

Sample letter to call together members of an RCIA team:

Dear RCIA Team Members,

Greetings! The primary intention of this letter is to provide you with the RCIA calendar for the coming months. Please look over the enclosed schedule in detail. At our upcoming meeting or before, I would like your input, as you can, on the following items:

- ✘ Teachings you would like to do (for those team members who serve as catechists)
- ✘ Potential sponsors you would suggest recruiting
- ✘ Supplies or other things that you can think of that we need or would benefit from having on hand
- ✘ Roles (sometimes overlapping) that you would most like to do on the RCIA team such as:
 - Catechist
 - Intercessor Coordinator
 - Sponsor Coordinator
 - Set-Up/Break-Down
 - Hospitality and Food
 - Library
 - Music
 - Liturgy Coordinator
 - Retreat Coordinator
 - Small Group Facilitator
 - Breaking Open the Word Facilitator

We will meet to discuss these and other matters at [date, time, and location]. I have enclosed some material relating to RCIA for you to read. Please read this prior to our meeting; it will help us to be of one mind in understanding the ministry of conversion that God has asked us to be involved in for this parish.

Please call me if you have any questions or problems. I look forward to seeing you on [day and date of meeting], if not before, and to serving the Lord alongside you. Again, thank you.

Sincerely in Christ,
[RCIA leader's name and title]

Sample agenda for an initial team meeting:

General introductions of team members.
Why RCIA? Why an RCIA team?
The RCIA schedule.

Qualifications of a team member:

- ✦ Be converted to Christ and his Church
- ✦ Docile to the Church's mission
- ✦ Punctual and flexible
- ✦ Desiring to continue your own formation
- ✦ Openness to new relationships
- ✦ Openness to questions
- ✦ Openness of your life as a witness of faith
- ✦ Prudent and able to keep confidentiality

Nature of the RCIA sessions:

- No commitment, no cost for the participants
- No participation required — each person must never feel manipulated, must be free to decide to come
- Spouse is welcome to come with the participant; we can provide babysitting
- Catechesis gradually introduces things Christian and things distinctively Catholic, including Catholic practices, navigating the Bible, Catholic teachings, living an adult Christian life
- If desired, we will try to find a Catholic from a participant's own faith background to talk with
- Any participant can always make an appointment to see our pastor, another priest, or the RCIA leader
- There will be a discernment process and interviews prior to each of the major Rites
- Questions from participants are never unwelcome, offensive, or too frequent
- Verbal questions should come only from participants, not team or sponsors (written ones are welcome from all)
- All participants will receive Bibles (and Catechisms if they request)
- Role of food and refreshments
- Role of handouts given at each session
- Role of the RCIA library of printed, video, and audio materials for participants
- Role of testimonies to be given by each team member
- Role and conduct of small groups
- Role of godparents and sponsors
- Critical importance of prayer
- Each team member must obtain a faithful intercessor who will agree to pray regularly for your work on the team

Jobs for the team (each person may occupy more than one of these roles):

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ✦ Catechist | ✦ Hospitality and Food | ✦ Music |
| ✦ Intercessor Coordinator | ✦ Library | ✦ Liturgy Coordinator |
| ✦ Sponsor Coordinator | ✦ Small Group Facilitator | ✦ Retreat Coordinator |
| ✦ Set-Up/Break-Down | ✦ Reflection on the Word Facilitator | |

Who are potential inquirers that might come if asked?

What the first session needs to be like.

Prayer for those we seek to serve...

Most holy Mother of God, Immaculate Virgin, we beseech you, for the sake of Christ, our Lord, your Son, offer your loving prayers before the throne of God for all those wandering children of yours who are outside the full communion of His one true Church.

Obtain for them, most tender Mother, the grace to see the love of God, the desire to understand the truth of the Catholic faith, and the strength to courageously embrace the gospel.

May the good influence of Catholic instruction, the pious example of the team, godparents, sponsors, and members of our parish, the prudent words of Catholic friends, the zeal of priests and religious, gently and sweetly invite them to come to their Father's home and to the unity of the fold of Christ.

Protect and watch over them in your kindness while they stray in exile and darkness. Obtain for them many effective graces. Be merciful and aid them, holy Mother, now in their time of desolation and need, so that you may have joy hereafter in welcoming to your family in Heaven these souls which have been redeemed by the passion and death of your most holy Son, Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Agenda for future team meetings:

- The items for discussion will be different at each meeting depending on the stage of the RCIA process and current needs
- Team members will report on the progress of participants
- Discussion of ways to better help various participants, or ways to address pastoral issues that have arisen
- Specific team members give updates concerning their respective roles
- Reminder about upcoming liturgical events or other calendar matters

Forming Souls through Small Groups

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: ANN LANKFORD

The purpose of small groups is to foster *greater openness to Jesus Christ* and to help others follow Him.

Benefits of Small Groups

Small groups help to build community and a sense of belonging in our parishes, to develop strong friendships in Christ, to deepen our relationship with the Lord through deepening our understanding, to strengthen us by walking with others, and to accept others and ourselves as imperfect persons who are seeking God.

Essential Components of Small Groups

In study groups we seek to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and to grow in our faith. This takes place through these four components, based upon Acts 2:42.

I. Apostles' Teaching (Study)

“Christ’s call to conversion continues to resounds in the lives of Christians” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 1428). We are to seek interior conversion throughout our lives through prayer and study (see CCC 1430). “. . . be transformed by the renewal of your mind . . .” (Romans 12:2).

II. Fellowship

“. . . and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

III. Breaking of the Bread

Small group study prepares us to participate in Mass at a deeper level by fostering a greater awareness of Jesus’ True Presence in the Holy Eucharist and a greater openness to receive Him in Holy Communion.

IV. Prayer

Begin with prayer, especially prayer to the Holy Spirit. Nothing is effective without the anointing of the Holy Spirit: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1). At the end, close with prayer of thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit.



We ask the Holy Spirit for the desire to be more committed to specific times of daily prayer each day and include some reflection about a particular point from the teaching and discussion that stood out. We will also want to ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen us with His grace in applying it to our lives.

“ And they held steadfastly to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. ”

ACTS 2:42

Outgrowth of the Essential Components

“

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith that has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and in a lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

JAMES 2:14-17

”



Service – Participating in a small group should foster greater kindness, which is to begin in the family. This kindness will then spill over in service to neighbor in such deeds as visiting a person in the nursing home or taking a meal to a sick neighbor.

Evangelization – Handing on the “Good News”

Be open to relate, in 2-3 sentences, the main focus of the study group when asked by a friend “What’s new in your life?” or “What are you learning in that study group that you attend?” Be prepared to offer a brief response to a checkout person when they ask about your plans for the evening. In response to a question, “What effect is it having on you?” speak about how it is affecting your relationship with others, Jesus and yourself.

Allow time during some of the sessions to practice answering such questions. Having a few minutes to formulate simple answers in their own minds is also beneficial to participants to name what they are actually learning.

“

Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence . . .

1 PETER 3:15

”



Sponsor: A sponsor is an individual “who assists an adult in Christian initiation ... [and] helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism...” The sponsor also takes “care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ...” (*Code of Canon Law*, Book IV, canon 872 & 892; see also CCC 1311).

One can have a sponsor for Baptism (called the “godparent”), Confirmation, and for the full reception into the Church through the RCIA process.

Godparent: A sponsor specifically for the Sacrament of Baptism. A godparent is “[t]he sponsor of one who is baptized, who assumes a responsibility to assist the newly-baptized—child or adult—on the road of Christian life (CCC Glossary; see also CCC 1255).

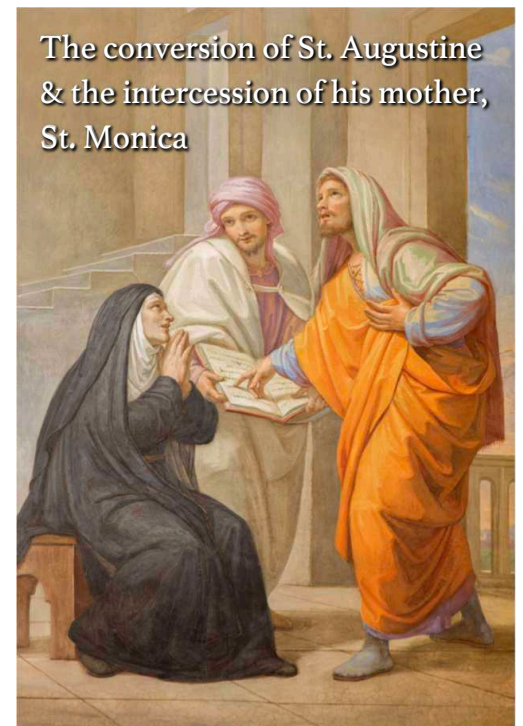
1 | *The Importance & Personality of Sponsors & Godparents*

The importance of sponsors and godparents:

- ✦ Good godparents and sponsors lead to a wonderful and productive RCIA process.
- ✦ Sponsors and godparents are called for by the Church because Jesus always calls us to community; we are not saved alone.
 - We need others to point us to Jesus, to show us how to live, and to encourage and support us.

How do we choose godparents and sponsors? Look for a person:

- ✦ Of prayer and faith—a converted believer; a disciple.
- ✦ Who is docile to the Church and Her teachings, to the Holy Spirit, to parish leadership, and to the RCIA process.
- ✦ Who is open to people’s differences and has the patience to allow the other to grow and convert.
- ✦ Who is willing to *love*—without condition or judgment—so Jesus can be *known*.
- ✦ Who is available (*for RCIA sessions, the rites, personal questions, etc.*).



The conversion of St. Augustine & the intercession of his mother, St. Monica

2 | *Church Guidelines* — (see [The Code of Canon Law](#), Book IV, canons 872-874)

Look for a person:

- ✦ Who is fully initiated into the Church (*i.e. has received Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist*).
- ✦ Who has no canonical prohibitions.

The sponsor or godparent:

- ✦ Can be a man or a woman.
 - *Pastoral advice:* It is often beneficial for a woman to sponsor a woman and a man to sponsor a man.
 - A person can have one or two sponsors/godparents (*if two, it must be a man and a woman*).
- ✦ Must be at least 16 years of age (*however, this is dependent on each diocese*).
- ✦ Cannot be one’s own parent.
- ✦ Can be one’s spouse or fiancé.
 - *Pastoral advice:* Sometimes choosing a spouse or fiancé as a sponsor can restrict the candidate/ catechumen’s free will. In other words, to avoid feelings of coercion or discomfort when asking frank questions about the faith, it is sometimes best for the sponsor to not be their spouse or fiancé.
 - *Pastoral advice:* Rather, invite the spouse or fiancé to join for the RCIA process (*sessions, rites, etc.*).
- ✦ *Pastoral advice:* “Parish sponsors” — a group of people in your parish that offer to be sponsors. When someone needs a sponsor, choose the best fit from your group of “parish sponsors.”



Grace: “The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children” (CCC Glossary; see also CCC 1996, 1997, & 2000).

Charism: “A specific gift or grace of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefits the Church, given in order to help a person live out the Christian life, or to serve the common good in building up the Church” (CCC Glossary; see also CCC 799-801, 951).

3 | *Spiritual Parenthood*

Spiritual parenthood:

- ✦ Sponsors and godparents are *spiritual fathers and mothers*.
- ✦ Sponsors and godparents are *parents by grace*.

Help sponsors and godparents understand their role to:

- ✦ Be present at the catechetical sessions and rites.
- ✦ Pray and model prayer.
- ✦ Introduce them to the saints; show the candidates/ catechumens *their* place in salvation history.
- ✦ Introduce them to the parish community.
- ✦ Help the candidates/catechumens identify:
 - The charisms that God will give them through the sacraments, for the sake of the Church.
 - The sacramental graces they will receive (e.g. *the grace to defend the faith in Confirmation*).

They should not consider that what they are doing is a routine action. Rather, they should be fully aware that they will share the credit if they guide their charges to the path of virtue by their advice, but if they are negligent, then grave condemnation will fall upon them. For this reason it is the custom to call them ‘spiritual fathers’ in order that they may learn from their office the affection they owe to their charges in giving them spiritual instruction. For if it is a noble thing to lead those who are in no way connected with us to desire virtue, we have a much greater duty to fulfill this obligation to one whom we have received to the position of spiritual son. To sum up, negligence brings no small danger to those of you who are acting as sponsors.

St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*,
Second Instruction, paragraph 16

4 | *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton: Model & Patroness of the RCIA*



Her Life Story:

- ✦ Elizabeth Ann Seton grew up as a well-off Episcopalian in New York, married, and had five children.
- ✦ Her husband’s job went under and he became very ill, so they moved to Italy to save his health.
- ✦ After his death, Elizabeth was taken in by some of her husband’s business associates, who were Italian Catholics.
- ✦ She moved back to the United States and became Catholic because of the witness of the Italian Catholics and her growing relationship with the Eucharist.
- ✦ She had been teaching in the States; however, after she became Catholic, non-Catholic families withdrew their children.
- ✦ She started teaching the Catholic immigrants’ children, who had been denied an education because they were Catholic.
- ✦ She was invited to Baltimore and then Emmitsburg; the American Catholic school system began through her efforts.

How her example is important to RCIA:

- ✦ **Model** for those entering the Church, who have family that turned their backs on them, who pay a price in the workplace, or who are ridiculed for coming into the Catholic Church.
- ✦ **Patroness** for those entering the Church and also for sponsors because of the shared faith of her Italian friends that gave her the witness and encouragement to come into the Church.

Godparents and Sponsors

THE RCIA RITUAL BOOK states that “it is a very ancient custom of the Church that adults are not admitted to Baptism without godparents, members of the Christian community who will assist the candidate at least in the final preparation for Baptism and after Baptism will help them persevere in the faith and in their lives as Christians” (GI 8). Godparents and sponsors play a crucial pastoral role in the Christian initiation process. They are called upon throughout the Christian initiation process to give public testimony to the progress and readiness of participants for the major RCIA liturgies, and serve as a bridge and connection between participants and the parish. They must be able to enter into a relationship with a single person, and be willing to give considerable prayer, time, and energy to serve as a mentor, role model, and friend.



CLARIFYING SOME POTENTIALLY CONFUSING TERMINOLOGY

The ritual book uses the term “godparent” in two different ways. First, catechumens and baptized candidates are to choose one or two godparents after the Rite of Welcoming (see RCIA 11, 80, 404). Second, godparents support *only unbaptized catechumens* from the time they are chosen by the catechumens, and stand up for them beginning at the Rite of Sending, and then at the Rite of Election, at the Scrutinies, and at the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (see RCIA 10–11). The godparents chosen by baptized candidates, however, are not mentioned again in the ritual book; instead, the candidates

appear to continue to have sponsors. These sponsors are, in fact, their godparents; the reason for the confusing switch in terminology in the ritual book is explained below.

The ritual book uses the term “sponsor” in two ways as well. First, sponsors are individuals who support *both* unbaptized or baptized inquirers during the initial stages of Christian initiation, and stand up for *both* unbaptized and baptized inquirers at the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming (see RCIA 10, 404; note that the latter references RCIA 10). Second, sponsors support and stand up for *only baptized candidates* beginning at the Rite of Sending, and then at the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion, at the Penitential Rite, and at the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation.

- What is the purpose of this confusing use of terms? The answer comes from a very careful reading of the relevant provisions in the ritual book, and is provided here in the order of the stages of the catechumenal process:
- ➔ The ritual book does not specify how sponsors are chosen during the pre-catechumenate. Therefore, the choice of sponsors for both unbaptized and baptized inquirers is one of the tasks of the RCIA leader. How this is done is discussed later in this chapter.
 - ➔ The ritual book states that godparents are chosen *by the catechumens and candidates themselves* after the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, who are to have the approval of “the priest” (that is, the pastor) (see RCIA 11, 80, 404).
 - ➔ Unbaptized catechumens may choose as their godparents persons other than their sponsors (see RCIA



10), but this is not mandatory. In many if not most cases, a bond has formed between catechumens and the sponsors who had been appointed to them by the leader during the precatechumenate that prompts them to choose their sponsors as their godparents. If the catechumen expresses a desire to choose another person as his or her godparent, and knows few Catholics, the leader must be able to provide the catechumen with the names of one or more other suitable persons from the parish. If the sponsor is not chosen as godparent, the godparent replaces the sponsor as soon as he or she is chosen. Thus, sponsors not chosen as godparents do not stand up for newly-baptized Catholics as they are confirmed; that is the responsibility and privilege of godparents.

- Since the godparents chosen by the *baptized candidates* are never mentioned in the Rites, *it must be understood* that these godparents are the sponsors who *are* named in RCIA 404, and that they are not necessarily the sponsors originally chosen for the candidates by the leader. As with unbaptized catechumens, the ritual book does not prohibit candidates from choosing the sponsors appointed to them during the precatechumenate as their godparents, and it is likely that, most of the time, the bond that has formed between candidates and their sponsors will prompt candidates to choose their sponsors as their godparents.
- However, the ritual book *also* allows baptized candidates to choose for their godparents the same individuals who had been their godparents at Baptism “provided they are truly capable of carrying out the responsibilities of godparents” (RCIA 404). Many of the candidates baptized in ecclesial communions other than the Catholic Church either had no godparents or have godparents that cannot meet the Church’s canonical requirements for godparents (see the next section for these requirements). Some of those candidates who entered the Christian initiation process as uncatechized Catholics may discover that their Baptismal godparents no longer meet the canonical requirements; for example, their godparents may no longer be practicing Catholics. In either of these cases, candidates must choose different individuals as godparents. This requirement ensures that candidates will choose godparents who

are “truly capable of carrying out the responsibilities of godparents” (RCIA 404). As with catechumens, if the original sponsor is not chosen to be the godparent, the leader must be able to suggest other suitable persons.

By these provisions, the ritual book does three things:

- ✦ In the English translation of the ritual book, the Church accepts the common use of “godparent” only for those to be baptized and “sponsor” for those who will be confirmed but not baptized (with the minor “glitch” of using “godparent” when the new-baptized are confirmed, necessary to ensure that the same individuals stand up for them at both Baptism and Confirmation).
- ✦ It ensures that both catechumens and candidates may choose the persons who will accompany them for the remainder of the Christian initiation process, creating a reciprocity in the bond between individuals that is pastorally appropriate for adults.
- ✦ It ensures that candidates’ sponsors are, like catechumens’ godparents, required to meet the canonical requirements for godparents by naming their sponsors “godparents” in RCIA 404.

Thus, while the ritual book’s substitution of “sponsor” for “godparent” in the text for the Rites for candidates from the Rite of Sending might seem to be an error, the reason for the apparent “disappearance” of godparents balances English-language use of the terms “godparent” and “sponsor” while ensuring that the sponsors of baptized candidates meet the canonical requirements for godparents. In this *Manual*, the distinction of terminology between godparents and sponsors is maintained from the period of the catechumenate forward, but it should be understood that sponsors of baptized candidates after the Rite of Welcoming are, canonically, the godparents chosen as permitted in RCIA 404.

CANONICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GODPARENTS

The Code of Canon Law identifies the following requirements for Baptismal godparents (*patrinis*, translated unidiomatically into English as “sponsor” rather than “godparent,” which is consistent with the Latin but confusing for English-speakers):



Sample outline of godparent and sponsor training session(s):

1) **Give an Overview of the Initiation Process**

What is Christian initiation process?

- Purpose (conversion of heart to God, turning away from sin, desire for holiness through the Church)
- Distinction between catechumens and candidates
- Periods and rites of the process

Why are there godparents/sponsors?

- Representatives of the community
- Establish a relationship with the participant

What do godparents/sponsors do?

- Attend weekly meetings, liturgical rites, and other initiation-related events
- Sponsors may or may not become godparents
- They are friends (companions on the journey)
- They are not catechists

2) **Discuss Qualities of a Godparent/Sponsor**

Welcoming

- Will I show an inquirer around the parish grounds and introduce them to staff, other parishioners?

Listening

- Can I listen to another's faith journey?

Sharing Life and Sharing Faith

- Can I be a friend?
- Am I comfortable sharing about my interior life and struggles?

Faithful to Church Teaching

- Do I support the Church's teachings?
- Can I say "I don't understand..." instead of "I've never understood why...?"

Helpful

- Am I willing to say "I don't know" and try to find an answer?

Active in the Parish/Community

- Do I participate in some form of outreach?

A Prayerer

- Will I pray for the person I am asked to sponsor?
- Will I daily ask God to help me to serve the person to the best of your ability?

Open to Differences in Participants

- Will I be open to varied types of Catholic spirituality and different ways of living a Catholic life?
- Will I be open to gently challenging and seeking to redirect spiritualities that conflict with a Christian understanding of God?

Able to Trust in God's Plan

- Can I be detached when things go differently than I hope?

3) **Discuss Handing on Catholic Culture**

- Importance of helping RCIA participants understand and appropriate Catholic culture
- Identify "Catholic culture" and "parish culture"
- How to share our Catholic/parish culture with others

4) **Explain Conversion**

- How conversion is a change in outlook and action
- Be aware of signs of conversion; what to look for
- Have trainers tell about their own journeys of conversion to the Lord

5) *Discuss How to Model Prayer and Pray with Participants*

Explain the importance of having a prayer life and helping participants learn to pray.

Discuss different prayer styles

- Praying aloud
- Praying with Scripture
- Praying the Mass
- Basic Catholic prayers

Provide information on aids to prayer (e.g., scriptural rosary, Magnificat magazine, etc.)

Require each godparent/sponsor to obtain a faithful intercessor who will agree to pray regularly for their work on behalf of the catechumen or candidate

6) *Encourage Godparents/Sponsors to be Witnesses to Charity*

Explain the importance of helping participants learn to live the Gospel message through acts of charity

How to participate in the corporal works of mercy

How to invite an RCIA participant to do so

7) *Discuss Issues that are Commonly Encountered When Serving as a Godparent/Sponsor*

What if we do not get along as well as hoped?

What if the person has an irregular marriage?

What if the person is not progressing in virtue, or desire for the Lord?

What if the person stops attending RCIA sessions, or attends very inconsistently?

What if the person is not ready to become Catholic?

Why do I have to attend so many events?

What if I or the person I am assisting is likely to move from the parish (e.g., military transfer)?

Sample job description for a godparent or sponsor:

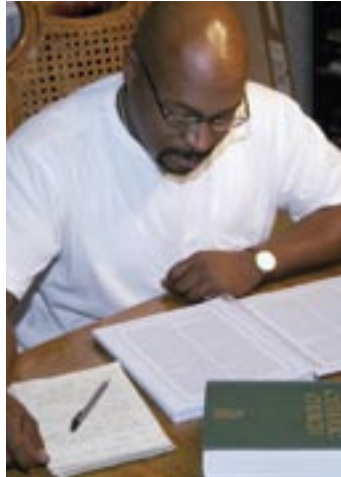
<i>Position:</i>	RCIA godparent/sponsor
<i>Accountable to:</i>	RCIA godparent/sponsor coordinator and RCIA leader Ultimately accountable to the pastor
<i>Short-Term Commitment:</i>	Duration of catechumen's/candidate's presence in the RCIA process Weekly RCIA sessions Participation in all relevant liturgical rites Regular personal contact with the catechumen/candidate
<i>Long-Term Commitment:</i>	Life (if chosen as godparent or sponsor for the sacraments) Regular contact especially during the new Catholic's first year Periodic personal contact thereafter

Specific Gifts Needed:

- ⊕ Fully initiated and active registered parishioner of our parish, in good standing
- ⊕ Love for Christ and his Church
- ⊕ Basic understanding of the Church's teaching
- ⊕ Steadfast commitment to the teachings of the magisterium of the Catholic Church
- ⊕ Evidence of a lived faith in one's personal life (fruits of the Holy Spirit are evident)
- ⊕ Mature Christian understanding of the meaning of "servant" and "service"
- ⊕ Punctual and flexible
- ⊕ Good communication and listening skills
- ⊕ Openness to new relationships
- ⊕ Prudent and able to keep confidentiality

Specific Duties/Responsibilities:

- ⊕ Commit to daily prayer for the person you are serving
- ⊕ Become familiar with the stages of the RCIA process
- ⊕ Attend weekly RCIA sessions
- ⊕ Maintain personal contact between gatherings
- ⊕ Attend RCIA retreats, relevant liturgical rites, and rehearsals as needed
- ⊕ Assist pastor and other RCIA leaders with discernment of a participant's readiness
- ⊕ Offer spiritual support throughout the process to the person you are serving
- ⊕ Model holiness, sacramental living, Christian charity, and prayer
- ⊕ Work to draw the person into the life of the parish
- ⊕ Answer doctrinal questions as you can; direct the person to catechists as needed
- ⊕ Explain as you can liturgical and devotional practices; direct the person to catechists as needed
- ⊕ Gently help the person deal with life situations (family problems, need to forgive, etc.) in a Christian way
- ⊕ Obtain a faithful intercessor who will agree to pray regularly for your work as a godparent/sponsor
- ⊕ Strive to love the person as Jesus would



*So Much to Learn... So Little Time
What Must I Teach? What Do They **Have** to Know?*

Analyzing Doctrines: The Truths of the Faith

TEACH THE **PREMISE**

The premise of the doctrine is the underlying truth upon which the doctrine is based. It is not necessarily the definition. The following are three examples:

Faith: We believe because of the authority of God who reveals. He can never deceive nor be deceived. (see CCC 156)

Mary: From all eternity God intended to enlist the free cooperation of a creature to accomplish the Incarnation. He chose a daughter of Israel and she gave her consent. (see CCC 488, 494)

Sacred Scripture: God has chosen to speak in human words. He is the primary author of these written words. (see CCC 105)

TEACH THE **ESSENTIALS**

The essentials are those aspects of the doctrine which cannot be left to chance that the participants will get them on their own.

Faith: 1. Is certain 2. Necessary for salvation 3. Seeks understanding 4. A gift 5. Can be lost and increased (CCC 29, 162)

Mary: 1. Mother of God 2. Immaculate Conception 3. Perpetual Virginity 4. Assumption 5. Mother in the Order of Grace

Sacred Scripture: 1. Human authors are true authors 2. Interpretation by Magisterium 3. Christocentricity

TEACH WHAT IS **COMMONLY MISUNDERSTOOD**

Insufficient or ineffective catechesis has left many participants with a false understanding of doctrines of the faith.

Faith: It is not a “blind leap.”

Mary: How Marian doctrines point to Christ. Devotion and the content of private revelation (apparitions).

Sacred Scripture: Scripture is only one aspect of (God’s Divine) Revelation.

TEACH THE **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

All doctrine is grounded in sacred Scripture. Many Scriptures enlighten understanding of a doctrine.

Faith: Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Mary: Luke 1:28: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!”

Sacred Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching...”

TEACH **RELATED DOCTRINES**

The Faith is an organic unity. The doctrines are not independent. Often the teaching of a related doctrine will reveal to a participant what had been previously hidden.

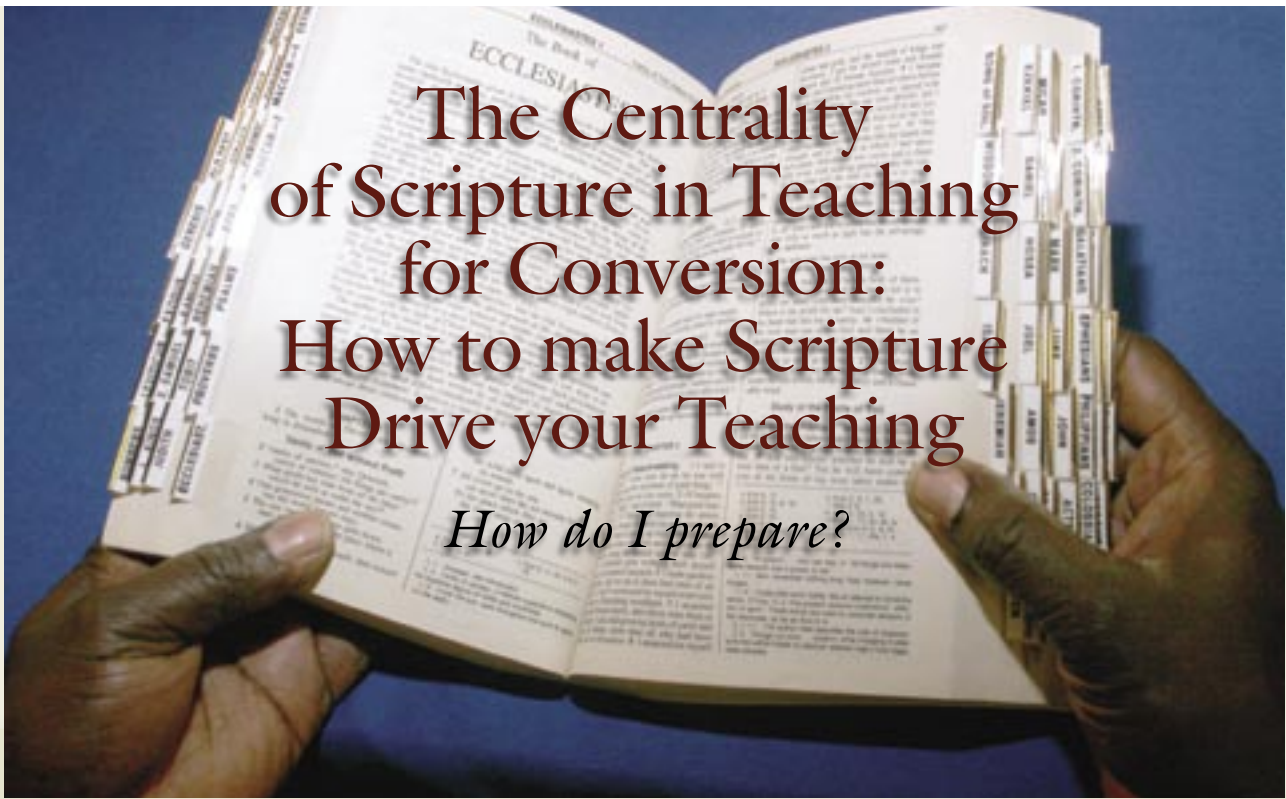
Faith: Jesus: Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2); **Prayer:** Increase our faith (Luke 17:5); **Redemption:** Your faith has saved you (Luke 7:50).

Mary: The **Father** chose his daughter to make the **Incarnation** possible. She is the Mother and model of the **Church**.

Sacred Scripture: Together with **sacred Tradition**, they make up the single sacred **Deposit of Faith**.

And you think you don’t have enough time to teach... Consider the plight of St. Francis Xavier, the great Jesuit missionary, who was known to have baptized ten thousand people in a single month:

“There was no time for careful teaching, for long instruction. On his arrival at a hamlet he would call together men and boys, in his halting, parrot-like Tamil he recited the Creed, the Commandments, some prayers, which he made his audience repeat after him when he had taught them to make the sign of the Cross. A question followed each article of the Creed: ‘Do you believe?’ A murmur of many voices answered, as dusky arms were crossed on naked breasts: ‘We believe.’ Then came Baptism and each new Christian received a palm-leaf on which the Father’s own hand had written his Christian name.” ~ Margaret Yeo in St. Francis Xavier: Apostle to the East, p. 145



"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching" ~ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

"The Word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two edged sword" ~ HEBREWS 4:12

PRAY: IN ORDER TO ENTER INTO DIALOGUE WITH GOD...

- ⊕ Ask God to open his Word to your understanding
- ⊕ Pray that those you teach will encounter God through your instruction

"Let them remember...that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For, 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the Divine oracles.'" (DV 25)

STUDY: THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND FOOTNOTES...

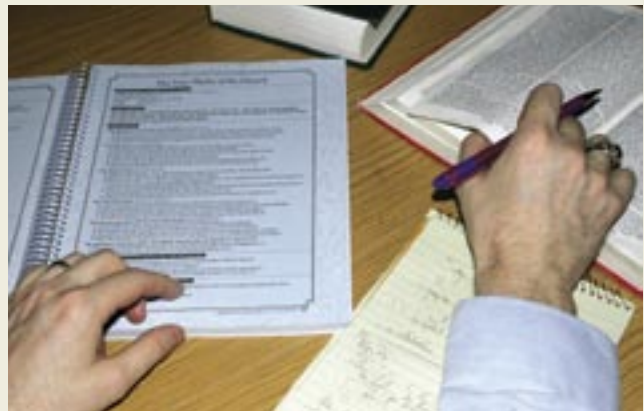
- ✦ Read all the Scriptural references for a particular topic
- ✦ Make use of a concordance, commentaries, and apologetic texts

"Biblical references are a valuable working-tool in catechesis." (CCC 19, see also CCC 11)

READ: SCRIPTURE...

- ✦ Immerse yourself in God's Word
- ✦ Be open to new insight
- ✦ Allow God to dictate the content of your presentation through his Word

"Therefore, all clerics...and others who, as deacons or catechists, are officially engaged in the ministry of the Word, should immerse themselves in the Scriptures by constant reading and diligent study." (DV 25)



How do I present this?



CONSIDER: THOSE YOU TEACH...

- ↔ Address their Scriptural needs, based on what degree of knowledge they may already have on your teaching
- ↔ Assess what Scriptural passages will be needed for doing any apologetics during the teaching, for inspiring participants to prayer, and for producing a desire to read further in God's Word on that subject

"Methods must be adapted to the age, culture, and aptitude of the persons concerned." (EN 44)

SELECT: THE SCRIPTURAL DRIVING FORCE OF THE DOCTRINE...

- ✎ Decide which passages most effectively unlock a deeper meaning of that doctrine for them
- ✎ Be sure not to focus too much on the New Testament to the exclusion of the Old Testament

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)

PREPARE: YOUR PRESENTATION...

- ⊕ Read the *Catechism* on the subject of your catechesis
- ⊕ Decide where the Scriptures will be placed in your catechesis

"Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." (Exodus 4:12)

TEACH: THE TRUTHS GOD HAS REVEALED...

- ✎ Read from the Bible as you teach
- ✎ Use Scripture-speak: use God's Word to phrase the truth
- ✎ Have them follow along in their Bibles
- ✎ Provide materials with the Scriptures clearly cited
- ✎ Suggest meditation on the key Scriptures

"Reflect on the statutes of the Lord, and meditate at all times on his commandments. It is he who will give insight to your mind, and your desire for wisdom will be granted." (Sirach 6:37)

"Catechesis must be impregnated and penetrated by the thought, the spirit, and the outlook of the Bible and the Gospels through assiduous contact with the texts themselves." (CT 27)

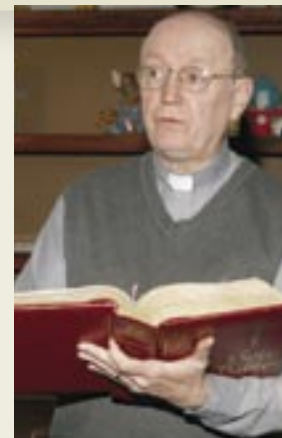
Catechetical Methodology: Catechesis that Changes Hearts

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. ~ 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-2

FIRST STEP: PREPARATION

Here are some of the principal elements of this first step:

- ⊕ Your relationship with the catechumens and candidates.
(St. John Bosco said, “Get them to love you and they’ll follow you anywhere!”)
- ⊕ Your arrangement of the environment is to be hospitable and attractive.
(St. Augustine warned not to let them be too cold or too hot because they will sleep or be distracted!)
- ⊕ Your readiness for them when they arrive—knowing their names, not being preoccupied.
- ⊕ A “sacred space” ready as a focal point for prayer and attention.
- ⊕ Your carefully prepared opening prayer, hymn, and perhaps Liturgy of the Word.
- ⊕ Your sincere love of teaching them.



The purpose of this step is to create the conditions for the deepening of God’s Word in the participant’s hearts. This preparation should help them disengage from other preoccupations and remember how good it is to come to the sessions! (With a group you are just getting to know this could take several weeks.)

SECOND STEP: PROCLAMATION

- ✦ Your announcement of the truth to be examined, explained, and assimilated comes like that of a herald, boldly and clearly stated but not intended as a confrontation. It is somewhat akin to rolling a very interesting object into the midst of a curious crowd.

✦ *For a group of adults or older teenagers, a proclamation about Mary might sound like this:*

“Tonight we will discuss Mary, the Mother of Jesus. From all eternity God intended to employ the help of a human being to accomplish the Incarnation. That woman was Mary of Nazareth. By her agreement with the Divine plan, and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, she became the Mother of God.”

✦ *For young children it might be:*

“Today you’re going to get to learn more about Mary, the Mother of Jesus. God always wanted to ask someone to help bring Jesus to us. He wanted it to be a mother, and a very special one. He asked Mary, who lived in Nazareth. She said yes to be the Mother of God, and then later God gave her to us to be our Mother, too.”

- ✦ The purpose of this step is to clearly proclaim the truth to be taught. It does not take long at all, but following a well-crafted proclamation, everything else follows more clearly.

- ✦ It’s like saying, “This is what we are doing tonight.” When catechumens and candidates go home, they know what they learned! Therefore, the announcement must not be ambiguous, delivered defensively, or phrased as an apology.

- ✦ **This is the central step of the method.** All of the other steps should relate to this one.



THIRD STEP: EXPLANATION

- ✧ Your proclamation signals the opportunity to examine this “good news” which you have just presented to the catechumens and candidates.
- ✧ In addition to presenting catechesis in a straightforward manner, you can get creative to draw the catechumens and candidates in:
 - ✦ *Do some apologetics if appropriate.*
 - ✦ *Share your testimony, or a relevant aspect of it.*
 - ✦ *Show and discuss various sacred art renderings of the Annunciation event and the Crucifixion with Mary at the foot of the cross.*
 - ✦ *Study a prayer (such as the Hail Mary) that is new to the participants.*
 - ✦ *Suggest that participants memorize or look up Scripture verses pertinent to this truth.*
- ✧ This is the step in which participants’ questions and doubts need to be honestly addressed. Some questions or concerns may be handled in the small group time, but the explanation portion of a session must communicate an openness to dialogue and questions.
- ✧ The goal of the explanation is that, even if the truth reaches to the heights of transcendence, it remains clearly practical and reasonable. The explanation of a given truth of the faith should not insult intelligence, rather it informs life experience and inspires fidelity to the God who reveals such wonderful things.



FOURTH STEP: APPLICATION

Now you begin to address what this truth means for the catechumens and candidates.

- ⊕ Break into small groups to examine the ramifications of this truth.
- ⊕ A catechumen or candidate might be led (by grace) to think:
“If Mary is the Mother of God, and I see that she is, I wonder how Jesus wants me to relate to her in my life?”
- ⊕ In helping them to apply this insight to their lives you might invite them to compare biological motherhood with spiritual motherhood. Or you might encourage them to create a simple Marian shrine in some room of their home.
- ⊕ The result is that they might say, *“You’ve given me a lot to think about.”*
- ⊕ This step intends to help the truths learned and revealed in the earlier steps bear fruit. The application portion of a session should also be focused to enlighten the catechumens’ and candidates’ experience, or intimation, of the truth discussed in that session. For example, providing encouragement to and knowledge about a catechumen’s or candidate’s growing desire to love Mary; or providing persuasive reasons to gradually end a long-term resistance to any real relationship with her.

FIFTH STEP: CELEBRATION

- ✧ To conclude an RCIA session, it is helpful to give the catechumens and candidates a way to respond to the grace that God was giving them while they investigated his truth in the explanation and application time of the session.
- ✧ A session on Mary might end by encouraging participants to give thanks and praise, or to pray to her for themselves or others. For example: praying the Litany of Loretto or the Memorare; processing to the parish Marian shrine; teaching them how to pray the rosary so that they might do so for a person they’re worried about; or simply asking Mary to help them come closer to her Son.

“The Ecclesial Method” is taken from *The Mystery We Proclaim* by Msgr. Francis Kelly (Our Sunday Visitor Books, 1999).





Tips on Methodology in General

KEEP THE CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON IN MIND

- ↔ Your methodology should be determined by your knowledge of the participants, your objectives for this session, and the content you will be presenting.
- ↔ Plan to look at the sessions coming up and note the order of teachings, decide what you want to do about feast days, see if there is an activity that would help get some aspect of the teaching across, but will need advance planning.

HAVE OBJECTIVES;

MAKE YOURSELF WRITE THEM AND FOLLOW THEM

- ⊕ Setting realistic goals, one for the “understanding” aim, and one for the “change” aim of CT 20, will help you. Participants will notice that you are getting somewhere (they don’t need to know the objectives/goals, they will be able to tell that progress is being made).
- ⊕ A deadly factor in once-a-week sessions is that they just seem to plod along, it is hard to see progress unless you plan progress.

HAVE STORIES READY!

ALWAYS BE LOOKING FOR STORIES AND COLLECT THEM

- ✦ Everyone loves a good story, jot down the main points and keep them with your session planning materials.
- ✦ Stories of your life, not embellished, are very helpful because you reveal yourself—you don’t want to be just “that teacher.” Reveal aspects of your love for God and the Church, witness to them regularly.
- ✦ Using stories right from the news, the parish, or the neighborhood gives you a chance to shine the light of God’s love on the participants’ daily experiences.
- ✦ Lives of saints and holy people are always useful, but make sure you portray them as real and believable—St. Teresa of Avila said there is nothing worse than a “sad” saint!
- ✦ Anthologies and digests are good sources, practice the telling of the story, keeping it concise and interesting.

DO NOT READ TO THEM (EXCEPT STORIES OR SCRIPTURE)

- ⊗ Only for those two mediums will anyone stay attentive to reading more than a one-line quotation.
- ⊗ Even though you come across a great quote, even something from the *Catechism*, don’t read it to them if it is somewhat lengthy. Paraphrase it instead—unless they have the same source and can read along.

Suggested Format for an RCIA Teaching

Preparation

Arrangement of environment and sacred space for this doctrine:

Opening prayer for this doctrine:

Music for this doctrine:

Proclamation

What is the statement of truth to ring in their ears?

What Scripture(s) will drive this?

Explanation

What essential truths will be explained in the form of a handout?

What aspects of this doctrine will be drawn out verbally?

Application

What does this mean for them?

Remember the adult learning model.

Celebration

How can we thank God and acclaim his wonderful truth together?

Remember to:

Samples Basic Outlines for RCIA Sessions on Three Doctrines

Preparation

Choose elements for Liturgy of the Word (readings and psalm) related to the doctrine.

Choose prayers and hymns appropriate to the doctrine.

Proclamation

Incarnation: In order to accomplish all his saving purposes for us, the Second Person of the Trinity assumed human nature. (see CCC 457-460) (Scriptures: John 3:16,17; Col 1:15-19; 1 John 1:14,16,18—draw these through the rest of the teaching)

Creation: Out of love, according to his incredible plan and purposes, God, who himself has no beginning or end, made out of nothing all that has a beginning. (Scriptures: Gen 1:1,27,31; Acts 17:24-28—creation is “very good”; ex nihilo)

Scripture: In order to make absolutely clear to us his saving work, God has communicated himself and his plan to us in human words. (Ps 119; Eph 6:17; 1 Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12—work through the Biblical citations to demonstrate this truth)

Explanation

Incarnation: 1) Give a handout on the four reasons for Incarnation and briefly explain them (see CCC 457-460)

2) Explain the concept of “true God and true man” (see CCC 464-469)

3) Explain how this is possible (Col 1:18-19; CCC 470-477), which includes the common error of the consciousness of Christ

Creation: 1) Give a handout on our participation in his creative work (Col 1:17)

2) Give a handout on Providence, including the scandal of evil (see CCC 301-314)

3) Explain creation “out of nothing” (see CCC 296-298)

4) Explain “in his image” (see CCC 356-361, 1878, 2331)

5) Explain that it was love that impelled God to create (see CCC 293-299)

6) Explain the plan of God’s loving goodness (see CCC 1, 280)

Scripture: 1) Give a handout on Scripture passages about Scripture

2) Explain the Christo-centricity of Scripture (see CCC 102)

3) Explain the role of human authors in writing Scripture (see CCC 106)

4) Explain the role of magisterium in identifying/guarding Scripture (see CCC 85)

5) Explain Divine authorship (CCC 105)

Application

Incarnation: Explain the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (see CCC 428, as well as margin numbers)

- Creation:**
- 1) Explain in Scripture the redemption of Creation: “All Creation waits in eager longing...” (Rom 8:18-23)
 - 2) Give examples of the practice of stewardship over Creation (Gen 1:26; CCC 2415)
 - 3) Expound on the statement: “The world was created for the sake of the Church” (CCC 760)

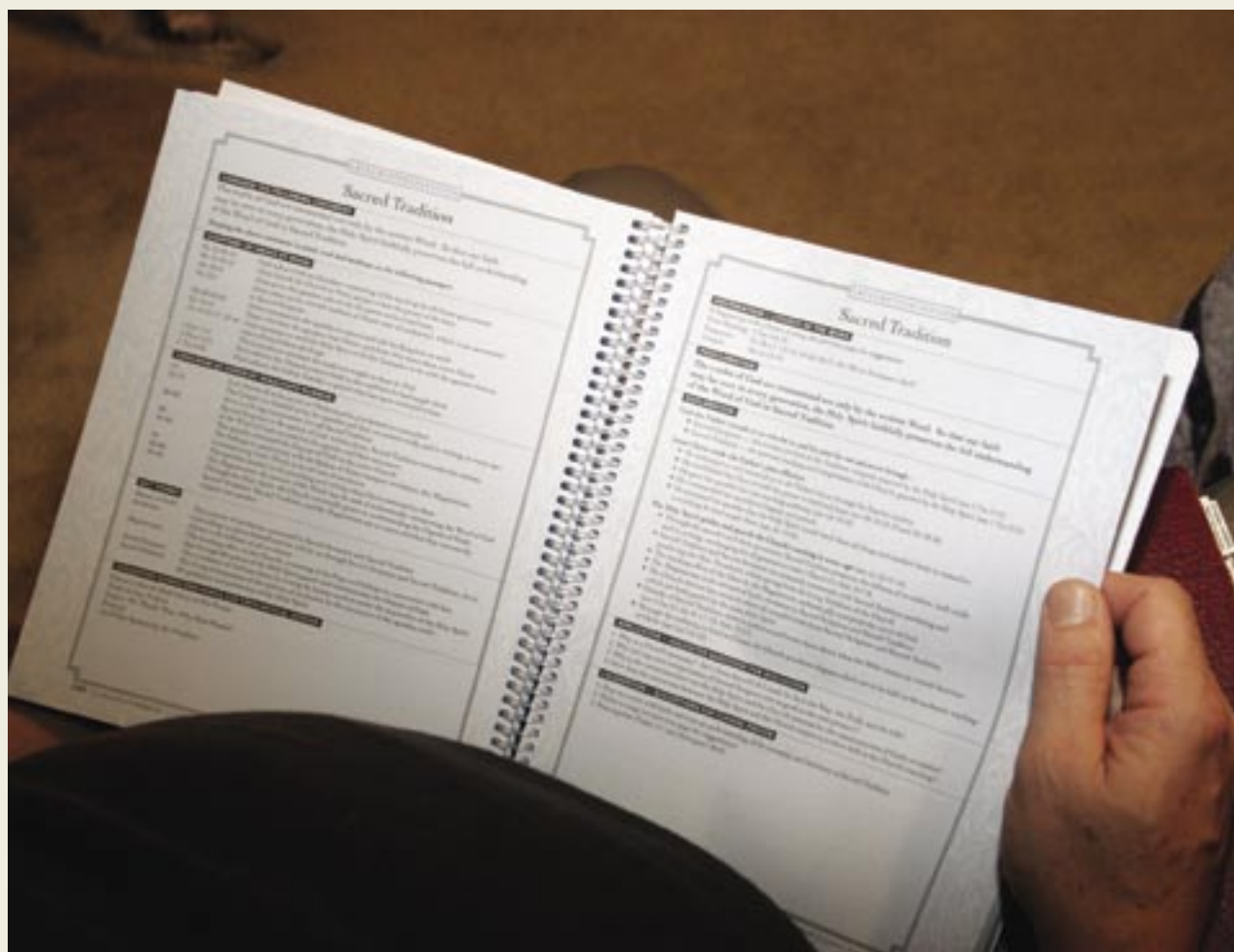
- Scripture:**
- 1) Show the use of the senses of Scripture (CCC 115)
 - 2) Give witness to the power of Scripture in *your* life (2 Tim 3:15)

Celebration

Incarnation: Pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart together

Creation: Pray or sing Psalm 148 together

Scripture: Teach and then sing “Thy Word” song (by Amy Grant)



A Pair of Examples of Good Methodology in Teaching Adults

“To be able to educate others in the faith, catechists should themselves have a deep spiritual life. This is the most important aspect of their personality and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation. The real catechist is a saint” (GCM 22). This is daunting. And yet this is doable — in God. So long as this daunting call drives us to prayer, instead of driving us away in fear, then all things become possible (see Lk 1:37). What we have to give — Who we have to give — is worth surmounting this fear.

Using Questions as an Aid to Conversion

Our own verbal teaching, private conversations with those we teach, small group dialogue, as well as times set aside for questions and answers, can all bring out questions, intended or not. Be grateful for questions: it means that someone is interested! Questions asked by participants are always good. It is important though, that catechists not relate to questions passively, much less view them as potential distractions. Good catechists *invite* and *work for* questions.

It’s helpful to consider the following questions: When does learning begin? Was there ever a time in your own education when a particular teacher left you feeling lost? The teacher may have expounded on several ideas with great passion, but left you wondering, “What is the point here?” If at some level that question was not satisfied, you may have continued to be present, but you had to force yourself to pay attention, unaided by any internal *need to know*.

If you have had this experience, you discovered that learning does not begin when the teacher simply starts to speak. Rather, it begins when the *learner* fashions a well-framed question in his or her mind, a question of such interest that it demands an answer. When the learner “owns” a question, when it strikes to the core of his or her own curiosity, then the proper dynamic is at work for real engagement. Learning has begun.

To be clear, we are not talking about simple factual questions like, “In what year was the D-Day Battle fought?” Rather, we are talking about broader questions, such as: “What would have happened if the Allies had not prevailed at Normandy? How would it have changed the face of Europe?” While dates are important, these larger questions are more interesting and present a framework that tie together otherwise disparate facts. In turn, they elicit other, more detailed questions.

When participants in adult catechesis feel lost or bored, it is often because they have not considered these larger questions or their underlying importance, or have not been helped to do so. One hallmark of a great catechist is the ability to initiate curiosity with a well-framed question, and guide those being catechized to ask their own questions along the path toward conclusions. This is accomplished through a series of guided questions posed by the catechist to elicit thought, discussion, and conclusions from participants. It demands thoughtful preparation on the part of the catechist, but when well executed, this method gives participants a chance to experience, in the midst of an indifferent culture, that truth is surprisingly *relevant*, and more important, to consider the invitation to conversion at a more *personal* level.

Using Eye Contact as an Aid to Conversion

Eye contact is one of the *most* crucial skills of a good catechist. It is certainly the case that a solicitation of participants’ questions or thoughts, small-group discussion, group dialogue during a teaching, and individual conversations afterward will all give a catechist insight into how a teaching is being received, but for those portions of a teaching in which such means are not used, it is indispensable for a catechist to learn to closely observe participants as truths are unfolded to them.

Very often, unless otherwise trained, most catechists (and speakers in general) will unconsciously begin to make eye contact with only those faces in the room that seem to be responding most positively. During a teaching, the presence of a person with a happy face and a head nodding in apparent agreement will soon attract a catechist’s eye contact in *great* disproportion to others in the room. For example, in an RCIA setting, it can even get to the point that if the most positive faces in the room are from RCIA team members, godparents, or sponsors then the catechist will begin to make eye contact *only* with them. Often the result of this unconscious action is that the catechist mentally shifts to teaching *them*, instead of participants, usually evidenced by an increasing use of terminology and phrases that may be meaningless or confusing to non-Catholics.

If a catechist can’t make eye contact with *all participants*, then he or she has *no real sense* of how the teaching is being received *in the moment*. What will be missed? A confused look on someone’s face (or maybe many faces) that signals a need to stop and clarify or repeat, to slow down, or to back up and come at a point from another direction, or to directly ask the quizzical ones a question. A change in expression that indicates some encouraging level of understanding or recognition. A slight shift in the mouth and slight clouding of the eyes that lets you know emotions have been stirred to the point of tears. A sleepy-eyed look (maybe from a long day, a good meal, or lackluster teaching) that calls you to work harder to engage a particular person, or simply to pause for a coffee or tea break. A questioning look that may benefit from an opportunity to ask one. An angry look that may need pursuing immediately, or perhaps in private after the session. A sudden turning down to write, implying you’ve perhaps said something of value.

All of these, and other reactions you observe as you teach, point to one of the most important aspects of relationships in your catechetical work: yes, you may be diligently seeking to build relationships with participants in many ways *in addition to* the actual catechesis, but does the importance of knowing *who* you are teaching now extend fully to knowing them *as* you are teaching.

St. Mary's Parish Inquiry Sessions

☞ Sessions are held in the Library ☞

✦ The Gospel Message, Part I ✦

DATE	EVENT	TEACHING
September 8 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Welcome/Does God Exist?
September 15 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Who is God? – The Blessed Trinity
September 22 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Who Am I? – God's Image
September 29 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Broken Relationship: Evil and Original Sin
October 6 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Restored Relationship: The Covenants of God
October 13 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	How Does God Speak to Us? – Revelation
October 20 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Person of Jesus
October 27 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Salvation, Justification, and the Paschal Mystery
November 1 (Tue)	Solemnity of All Saints (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
November 3 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church
November 10 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Four Marks of the Church
November 17 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Ten Commandments
November 24 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (Thanksgiving)	-----
December 1 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Four Last Things
December 8 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Sacraments and the Sacrament of Baptism
December 8 (Thu)	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
December 10 (Sat)	RCIA Retreat (8:30am-4:30pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Introduction to Sacred Scripture / Lectio The Family of the Church: The Communion of Saints The Mother of Us All: The Blessed Virgin Mary
December 11 (Sun)	Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming (12:00pm Mass)	-----

✦ The Gospel Message, Part II ✦

DATE	EVENT	TEACHING
December 15 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Incarnation
December 22 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (Christmas)	-----
December 25 (Sun)	Solemnity of Christ's Birth (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
December 29 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (New Year)	-----
January 1 (Sun)	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
January 5 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Sacred Tradition
January 12 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Sacred Scripture
January 19 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	God Calls Us by Name: God's Plan for Us
January 26 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Gift of Grace
February 2 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Holy Spirit
February 9 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Temptation and Sin
February 16 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Virtue and Vice
February 22 (Wed)	Ash Wednesday (Beginning of Lent)	-----
February 23 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	What Do I Do Now? – Repentance
March 1 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Faith and Hope
March 8 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Virtue of Love
March 15 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Life of Prayer
March 22 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Lord's Prayer
March 29 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Special Question and Answer Night
April 1 (Sun)	Palm Sunday	-----
April 2 (Mon)	Chrism Mass, Diocesan Cathedral (7:00-9:00pm)	-----
April 4 (Wed)	Tenebrae Service in the Church (8:00-9:00pm)	-----
April 5 (Thu)	Holy Thursday Mass (8:00pm)	-----
April 6 (Fri)	Good Friday Liturgy (8:00pm)	-----
April 7 (Sat)	Easter Vigil (8:00-11:00pm)	-----
April 8 (Sun)	Solemnity of Christ's Resurrection	-----
April 12 (Thu)	No RCIA Session for Inquirer Group	-----
April 19 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Connection Among Us All: Liturgy
April 26 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Sacramental Principle and Sacramentals
May 3 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Mass as the Life of the Family of Jesus
May 10 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Communion of Saints
May 17 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Redemptive Suffering
May 17 (Thu)	Solemnity of Christ's Ascension	-----
May 24 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Blessed Virgin Mary
May 27 (Sun)	Solemnity of Pentecost	-----
June 14 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	A Catechism as the Faithful Echo
June 21 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Catechism of the Second Vatican Council
July 5 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Creed: The Economy of Salvation
July 12 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Sacraments
July 26 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	Morality: Life in Christ
August 9 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	Prayer: Where God Becomes Real



St. Mary's Parish RCIA Sessions

☪ Sessions are held in the Library ☪

DATE	EVENT	TEACHING
September 6 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Welcome/Does God Exist?
September 13 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Who is God? – The Blessed Trinity
September 20 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Who Am I? – God's Image
September 27 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Broken Relationship: Evil and Original Sin
October 4 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Restored Relationship: The Covenants of God
October 11 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	How Does God Speak to Us? – Revelation
October 18 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Salvation, Justification, and the Paschal Mystery
October 25 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Four Last Things
November 1 (Thu)	Solemnity of All Saints (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
November 1 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Ten Commandments
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December 6 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Person of Jesus
December 8 (Sat)	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
December 13 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Eucharist: Sacramental Body of Christ
December 15 (Sat)	RCIA Retreat (8:30am-4:30pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Introduction to Sacred Scripture / Lectio Divina
		The Family of the Church: The Communion of Saints
		The Mother of Us All: The Blessed Virgin Mary
December 16 (Sun)	Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming (12:00pm Mass)	-----
December 20 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (Christmas)	-----
December 25 (Tue)	Solemnity of Christ's Birth (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
December 27 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (New Year)	-----
January 1 (Tue)	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----
January 3 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Reconciliation
January 10 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Holy Orders
January 17 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering
January 24 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Dignity of the Human Person and Conscience
January 31 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Cardinal Virtues and Cardinal Sins
February 7 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Theological Virtues
February 9 (Sat)	RCIA Retreat (8:30am-4:30pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Matrimony / Contraception / Lectio Divina
		Teaching Mass / Stations of the Cross
February 13 (Wed)	Ash Wednesday (Beginning of Lent)	-----
February 14 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Social Teachings of the Church and Life Issues
February 16 (Sat)	Rite of Sending (5:00pm Mass)	-----
February 17 (Sun)	Rite of Election at the Diocesan Cathedral (3:00-5:30pm)	-----
February 21 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Prayer: Crafting a Spiritual Life
February 24 (Sun)	Penitential Rite for the Baptized (9:30am Mass)	-----
February 28 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Spiritual Combat
March 3 (Sun)	First Scrutiny for the Unbaptized (9:30am Mass)	-----
March 7 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Challenge of Humility
March 10 (Sun)	Second Scrutiny for the Unbaptized (9:30am Mass)	-----
March 14 (Thu)	RCIA Session & Presentation of the Creed (7:15-9:15pm)	The Call to Purity
March 17 (Sun)	Third Scrutiny for the Unbaptized (12:00pm Mass)	-----
March 21 (Thu)	RCIA Session & Presentation of the Lord's Prayer (7:15-9:15pm)	The Lord's Prayer
March 24 (Sun)	Palm Sunday	-----
March 25 (Mon)	Chrism Mass, Diocesan Cathedral (7:00-9:00pm)	-----
March 27 (Wed)	Tenebrae Service in the Church (7:30pm)	-----
March 28 (Thu)	Holy Thursday Mass (8:00pm)	-----
March 29 (Fri)	Good Friday Liturgy (8:00pm)	-----
March 30 (Sat)	Rehearsal for the Easter Vigil for Sponsors only (10:00-10:45am)	-----
March 30 (Sat)	Holy Saturday Preparation Rites (11:00-11:45am)	-----
March 30 (Sat)	RCIA Holy Hour (6:30-7:30pm)	Meditation on Scripture and the Church Fathers
March 30 (Sat)	Easter Vigil (8:00-11:00pm)	-----
March 31 (Sun)	Solemnity of Christ's Resurrection	-----
April 4 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Party for New Catholics
April 11 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Who is God to You Now
April 18 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	What to Know and Where to Go
April 25 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Vocations and the Universal Call to Holiness
May 2 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Adoration and Traditions of Prayer
May 9 (Thu)	Solemnity of Christ's Ascension	-----
May 9 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Evangelization and Ecumenism
May 16 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Becoming a Saint
May 19 (Sun)	Solemnity of Pentecost	-----
June 13 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Sacrifice
June 20 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for the Poor
July 11 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Authority
July 25 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Love of Scripture
August 8 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Beauty
August 15 (Thu)	Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary (Holy Day of Obligation)	-----



Sample questions that could be used to evaluate the parish RCIA process:

1. List as many as possible of those who have been initiated into the Church in the parish during the past three years, except for those who have moved away from the parish (new job, military transfer, etc.)
 - Do we see these individuals at Sunday Mass?
 - Are they involved in other ways in the parish?
 - Are there reasons why they may not be practicing the Catholic faith?
2. What happens when someone calls our parish saying that they want to know more about becoming Catholic? What does our precatechumenate look like?
3. How do we prepare RCIA participants and the parish for the major liturgical rites? How do we reflect on these rites after they take place?
4. How often and how well do we make available the various minor rites (Celebrations of the Word, Blessings, Minor Exorcisms, Anointings, Presentations, etc.)?
5. If we dismiss the catechumens from Sunday Mass, how often do we do so? If not, how can we change things to offer this opportunity? What takes place at Reflection on the Word?
6. What happens during Lent? Is Lent a time for “interior reflection” or primarily catechetical instruction? Do we celebrate all of the Scrutinies, the Presentations, and the Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday?
7. What is our Easter Vigil like? How many parishioners attend? Do the elect and the candidates feel welcomed and at home by their experience of the parish at the Vigil?
8. What do we do during the period of mystagogy? During the neophyte year?
9. How do we initiate children of catechetical age and teens who need to prepare for Baptism or for reception into full communion?
10. In what ways could others assist in the catechumenal ministry at our parish? How could we invite them?
11. How supportive is the parish of the initiation process?
12. Are sponsors and godparents deeply involved before and after the Easter Vigil? What sort of formation do they receive?
13. What is our understanding of how well RCIA participants will know and live the Catholic faith? What resources do we use? What other activities (prayer experiences, service, field trips) do we provide for participants to join in? Do they understand their responsibility to participate in the Church’s mission to evangelize?
14. What do we do well regarding initiation? What really works? What does not seem to be working?