 131B).

“The deliberation may take various forms, depending on local conditions and pastoral needs,” the rite tells us (RCIA 122). Interviews, retreats, and discussions including the catechumens themselves are all helpful means of arriving at this discernment.

Admission to Election belongs to the bishop (RCIA 121). The discernment, which is the basis for the bishop's admission, however, is carried out in the parish. The following people are involved in this discernment, each in a way that is proper to them:

- priests
- deacons
- catechists
- godparents
- the entire community
- the catechumens themselves. (RCIA 121, 122)

By participating in this discernment, the whole local community takes responsibility for those who are coming to the Easter sacraments. They “surround the elect with prayer, so that the entire Church will accompany and lead them to encounter Christ” (RCIA 121). For the Baptized Candidates, the criteria for discernment are stated differently. The Affirmation by the Sponsors in the Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion summarizes the candidates' signs of readiness as follows:

- they have *faithfully listened to the apostles' instruction proclaimed by the Church*
- they have *come to a deeper appreciation of their baptism*; and
- they have *reflected sufficiently on the tradition of the Church, which is their heritage, and joined their brothers and sisters in prayer* (RCIA 452B).

The fundamental issues of conversion and Christian living that were part of the catechumens' discernment also need to be discerned for candidates. The additional concerns of coming to appreciate their own baptism and reflecting on Church tradition as their own heritage, however, give the discernment for candidates its particular character.

**What Happens in Lent (the Period of Purification and Enlightenment)**

**THE GOAL:**

“The goal and focus of catechesis during the **period of purification and enlightenment** is different from that during the period of the catechumenate. This is a time for **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**.

During the period of the catechumenate, the focus of catechesis was immersion into the fullness of the Christian community as expressed in the Catholic Tradition – scripture, doctrine, worship, community and service. The period of purification and enlightenment presumes such immersion and the readiness to make the commitment of baptism.

**NOW THE FOCUS IS AKIN TO A RETREAT.**

The elect and candidates, firm in their resolve to embrace the gospel, experience a time set apart for deepened reflection on this gospel way of life, seeking the prayers of the community during these final days of preparation.... . . . . . This, then, is a time of prayer and reflection. This is not the time to cover materials that they may have forgotten during the catechumenate period.

Rather, it is a time of focusing on God’s gifting presence, and how that presence uncovers and reveals attitudes and lifestyles that are contrary to relationship with God – namely, sin – as well as raising up those attitudes and gifts that deepen the relationship with God.”

(Morris, Thomas, The RCIA, Transforming the Church, pp 170 - 171, Paulist Press, 1997)

**THE SCRUTINIES:**

The Scrutinies are celebrated on the **Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent**.... They are celebrated with the Elect only (those that are NOT-BAPTIZED). Candidates (those BAPTIZED) would be invited to participate in the Penitential Rite (RCIA # 461) and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Scrutinies raise up and expose whatever keeps the transforming love of God from liberating all forms of oppression.... The scrutinizes unmask the deception of evil and sin for what they really are: robbers of true and authentic life.... The scrutinizes also raise up those dimensions of life that welcome the loving presence of God, thus encouraging full life.... Thus, the focus of the scrutinizes is toward life, toward freedom, toward salvation. They take very seriously the transforming love of God. ... The best preparation for the celebration of the Scrutinizes is to help the Elect identify and name their areas of strength and weakness in relationship to life with God.... One way of doing this could be to provide a retreat experience with the Elect during which time they could raise and address the issues of their life.... The symbols of the Scrutinies are: living waters, light of the world, new life. (Morris, Thomas, The RCIA, Transforming the Church, pp 171 - 172, Paulist Press, 1997)

**The Lectionary Text for the celebration of the Scrutinies – Year A**

Third Sunday of Lent RCIA 150-156 <b>First Scrutiny</b>	Exodus 17:3 – 7 Israel grumbling in the desert; God gives water to drink.	Psalm 95	Romans 5 : 1 – 2, 5 – 8 The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.	John 4: 5 – 42 The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.
Fourth Sunday of Lent RCIA 164-170 <b>Second Scrutiny</b>	1 Samuel 16: 1, 6 – 7, 10 – 13 David is chosen and anointed.	Psalm 23	Ephesians 5: 8 – 14 Live as children of the light.	John 9: 1 – 41 The man who had been blind from birth
Fifth Sunday of Lent RCIA 171-177 <b>Third Scrutiny</b>	Ezekiel 37: 12 – 14 I will put my spirit in you that you may live.	Psalm 130	Romans 8: 8 – 11 If the Spirit of Christ is in you, you will have life.	John 11: 1 – 45 The raising of Lazarus from the dead.

“What about the Easter Vigil” .....

## **The Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil**

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist normally are conferred at the Easter Vigil. The Easter Vigil must be a worthy celebration in every way, especially in its full and lavish use of symbol, both in the celebration of the sacraments themselves, and in the preceding services of light and word. A generous use of water is especially important. Baptism by immersion is preferred as “the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament” (National Statutes no. 17), and should be encouraged.

The elect do not carry lighted tapers as the baptized do during the service of light, because Christ in Baptism has not yet enlightened them. The candidates however do carry lighted tapers, because they are baptized. After the elect are baptized, they may be clothed in a baptismal garment. Traditionally, this is a simple, white, flowing garment that clothes the whole person. The alb is a baptismal garment. Full-length, poncho-like garments are sometimes used. The baptismal garment should not be decorated with “symbols.” It is itself the symbol, and anything added to it will detract from its effectiveness. Stoles are not baptismal garments. If the newly baptized are to receive a baptismal garment, it is appropriate that the candidates who will complete their Christian initiation at that celebration (but have already “put on Christ” in their Baptism) be clothed in such garments from the beginning of the liturgy.

Priests who exercise a pastoral office in the Archdiocese of New York are automatically granted faculties by the Archbishop to baptize adults and children of catechetical age, and they receive from the law the faculty to confirm them (Canon 883.2).

When the elect are baptized, the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist must be conferred immediately thereafter, unless a grave reason prevents it (Canon 866, cf. RCIA no. 215, NCCB Statutes no. 14). The absence of a bishop does not constitute a grave reason (cf. NCCB Statutes no. 13-14); nor does the personal preference of the celebrant or candidate for Baptism. A grave reason may arise in emergency situations or missionary situations where the minister of Baptism is a deacon, or the oil of chrism is not available.

It is not permissible at one celebration for one priest to baptize and another to confirm. The faculty to confirm is only granted to the one who baptizes. For the same reason, it is not permissible for a deacon to baptize and a priest to confirm. If there are a large number to be confirmed, the presiding minister may invite other priests to assist him in the anointing (RCIA no. 14). When an ordinary minister of Baptism is available, a layperson is not authorized to baptize. Nor is it appropriate for anyone except the baptizing minister to question the catechumen for the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith prior to Baptism.

Priests who exercise a pastoral office in the Archdiocese of New York are automatically granted faculties by the Archbishop to receive into the full communion of the Catholic Church adults and children of catechetical age, and they receive from the law the faculty to confirm them (Canon 883.2). Those who have the faculty to confirm are bound to exercise it (Canon 885.2; see also NCCB Statutes no. 35).

In the Archdiocese of New York, the faculty to confirm those candidates in the catechumenate who were baptized as Catholics and who have not celebrated Confirmation and Eucharist has been given to pastors, administrators, and to any priest that a pastor or administrator sub-delegates, under the following conditions:

- to be used only for baptized Catholics who have fully participated in the process and catechesis of the 1988 Rite of Christian Initiation,
- when the celebration of Confirmation takes place during a Eucharistic Liturgy either at the Easter Vigil, or at celebrations held during the Octave of Easter, or during the Saturday of or at the Vigil of Pentecost, or on Pentecost Sunday.

*If any of these conditions are not met, then the faculty to confirm must be specifically requested from the Vicar General.* Since questions of validity may arise when the Sacrament of Confirmation is administered by a priest, (Canon 882), a notation should be made in the Parish Confirmation Register that the faculty to confirm under the above-listed conditions is expressly delegated, i.e., “*delegatus.*”

The neophytes and the other newly initiated may take up the gifts at the preparation of the altar. Communion should be offered under both forms.



## Unity and Order of the Sacraments and the Catechumenate (RCIA)

**Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist** were celebrated together in the early Church. After the Baptismal washing and anointing of the whole body (usually by deacons or presbyters), the bishop anointed the forehead with chrism. The new Christians were then welcomed into the assembly for participation in the Eucharist. This sequence has been preserved to the present day in the liturgy of the Eastern Churches. As recently as 2007, Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed the importance of the unity of the three sacraments of Christian initiation. (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 17-19)

In the West, the sequence of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist remained almost entirely intact until the twentieth century. While the sacraments were separated in time, the sequence remained the same. Baptism was separated from both Confirmation and Eucharist by a period of about ten years. In 1910 Pope Pius X mandated that children be welcomed to the table by the age of seven, but no mention was made of when Confirmation should be celebrated. The result was that the order of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist was inverted in many parts of the world. (One should note however that the practice of celebrating Confirmation before Communion was maintained in some places, such as parts of Latin America. The Code of Canon Law also has consistently referred to the sacraments of initiation in their traditional order.)

In 1971, the new *Rite of Confirmation* reiterated the traditional order: "The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and finally are sustained by the food of eternal life in the Eucharist." The whole process of initiation culminates in the celebration of the Eucharist. The ongoing life of faith is then continually nourished on the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The *Apostolic Constitution on Confirmation* stresses that:

. . . Confirmation is so closely linked with the holy Eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by holy Baptism and Confirmation, are incorporated fully into the body of Christ by participation in the Eucharist.

In 1972, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 206- 207, gave further support to this sequence, as did the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994, 1997), 1233, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), 91, and the revised *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005), 36.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* states the purpose of celebrating the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation together, in this way:

The conjunction of the two celebrations [Baptism and Confirmation] signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized. (RCIA 215)

The celebration of the Eucharist that follows, then, is the event in which ". . . the newly baptized reach the culminating point in their Christian initiation." (RCIA 216)

This sequence—**Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist**—is followed both in the initiation of adults and in the initiation of children of catechetical age. . . . **see RCIA 206.**

“What about the Mystagogy Period”

### **The Period of Post baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy**

The period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy refers to the fifty days of the Easter season, concluding at Pentecost (RCIA 249), and also to the first year of the neophyte's life as a baptized Christian (NCCB Statutes no. 24), concluding on the anniversary of the neophyte's initiation (RCIA 250). The mystagogy that takes place during this first year is also called "extended mystagogy." Extended mystagogy includes monthly meetings (NCCB Statutes no. 24). Seasonal gatherings may also be appropriate.

The neophytes and their godparents should participate as a group in the Sunday masses of the Easter season, and special places in the assembly should be reserved for them (RCIA 248). They may wear their baptismal garments at these celebrations, so as to make their presence more visible to the assembly. These "neophytes' masses," are the main setting of the mystagogy. (RCIA 247).

Candidates whose initiation was completed in the catechumenate participate in this period in the same way as the newly baptized. Their sponsors should support them and participate in the neophytes' masses with them.

#### **Catechesis during the Period of Mystagogy .. ONGOING FORMATION**

Mystagogical catechesis is different from the catechesis of the preceding periods because in mystagogy the neophytes' new experience of the sacraments is engaged and deepened. This period is centered on the sacraments and on living a sacramental life. The role of the catechist during this time is exercised under four headings (cf. RCIA 244):

**a. meditation on the Gospel**

The catechist helps the neophytes and the newly confirmed to explore the meaning of the Easter lectionary, especially the Gospel readings, to discover how the Sunday Word illuminates the new life of baptism.

**b. the experience of the sacraments**

The catechist guides the neophytes and the newly confirmed in reflecting on their actual experience of the sacraments they have received, and leads them to gain insight into their meaning.

**c. the works of charity**

The catechist continues to encourage the neophytes and the newly confirmed to join the community in its works of charity, and to connect these experiences with the Eucharist.

**d. the role of the community**

The catechist works with the community, preparing them to receive the neophytes and the newly confirmed in a spirit of joyful welcome and to establish ongoing relationships with them.

The catechumenate team and the whole community of faith have an important role to play in this stage of the process. The catechist works together with them and with the clergy who preside and preach at the Masses for neophytes.

## Catechesis in the Catechumenate

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“Catechesis during the entire Catechumenate process is concerned with helping the catechumen and candidate name the experience of God within his or her own life”

*(The RCIA, Transforming the Church, Thomas Morris)*

“Catechesis is not about passing information. It is about enlivening faith.”

*(The RCIA, Transforming the Church, Thomas Morris)*

“...the challenge of catechesis: making the Word of God  
– in scripture and as articulated in the teachings of the Church –  
credible and meaningful.”

*(The RCIA, Transforming the Church, Thomas Morris)*

“Catechesis...needs to be holistic.

There needs to be variety in presentation that energizes and challenges the catechumens' and candidates' minds, hearts and wills.”

*(The RCIA, Transforming the Church, Thomas Morris)*

“The initiation process has explicitly claimed the close link between  
CATECHESIS and LITURGY...

...liturgical catechesis places the liturgical celebration of rites  
at the center of initiation catechesis”

*(The RCIA, Transforming the Church, Thomas Morris)*

“Key resources for such a catechesis are: the LITURGICAL CALENDAR itself with its celebrations of feasts and seasons, the “Roman Missal”, the Lectionary, and the primary liturgical symbols of the community”

*(The RCIA, Transforming the Church, Thomas Morris)*

“Valid Baptisms and Confirmations”

### **Criteria for Determining a Valid Non-Catholic Baptism**

There are three criteria for determining that any Baptism is valid, whether Catholic or not. These are: **the use of water, the use of the Trinitarian formula, and the intention to do what the Church does when it baptizes.** If the ritual books of a non-Catholic Church or communion prescribe Baptism by water (either by immersion, or pouring, or sprinkling) and the Trinitarian formula, the only way that one can question the validity of a Baptism in such a Church or communion is to have reasonable proof that the minister did not use the proper matter or form or did not intend to baptize, or in the case of an adult recipient, that the proper intention was lacking in the one being baptized (canon 869.2). Inability to obtain a baptismal certificate from the particular Church or communion in question does not in itself constitute reasonable proof that a Baptism was invalid. Ordinarily a certificate should be able to be obtained, but sometimes there are valid reasons why written records do not exist or have become unavailable. Each case should be considered individually, and the chancery should be consulted in doubtful cases. Preferably, the certificate of Baptism should be obtained before the Rite of Acceptance or Welcome. If, however, there is a doubt about the fact or validity of Baptism, and the doubt remains after serious investigation, Baptism may be conferred conditionally (canon 869.1).

### **Conditional Baptism**

Conditional Baptism must always be celebrated privately and with limited rites (NCCB Statutes no. 37). The doctrine of the sacrament of Baptism, and the reasons for the doubtful validity of the Baptism must be explained to the person before conditional Baptism is conferred (canon 869.3).

#### **+Some of the Churches or Communions that either Do Not Baptize or Do Not Have a Valid Baptism Recognized by the Catholic Church:**

Bohemian Free Thinkers	Salvation Army
Christadelphians	Unitarians
Christian Science Church	Jehovah's Witnesses
Mormons*	Quakers

*For information about other Churches or communions, which are not listed here, contact the Chancery Office and/or See the Archdiocesan RCIA Guidelines(March 2017).*

#### **+Non-Catholic Confirmations**

The only non-Catholic Churches whose sacrament of Confirmation is accepted as valid by the Catholic Church are: the Eastern Non-Catholic Churches, the Polish National Catholic Church, and the Society of Pius X. All candidates from Christian Churches other than these must be confirmed when they are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

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\* Please note that Mormon baptism will, however, affect the disposition of marriage cases.

# What about the RCIA for Children?

CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE AND THE CATECHUMENATE (RCIA)

## **Who Are the Children?.. that belong in the Catechumenate (RCIA)**

Because children of catechetical age are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (canon no. 852.1), they are included in the norms set forth by the RCIA. Children of catechetical age are old enough to hear and understand the call of Christ, and to respond with faith at their own age level. Consequently, their initiation is not based, as is the Baptism of infants, entirely on the commitment of the parents and the faith of the Church, but requires a genuine faith response on the part of the child. At the same time, the child is still dependent on his or her parents, and will need continued nurturing in faith. Children of catechetical age are those who have reached the age of reason, which is generally considered to be **age seven**. The category of "children of catechetical age" extends up to the fourteenth year.

The initiation of young people fourteen years and older should follow the rite for adults in every respect (Part I for the unbaptized, and Part II, Chapters 2-5 for the baptized), rather than following the adaptations for children that are found in Part II, Chapter 1 of the RCIA.

### A. Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age

This is the primary group of children involved in the catechumenate. The Part II, Chapter 1 of the rite, addresses their special concerns. They should without exception participate fully in the children's catechumenate, and celebrate all three of the sacraments of initiation together. (See RCIA no. 305, NCCB Statutes nos. 18–19, and canons 852.1 and 866.)

### B. Baptized Non-Catholic Children Seeking Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

This group is included in the norms set forth by the RCIA. Their situation is addressed in part by the description of the catechumenate for children found in Part II Chapter 1 of the rite. Their situation is also addressed in Part II, Chapter 5 of the rite, which concerns the reception of baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church. The priest who presides at the reception of these young candidates receives from the law the faculty to confirm them (canon 883.2), and must use it (canon 885.2; see also NCCB Statutes no. 13). Therefore, children who are received into the Church and who have not been validly confirmed must be confirmed at the time of their reception. The process of formation for these baptized children may be carried on in the catechumenate, with the clear understanding that they are candidates, not catechumens. Just as the participation of baptized adults is allowed in the adult catechumenate for pastoral reasons, so the participation of baptized children is allowed in the children's catechumenate. If the parents of these children are also being baptized or received into the Church, their children should be received at the same time, depending on their readiness.

### C. Children Younger Than Catechetical Age - **DO NOT BELONG IN THE CATECHUMENATE!**

Unbaptized children younger than catechetical age are to be baptized according to the Rite of Baptism for Children, which is the rite used for infant Baptism. Their Confirmation and Eucharist are then deferred until a later age, according to parish and archdiocesan policy.

Baptized children younger than catechetical age whose parents are being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church do not participate in a catechumenate. They are received on the same date as their parents. Although no rite is required of them, these children should be warmly welcomed and may be recognized in various ways at the celebration of their parents' reception.

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Notation of their reception and record of the date and place of their Baptism should be made in the parish baptismal register at the time of their parents' reception. They then receive the remaining sacraments of initiation with their Catholic peers. Baptized children younger than catechetical age who were baptized in a non-Catholic Church, and whose parents are Catholics, are considered to be received into the Church at the time of their reception of first communion, with no additional rites required of them. The date of their first reception of Eucharist should be noted in the parish baptismal register as their date of reception, and record of the date and place of their Baptism should also be entered. They should participate with their Catholic peers in catechesis and the sacraments, and should not take part in a catechumenate.

## **The Relationship of the Rite for Adults to the Rite for Children**

The catechumenate as it is described for an adult is the model for the catechumenate for children. What is contained in the section devoted to children (RCIA Part II, Chapter 1) is a set of adaptations to render the adult catechumenate better suited to the pastoral needs of children. It does not constitute a different model. Whenever the introductory material in the chapter on children does not provide enough information or guidance concerning the periods or the rites, the reader should refer to the corresponding section of the rite for adults for more information. From apostolic times, families have come to the grace of Baptism together. Families that are undergoing initiation should, as far as possible, celebrate the rites of the catechumenate and the sacraments of initiation together as a family, provided that each member is ready for the next stage of the process. When there is a mixed group of children and adults, the adult rite is followed, with appropriate adaptations made for the children who are participating. The catechumenate for adults and children is a single reality. Adults and children may always participate in the rites together. When the children's parents are not part of the catechumenate for adults, however, the parish may celebrate the rites for them in gatherings separate from the adult catechumenate, where the fullest use of the adaptations for children may be exercised. This is a pastoral decision.

## **Special Needs of Children in the Catechumenate**

The Christian initiation of children of catechetical age must therefore take special care to evaluate the following elements of the child's conversion, so that the child's special needs may be met:

- A. What is the attitude of the child's family? Is there a commitment on their part to help the child grow in faith and in the community of the Church? Can this commitment be developed?
- B. What is the child's relationship to the parish community and to Sunday worship? Is there an on-going relationship? Can such a relationship be developed?
- C. Has the child expressed faith in Christ? Does the child want to belong to the Church? Can a personal relationship to Christ and to the Church be developed?

## **Role of the Family in the Children's Catechumenate**

The catechumenate for children should incorporate ways for the family of the young catechumen to be involved in the process of initiation. The catechumenate director or pastor should meet with the family and enlist their active support from the beginning of the process. A commitment to bring the child to the catechumenate gatherings is essential. The director or pastor should make clear what the process involves for the child, and that the family is expected to participate with the child in the rites and the catechetical process. Families today take a great many different forms, due to the prevalence of divorce and remarriage in our society. The family structure also varies according to culture. Families today are frequently subject to economic pressures, and experience time pressures due to both parents working outside the home. The Church should take these factors into account in determining reasonable expectations for family involvement.

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For children to be initiated into the Church, it is always necessary to have the consent of their parents, or at least one of them, or those who lawfully take their place. Children who have the consent but not the active involvement of their parents in the process of initiation should not on that account alone be barred from the process. If these children have grandparents, responsible older siblings or other key family members who will support their conversion consistently; these factors should also be taken into account.

### **Role of Catholic Peers in the Children's Catechumenate**

The support of the child's community of peers and their families will strengthen the young catechumen's experience of the Church and of conversion, and should be sought whenever possible. The special role of a "peer companion" does not substitute for an adult sponsor, but can provide a helpful support for the catechumen and should be used judiciously.

If the child is enrolled in a Catholic school or catechetical program, the child's classmates should be made aware of the special journey of the child and invited to participate in liturgical celebrations of the catechumenate for their classmate whenever appropriate. This may take the form of participation in one of the major rites held in the parish Church, or one of the minor rites, which may be celebrated with a group of children in a school or catechetical center.

### **The Shape of the Catechumenate for Children**

Initiation is a gradual process for children as well as for adults, and care should be taken to allow enough time for the children to grow secure in their new faith and develop bonds to the Church community. Frequently, the time needed by the children is longer than the time needed by adults.

The catechumenate begins with an inquiry period that leads up to the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance (or the combined Rite of Acceptance and Welcome). The inquiry period, or precatechumenate, should introduce the child to ingredients basic to our faith: who is God, who is Jesus, what is the Church.

After the Rite of Acceptance, the process continues with the catechumenate period, which is linked with the Sunday Liturgy of the Word. This period includes dismissals and minor rites, as does the catechumenate period for adults. The child's experience of worship is very important to this period. Special attention should be given to cultivating a sense of wonder at God's presence in the central symbols of our faith: light, water, oil, bread and wine, and the people gathered to worship. Catechesis about what it means to follow Jesus in our daily lives springs naturally from the lectionary readings Sunday by Sunday in the course of the liturgical year. At least one full year should be devoted to the catechumenate period. The pastor, catechumenate director, catechists, and other members of the team should carry out a discernment of the children's progress and readiness for the sacraments of initiation. Those who are truly prepared then pass into the Lenten period of purification and enlightenment.

The Rite of Election is considered an optional rite for children. That does not mean that each child may decide whether or not to attend. Rather, the pastor and catechumenate director, in consultation with the catechumenate team, should decide whether and how the children who will receive the sacraments at Easter should participate. Careful consideration should be given to this question as a matter of parish policy. Children may participate in the archdiocesan Rite of Election. If the children do not participate with the adults at an archdiocesan celebration, another option is to hold a Rite of Election for children in the parish.

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During the period of purification and enlightenment, one or two Scrutinies should be celebrated with the children. These celebrations may be linked with services for the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation for the children's Catholic peers. Those children taking part in the catechumenate who are already baptized should be prepared to receive the sacrament of penance during this time.

The sacraments of initiation are celebrated for the children at the Easter Vigil, unless some serious reason prevents it, such as inordinately large numbers. Children whose parents are being initiated at the Easter Vigil should be included with their family members, provided they are ready.

If, for pastoral reasons, any of the children are not initiated at the Easter Vigil, they should receive the three sacraments of initiation as soon as possible thereafter, at the Mass of Easter day or a Sunday Mass during the Easter season.

Children should share in the joy of the fifty days of the Easter season, and be visible to the community at Sunday Mass with their godparents and the other neophytes, in a special place reserved for them in the assembly. They may attend the neophytes' celebration with the bishop, and should have a special celebration to mark the end of the Easter season, at Pentecost. For children, extended mystagogical catechesis will be provided by their ongoing participation in the parish religious education (catechetical / faith formation) program, and ongoing mystagogia through the parish catechumenate.

## **Adapting the Rites for Children in the Catechumenate**

When celebrating the rites for children, the ritual for children should be used and adapted to the needs of the particular children who will participate. Those who are involved in preparing the rites, especially catechists whose background in liturgy is not extensive, should take great care in adapting the rites. The following principles should be kept in mind:

- The adaptations for children offered by the rite should be read and understood in light of Part I of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.
- It is the goal of any adaptation to preserve and highlight the central symbols of the rites.
- It is necessary to avoid adding additional layers of symbolism to the symbols that are already in the rite.
- It is necessary to understand the structures of the rites, and keep those structures intact.
- The rite as it appears in the ritual book is always our guide and reference point.

When children celebrate the rites together with adult catechumens, the adult rite is followed, with some adaptations for the children. In order to accomplish this successfully, the celebrant should prepare carefully, perhaps using a text prepared specially that combines the adult rite with the adaptations for children.

When combining adaptations for children with the adult rite, in celebrations where both adults and children will participate, the following guidance is offered:

- A. In the Rite of Acceptance, the opening dialogue with the children should ask the questions that appear in the rite for children, whereas the dialogue with the adults would ask the questions that appear in the adult rite.
- B. The Rite of Acceptance for children incorporates a special affirmation by the parents. This affirmation by the parents should be retained when the children celebrate with the adults.
- C. The Scrutinies for children, unlike those for adults, may be combined with an anointing with the oil of catechumens. If the Scrutinies for children are celebrated with the adults however, the anointing should be celebrated at another time.



# What about Marriage Issues?

Marriages, Annulments and Convalidations

## **Collaboration is Important**

Pastors and catechumenate directors or coordinators should work closely together to assure that the marriage situations arising in the catechumenate are addressed in a pastorally sensitive and expeditious manner. Pastors should inform catechumenate directors or coordinators of the progress of annulment cases, and consult them concerning the needs and progress of those going through the process of initiation. **Catechumenate directors should see to it that the need for a Church annulment is identified, and the process of seeking it begun, before the Rite of Acceptance and the Rite of Welcome is celebrated.** In planning for the marriage of catechumens or the convalidation of marriages for those who are in the catechumenate, the catechumenate director's advice and cooperation should be sought by the parish priests and deacons, so that the formation process can be integrated with these important events.

## **Marriage**

### **1. Rules Concerning the Marriage of Catechumens**

Once a person has become a catechumen (the result of celebrating the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens), that person is a member of the household of faith and has certain rights in the Church. Among them is the right to be married according to the Catholic Rite of Marriage. When a catechumen is married, the language of the rite is adapted to reflect the fact that the catechumen is unbaptized. The marriage should take place outside Mass, following the order described in Chapter III of the Rite of Marriage. When a catechumen marries an unbaptized person, no dispensation is needed. When a catechumen marries a baptized person, a dispensation is needed for disparity of cult.

### **2. Divorced and Remarried Persons Seeking the Sacraments of Initiation**

As people enter into the Christian initiation process, they begin examining many aspects of their lives, including their marriage relationship. In forming people for the Christian way of life, the Church is concerned about bringing all aspects of life into relationship with Christ, including marriage. The scriptures, including permanence and indissolubility, proclaim specific qualities of marriage. St. Paul proclaimed marriage a mystery that manifests the love of Christ for each of us (Ephesians 5:32). The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to matrimony as a sacrament of the communion of the Church. Those who minister to divorced persons seeking initiation should keep in mind these pastoral and theological concerns.

A person who is divorced but not remarried may celebrate the sacraments of initiation. That person should clearly understand however that the Church considers him or her bound by the bond of the previous marriage and that a future marriage would not be possible unless the previous marriage was dissolved by death or by a Church annulment. The time of preparation for initiation may be an appropriate time to present their case so they can know of their freedom to enter into a future marriage within the Church.

Anyone who was married and divorced, and is now remarried, must seek an annulment of the prior marriage or marriages. (N.B. If the ex-spouse has obtained a Church annulment, that annulment frees both parties.) Also, anyone who is married to someone who was previously married and divorced cannot be admitted to the sacraments unless the spouse obtains an annulment of the previous marriage.

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An annulment is a declaration by the Church that the marriage in question was not binding in the eyes of the Church. It affirms that a required intention or capability was not present. An annulment (declaration of nullity) does not deny that a real relationship existed, or implies that the relationship was entered with ill will or moral fault. It is a statement, which says that the Church has judged that the relationship lacked at least one of the elements considered essential for a binding union. An annulment has absolutely no effect on the legitimacy of children.

The person seeking initiation should understand that the process of getting an annulment is not the same as getting a divorce. Civil law views marriage as a contract that can be broken or dissolved. The Church understands marriage to be a covenant relationship that is indissoluble. A covenant relationship demands more than the establishment of a contract. Only when the parties involved bring certain intentions and capabilities to the relationship is the covenant real and genuine.

It is necessary to begin the annulment process as soon as the inquirer's intention to join the Church becomes clear, that is, some time before the Rite of Acceptance and the Rite of Welcome.

**It is possible to receive someone into the catechumenate while their marriage case is pending, but it will not be possible for them to enter into the final period of purification and enlightenment, nor to receive the sacraments, nor to celebrate the rite of reception, until such time as the marriage situation is resolved.**

Any questions about the annulment process (or anyone needing to begin the process) should be referred to the clergy or a qualified member of the pastoral staff of the parish, or to the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal office.

### **Types of Annulment Cases**

Those who minister to people in the process of Christian initiation should always refer annulment cases to those who are fully professionally competent to assess them. Initiation ministers should take care not to make promises or predictions concerning the time frame or outcome of the annulment process. It is helpful however to know some of the possible reasons for granting a Church annulment.

Some possible reasons for an annulment are:

1. lack of ability or intention to enter into a lifelong commitment
2. lack of ability or intention to be faithful to one's spouse
3. lack of freedom in entering into the marriage
4. intention against having children
5. lack of complete commitment (placing conditions or restrictions on the commitment)
6. lack of ability or intention to form a relationship based on love and respect for the good of one another
7. psychological, mental, or emotional illness or personality disorders

There are certain cases, in addition to those listed above, in which an annulment may be obtained.

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A. Lack of form

This type of annulment can only be sought in cases where one or both of the parties are Catholic. It is based on the rule that in order for a Roman Catholic's marriage to be considered valid and binding in the Roman Catholic Church, that person must be married before a Roman Catholic priest or deacon and two witnesses, or who have obtained a dispensation from the form of marriage. If the person was married in any other way, such as a civil ceremony or a non-Catholic ceremony for which no dispensation was obtained, the marriage can be declared null and void.

B. Privilege cases

There are two types of privilege cases, both dealing with either one or two unbaptized people:

I. **Pauline Privilege**: The Pauline Privilege comes from an ecclesiastical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:12-15, and applies to the marriage of two unbaptized persons, one of whom is later baptized. The first marriage of the now-baptized party can be dissolved with this privilege only when the baptized party enters into a new marriage. For example: A Catholic who wishes to marry a convert to the faith who was previously unbaptized and married to another unbaptized person could invoke the use of the Pauline Privilege. This can be handled at the local level (i.e. the diocesan level). It does not have to be sent to Rome.

II. **Privilege of the Faith (Petrine Privilege)**: This is the dissolution of a legitimate marriage of a baptized party with an unbaptized party granted only by the Pope in favor of the faith. It pertains only to those cases in which one of the parties remained unbaptized during the entire marriage. For further information, contact the marriage tribunal.

### **Convalidation of Marriages**

Convalidation of an irregular marriage of a catechumen or a candidate should be completed before the sacraments of initiation are celebrated. One cannot enter into the full sacramental life of the Church unless one is completely free to receive the sacraments. It is pastorally advisable to convalidate the marriage as early in the process as possible.

If one party of the marriage does not want to be subjected to a convalidation ceremony, it is usually possible to obtain a ***radical sanation*** from the chancery, provided that both parties intend to remain faithful to the marriage bond. Ordinarily, the sanation involves a dispensation from any further public rite, and it effects a valid marriage between the parties (canons 1161-1165).

## **What About the Eastern Non-Catholic Candidates?**

### **What is an Eastern Catholic?**

A Christian is a member, canonically, not of a rite but of a specific Church which follows in its worship a certain pattern of liturgy called a "rite." Thus in Catholicism there is a Latin Catholic Church, and Eastern Catholic Churches. **They are all Catholic**, but they follow different liturgical rites.

There are six families of liturgical rites in the Catholic Church. They are: Latin, Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochene, Chaldean, and Armenian.

At least twenty ritual Churches comprise the Catholic Church: Armenian, Bulgarian, Byelorussian, Chaldean, Coptic, Ethiopian, Greek-Melkite, Hellenic Byzantine Rite, Hungarian Greek Catholic, Italo-Greek and Albanian, Krizevsky (Yugoslavian, Croatian, Russine, Macedonian, Ukrainian), Latin, Malabar, Malankar, Maronite, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Byzantine-Catholic USA, Slovak Greek Catholic, Syrian, and Ukrainian. Each of these Churches uses one of the rites that exist in the six families listed above.

Members of any of the Eastern Catholic Churches listed above who wish to become members of the Latin Church are not candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church, since they already belong to the Catholic Church. There are rules which govern the circumstances of their transfer of membership, however, which must be followed.

### **What is an Eastern Non-Catholic?**

**There are several groups of non-Catholic Eastern Churches.** There are those Churches, which call themselves **Orthodox** (usually Byzantine Churches). There are other Churches, sometimes known as **non-Chalcedonian** Churches, which may or may not use the term Orthodox (such as the Coptic Church, the Syrian Jacobite Church, the Ethiopian Church and the Armenian Church). There is also the Church of the East, or **Assyrian Church** (which is Nestorian). None of these Churches is in union with Rome; they are non-Catholic Churches.

For information on the reception of candidates from Eastern non-Catholic Churches, see below: Rules Concerning Eastern Non-Catholics Becoming Catholic.

### **Rules Concerning Eastern Non-Catholics Becoming Catholic**

Non-Catholic Christians, when they are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church, must become members of the ritual Church indicated by their Baptism. **Thus, all Protestants must become members of the Latin Church.** Someone who is Greek Orthodox must become a member of the Greek Catholic Church. A Syrian Orthodox person must become a member of the Syrian Catholic Church, etc. **Exceptions constitute a transfer of rite, and require the permission of the Holy See. If such permission is necessary, it should be sought before any participation in the formation process of the catechumenate.**

**In the case of uncatechized Eastern non-Catholic candidates, if and when permission to join the Latin rite is granted, these candidates may participate in the formation process of the catechumenate, but not in its rites.** Such candidates are received with a simple profession of faith, and no liturgical rite (RCIA no. 474). The simple profession of faith takes place before a priest, and the date should be recorded in the parish records as the date of their reception. For pastoral reasons, these candidates should be warmly welcomed by the parish community, and catechized in an appropriate way before their profession of faith. The Baptism and Confirmation of eastern non-Catholic Christians are considered valid by the Catholic Church and must not be repeated.

*(continued)...*

### **Notes Concerning Eastern Catholics Who Wish to Join the Latin Rite**

**These individuals are never a part of the catechumenate.** They are already Catholic. Catholics, one and all, everywhere in the world should retain their own rite, cherish it and observe it. In special cases however, individuals, communities, and even regions have the right of recourse to the Holy See, which is the supreme arbiter of inter-ecclesial relations. The Holy See will itself or through other authorities provide for special needs in an ecumenical spirit by issuing timely norms, decrees, or rescripts (*Orientalium ecclesiarum* no. 4).

A transfer of rite normally requires permission of the Holy See, and should not be encouraged. Such a transfer is not to be treated under any circumstances as part of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Information about this topic is included in these statutes for the orientation of the Catechumenate Director, who may be in the position of answering inquiries about this. Further information can be obtained by calling the chancery.

A child of parents who belong to the Latin Church becomes a member of the Latin Church by receiving Baptism in the Latin Church. If one of the parents does not belong to the Latin Church, and both parents agree that the child will be baptized in the Latin Church, the child may be baptized in the Latin Church and will belong to it because of being baptized in it. If the parents do not agree, the child is to be baptized in the ritual Church to which the father belongs (canon 111).

A similar provision is used in the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, (canon 29): "By virtue of baptism, a child who has not yet completed his fourteenth year of age is enrolled in the Church sui iuris of the Catholic father; or the Church sui iuris of the mother if only the mother is Catholic or if both parents by agreement freely request it, with due regard for particular law established by the Apostolic See." Anyone to be baptized who has completed the fourteenth year of age can freely choose to be baptized in any of the ritual Churches and in this case the person belongs to that Church which is chosen (canon 111).

After receiving Baptism, the following are enrolled in another ritual Church (canon 112):

- A. One who has obtained permission from the Holy See. (Anyone who does not fall into categories B or C below should contact the chancery to seek permission from the Holy See.)
- B. A spouse who declares at the time of marriage or during marriage that he or she is transferring to the ritual Church of the other spouse. When the marriage has ended, however, that person can freely return to the Church of their Baptism.
- C. Children under the age of fourteen, of parents who have legitimately transferred to another ritual Church. But when they reach the age of fourteen, they may return to the Church of their Baptism. (From John Huels, *The Pastoral Companion to Canon Law* p. 28-29)

## **Glossary of Terms**

**Inquirer:** One who is seeking entrance into the Catholic Church or seeking to complete their sacraments of initiation....but has not made any formal commitment to the Church through and public rites. He/she is just curious and inquiring.

**Catechumen:** One who is not baptized and is preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through baptism, confirmation and Eucharist.

**Candidate:** One who is already baptized either in the Catholic Church or another Christian faith and who is preparing to complete his/her Christian initiation through confirmation and Eucharist.

**Elect:** The name given to the catechumens who celebrate the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent with the bishop, signifying their being chosen for the initiation sacraments at Easter.

**Neophyte:** One who just received the sacraments of Christian initiation at the Easter Vigil and is still in the RCIA process, in the period of Mystagogy.

**Godparent:** The Godparent serves as companion for the Christian life for the elect. The Godparent helps the elect integrate into the Catholic community by offering ongoing support, care and the sharing of faith.

**Sponsor:** A sponsor accompanies any catechumen or candidate through the catechumenate period. Sponsors are persons who get to know their catechumens or candidates and can stand as witnesses to the catechumens' or candidates' moral character, faith and intention.

**Rite of Election:** This is the rite that is celebrated by the bishop, which proclaims the catechumens ready for their celebration of the sacraments of initiation at Easter. This is celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent.

**Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion:** This is the rite that proclaims the candidates ready for their completion of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

## Ministry Responsibilities of the parish Catechumenate Leader

**Ministry Position Title:** Parish Director / Coordinator of the Catechumenate (RCIA)

### Ministry Position Responsibilities:

Designated and authorized by the pastor, the Parish Director / Coordinator of the Catechumenate (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) is primarily responsible for planning, executing, and evaluating the **four periods** of the Catechumenate process that is offered to all adults and children of catechetical age who seek full initiation into the Catholic Church with the parish. This responsibility may be exercised in collaboration with parish staff members and a parish Catechumenate (RCIA) team. The Parish Director / Coordinator may be a parish staff member or a qualified parishioner. The role may be a full time position or a part time position. The position may be salaried or volunteer. The Parish Director / Coordinator has a basic understanding of the vision and practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, is formed by Scripture and the Tradition of the Church and is familiar with current catechumenate and catechetical documents. The Director / Coordinator has the necessary personal and practical skills to coordinate the Catechumenate (RCIA) in the parish.

### The Director /Coordinator of the Catechumenate:

1. **Advocates** for the full implementation of the Catechumenate according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* and the *Archdiocesan RCIA Guidelines*, within the parish, in collaboration with the pastor, parish staff members and parishioners.
2. **Recruits** and **provides initial and ongoing training** for the members of the Parish Catechumenate (RCIA) Team, catechists, sponsors, facilitators and potential godparents.
3. **Identifies** a variety of parish and archdiocesan opportunities that correspond in content and process to those in the RCIA: Inquirers, Catechumens, Candidates, Elect, Neophytes.
4. **Schedules and coordinates** the RCIA “events” (liturgical and catechetical) realistically and most effectively throughout the liturgical year in the most appropriate parish facilities possible, including the Rite of Acceptance, Rite of Welcome, Dismissal, Minor Rites, Rite of Sending, Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion, the three Scrutinies, Preparatory Rites, the Sacraments of Initiation as well as the Inquiry Sessions, Dismissal Catechesis, Extended Catechesis, and Days of prayer and reflection, in consultation with Pastor, parish director of liturgy/worship and the Catechumenate Team.
5. **Oversees** the creative marketing, promotion and advertising of all the Catechumenate (RCIA) “events”.
6. **Coordinates** the discernment process in the name of the Pastor for the Inquirers, Catechumens and Candidates.
7. **Supervises** the resources and finances available for the general running of the Catechumenate process.
8. **Maintains** the necessary records of those who enter the Catechumenate, participate in the Rite of Election and receive the Sacraments of Initiation.
9. **Registers** catechumens that are ready for the Archdiocesan Rite of Election.
10. **Networks** with local colleagues and participates in professional ministry formation offered by the Archdiocese of New York and other institutions.

## **Rites in the Catechumenate Process**

Major and Minor Rites in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

### **For the Unbaptized**

*Catechumens*

#### **Major Rites:**

Catechumenate Period

- Rite of Acceptance (RCIA 48)
- Celebrations of the Word & Dismissal (RCIA 81)
- Rite of Sending (RCIA 106)

Period of Purification / Enlightenment

- Rite of Election (RCIA 129)
- Scrutiny 1 (RCIA 150)
- Scrutiny 2 (RCIA 164)
- Scrutiny 3 (RCIA 171)

Easter Vigil

- Sacraments of Baptism/Confirmation/  
First Eucharist (RCIA 206)

#### **Minor Rites:**

During the Catechumenate Period

- Minor Exorcisms (RCIA 90)
- Blessings of the Catechumens (RCIA 95)
- Anointing of the Catechumens (RCIA 98)

During the Lent:

- Presentation of the Creed (RCIA 157)
- Presentation of the Lord's Prayer (RCIA 178)
- Ephphetha Rite (RCIA 197)

### **For the Baptized**

*Candidates*

#### **Major Rites:**

Catechumenate Period

- Rite of Welcome (RCIA 416)
- Celebrations of the Word (RCIA 406)
- Rite of Sending (RCIA 438)

During Lent

- Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion (RCIA 450)
- Penitential Rite & Sacrament of Reconciliation (RCIA 61)

Easter Time

- Celebration of Reception (*Candidates for Full Communion only*) (RCIA 490)
- Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist (RCIA 493)



## **NOTES**

## The Summons

1. Will you come and fol - low me If I but  
 2. Will you leave your - self be - hind If I but  
 3. Will you let the blind - ed see If I but  
 4. Will you love the 'you' you hide If I but  
 5. Lord, your sum - mons ech - oes true When you but

call your name? Will you go where  
 call your name? Will you care for  
 call your name? Will you set the  
 call your name? Will you quell the  
 call my name. Let me turn and

you don't know And nev - er be the same?  
 cruel and kind And nev - er be the same?  
 pris - 'ners free And nev - er be the same?  
 fear in - side And nev - er be the same?  
 fol - low you And nev - er be the same.

Will you let my love be shown, Will you  
 Will you risk the hos - tile stare Should your  
 Will you kiss the lep - er clean, And do  
 Will you use the faith you've found To re -  
 In your com - pa - ny I'll go Where your

let my name be known, Will you let my  
 life at - tract or scare? Will you let me  
 such as this un - seen, And ad - mit to  
 shape the world a - round, Through my sight and  
 love and foot - steps show. Thus I'll move and

life be grown In you and you in me?  
 an - swer prayer In you and you in me?  
 what I mean In you and you in me?  
 touch and sound In you and you in me?  
 live and grow In you and you in me.

Text: John L. Bell, b.1949, © 1987, Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent  
 Tune: KELVINGROVE, ♯ 6 7 6 7 7 6; Scottish traditional; arr. by John L. Bell, b.1949