



The Catechumenal Process: A Modern Restoration of an Ancient Practice

As the Catholic Church began to spread throughout the Roman world in the early centuries, she encountered pagan people who sought conversion to the Catholic faith. These pagans were not unreligious but were, on the contrary, very religious people. Still, their background did not give them the monotheistic worldview that previous converts from Judaism brought to the Christian faith. Therefore, the Church had to create a process for these people in order to help them develop a fundamental Judeo/Christian, or Catholic, worldview. This process came to be known as the Catechumenate and was marked by:

- ↔ A saturation in Scripture
- ↔ The involvement of the whole community of bishops, priests, deacons and laity
- ↔ The intense participation of sponsors
- ↔ An extended period of catechesis, usually three years, punctuated by major and minor liturgical Rites as preparatory for the Easter sacraments

In the early fourth century, with the Edict of Milan, the Church became a legal entity and the persecutions of the preceding centuries came to an end. Over the following centuries, the Church came to have such a strong influence on the culture that there were, so to speak, no more pagans except in outlying areas. The vast majority of people now entered the Catholic faith at Baptism shortly after birth. As there was no longer the overwhelming numbers of converts, the Catechumenate simply fell out of use, except in mission territories.

This situation became the norm throughout the centuries until well into the twentieth century. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, referring to “the signs of the times,” called for the restoration of the ancient Catechumenal process in no less than five of the Council documents. The Council Fathers did so because they recognized that a kind of ‘neo-paganism’ had come to be the predominate worldview of modern culture in many parts of the world where Christianity had long been present. This neo-paganism was similar to ancient paganism, but did have a marked difference.

- ⊕ The *similarity* is that neither the ancient pagans nor the neo-pagans knew the one true God of Judeo/Christianity.
- ⊕ The *difference* is that, while the ancient pagans had come to the faith from a background of ignorance regarding truth, and so were open to the ‘new’ teachings of the Church, the modern neo-pagans, on the other hand, are coming from a background that, at its very foundation, had known and rejected the truths of the Christian faith. Therefore, neo-pagans have what could be called a certain jadedness that makes them harder to evangelize and convert than their ancient predecessors.

In order to reach out to the neo-pagans, the restored Catechumenal process, like its ancient predecessor, called for:

- ✕ Greater use of Scripture
- ✕ Involvement of the entire Church community — both clergy and laity
- ✕ Restoration of the use of sponsors
- ✕ Restoration of major and minor Rites as preparatory for the Easter sacraments

SUMMARY:

The restoration of the Catechumenal process is a reflection of the Church’s wisdom in going back to a tried and true practice in order to lovingly bring people into her fold. It is a restoration of grace for those who are seeking Christ and his one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.



POPE JOHN XXIII'S PRAYER FOR THE CONVOCAION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL



*O DIVINE SPIRIT,
RENEW YOUR WONDERS IN OUR TIME,
AS THOUGH FOR A NEW PENTECOST,
AND GRANT THAT THE HOLY CHURCH,
PRESERVING UNANIMOUS AND CONTINUOUS PRAYER,
TOGETHER WITH MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS,
AND ALSO UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF ST. PETER,
MAY INCREASE THE REIGN OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR,
THE REIGN OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE,
THE REIGN OF LOVE AND PEACE.
AMEN.*

GOD is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel ... No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.

~Pope John Paul II,
REDEMPTORIS MISSIO 3

CHURCH DOCUMENTS INTRODUCED:

- ❖ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
- ❖ *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), The Mission of the Redeemer
- ❖ *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), The Joy of the Gospel

BOOKS INTRODUCED:

- ❖ *RCIA Leader's Manual*, Association for Catechumenal Ministry
- ❖ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Ritual Text*

REFERENCES:

- ❖ **SC 64**: "The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps..."
- ❖ **SC 10**: "Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is..."
- ❖ **RM 3**: "God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully..."
- ❖ **RM 92**: "I see the dawning of a new missionary age which will become a radiant day..."



WHAT ARE THE WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH JESUS HIMSELF BRINGS
OTHERS INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM (CHRIST'S PEDAGOGY)?

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS: LUKE 24: 13-31



3 ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S PEDAGOGY:

- ❖ *Pastoral Aspect* Luke 24: 15-24; 28-29
- ❖ *Catechetical Aspect* Luke 24: 25-27
- ❖ *Liturgical (Sacramental) Aspect* Luke 24: 29-31

QUESTIONS TO HELP US EVALUATE OUR MINISTRY PROGRAMS:

- ❖ How are we getting to know these people?
- ❖ What are we doing pastorally to understand them and meet them where they are at?
- ❖ How are we teaching them, based on where they are in their lives and what they're ready for, what they need to hear?
- ❖ How are we leading them to active participation in the liturgy?

ADDITIONAL MAGISTERIAL REFERENCE:

CCC 50 "By natural reason man can know God with certainty..."

REFERENCES FROM THE RCIA RITUAL TEXT:

- Article 75** "The catechumenate is an extended period . . ."
- Article 75.1** "A suitable catechesis is provided by priests or deacons . . ." (*Catechetical*)
- Article 75.2** "As they become familiar with the Christian way of life . . ." (*Pastoral*)
- Article 75.3** "The Church, like a mother, helps the catechumens . . ." (*Liturgical*)
- Article 75.4** "Since the Church's life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn . . ."
- Article 78** "The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period . . ."



Encountering Christ as Sacrament ~

Models of the Catechumenate

by Msgr. M. Francis Mannion

The renewal of the process of Christian initiation stands as one of the most important and successful features of modern liturgical renewal. Since its promulgation in 1972 and its further elaboration under the auspices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1988, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has been among the most pastorally effective features of Catholic life in the United States. (Despite its name, we should always keep in mind that when we are talking about initiation, we are not talking only about rituals, but the whole liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral process of which it is comprised. Widespread use of “RCIA” probably precludes renaming it more appropriately.)

RCIA is a model of Christian initiation that highlights the sacramental features of incorporation into Christ; more adequately integrates doctrinal instruction into a framework of comprehensive spiritual, moral, and liturgical formation; reinvigorates the communal elements of the process of adult formation; and gives the laity active responsibility. All of these clearly represent an advance over the process of initiation in use on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. Few areas of Catholic life have been as richly blessed by the *ressourcement* – the return to early Christian Order of Initiation--called for by the Council as has the whole process by which adults today become Catholic Christians.

And yet all is not well. The very fact that the challenge is conversion, the conforming of imperfect men and women to Christ, means that the process will never be perfect. Initiation is, after all, the beginning of a process which

has its ending in eternity. However, there are problems that are more concrete and, for that reason, can more readily be corrected. In general, three models of RCIA are operative today in U.S. Catholic parishes. Each of the models conceives of, and practices, Christian initiation differently. This chapter describes these models, discussing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of catechetical, liturgical, and pastoral/ecclesial dimensions.

The First Model: Doctrinal-Apologetic

The first model can be termed “doctrinal-apologetic”. The key operative elements here are, obviously, doctrine and apologetics. The doctrinal features of Catholicism are matters of the highest importance. It is not possible to be a Catholic without adherence to a body of doctrine, nor is it possible to become a Catholic Christian without acquiring a thorough knowledge of Christian doctrinal tradition. By the same token, apologetics--the defense of Catholic faith--is no less important today that it was in the past. Even from New Testament times, apologetics of necessity played an important part in providing a clear delineation of Christian belief, offering an “account of the faith” in a wider cultural context, and defending orthodoxy from corruptions of various sorts and from various sources.

The doctrinal-apologetic model, however, is one in which the doctrinal and the apologetic elements are the *primary* focus, so that the teaching of doctrine and apologetic methodology are regarded as the principal tasks and concerns of Christian initiation. The



cognitive aspects of religion are preeminent, so that religious reality is approached in a manner similar to philosophy or science. The emphasis is on clear, comprehensive, and detailed communication of the doctrinal elements of Catholic faith, so that the participant can proceed into membership as quickly and efficiently as possible. In this model, Christian initiation tends to be businesslike, juridical, and pragmatic. The participant tends to be thought of as well-informed and well-formed when he or she knows the Catholic faith and can account for it conceptually.

In this model, the catechist is primarily a *teacher*, a master of doctrine and a good apologist for the Faith who is able to demonstrate the truth of the Catholic faith against other religious claims to truth with which the catechumen or the candidate may be familiar. The physical place for RCIA in this model is a *classroom* and its image is a *blackboard*.

This model of Christian formation has considerable strengths. These include providing strong doctrinal knowledge to those joining the Church; tailoring the process to individual needs, social backgrounds, and levels of education of converts; placing a necessary emphasis on Catholic identity and on what is distinctive about the Catholic faith; accounting well and in a compelling manner for the truth claims of Catholicism; and, not least, requiring of converts a clear sense of what they are undertaking, as well as requiring of them a lifelong commitment to Catholic faith in its explicit ecclesial dimensions.

However, the duration of instruction tends to be relatively short, often fitting comfortably within the timetable of the secular school year. The catechumen is a student in the regular educational sense; though the process may take

place with other learners in the classroom, the communal dimension might not be significant. The actual event of initiation in this model may also be non-communal and involve few people, and options that allow for private initiation will tend to be used. The ritual dimensions will accordingly tend to be truncated. An approach which gives priority to the doctrinal and the apologetic, and which highlights the formal and juridical features of the Church, tends not to have a high sacramental and liturgical consciousness. Thus, what is problematic about this approach is not the importance it accords to doctrine and apologetics, but rather the relatively low profile given to other crucial factors of initiation: the spiritual, the communal, and the liturgical. Spiritual and moral formation, and introduction into the

sacramental life of the Church, have their place in this model, but they are expected to fall into place by themselves and are not systematically and carefully stimulated and promoted.

Furthermore, the ecclesiology that goes with this kind of

understanding is overly institutional. When the formal, structural, and procedural features of the Church are highlighted disproportionately, a kind of rationalistic, excessively scholastic, and abstract theology and spirituality will be generated in participants, with negative results for the general life of the Church. When the cognitive, the propositional, or the informational features of faith dominate and become the paradigm for the whole, then Christian life and the process of Christian initiation are more easily misconceived.

This process of formation, which has its roots in the pre-Vatican II Church, produces good converts; it would be arrogant and untrue to suggest otherwise. Indeed, the strengths of the conversion process of that era are very easily





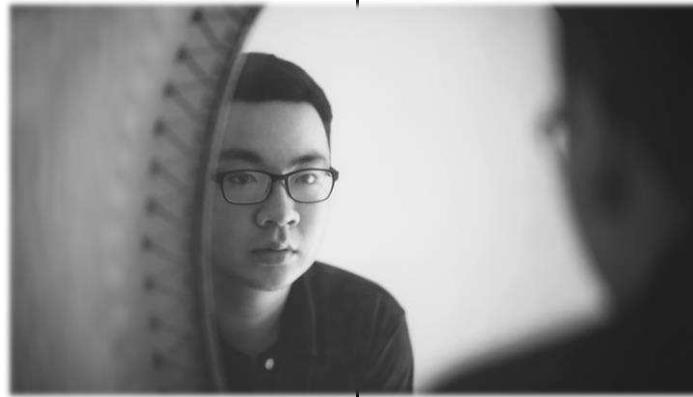
forgotten in the enthusiasm for the newer RCIA process. The problems are not found in what it actually does or seeks to do, but in what it could do more amply, comprehensively, and richly. Vatican II sought not to replace the old system but to take its strengths and to expand them, amplifying areas not adequately emphasized previously.

The Second Model: Spiritual-Expressive

The second model is the conception and practice of RCIA as a means by which the spirituality of individuals is brought to expression and given shape. The use of the word “spiritual”

here does not mean what has traditionally been meant by the word in Catholicism, but instead what it has come to mean in our secular culture and, to a very significant and profound degree, in contemporary writing about spirituality in American Catholicism: the personal, intense search for meaning.

The spiritual-expressive approach has its roots in what is called “the turn to the subject” that began in the 18th-century European Enlightenment. Philosophers and psychologists assert that whatever is finally important to religion is found in the pre-reflective, experiential depths of the self. Adherents to this approach regard the outer, or public, features of religion principally as expressive and evocative of internal experience. The subjective manner of thought that this movement produced is now fully embedded in Western secular culture.



In this model, the RCIA is seen as a means of helping individuals to find God within the deepest part of themselves. It is generally anti-doctrinal, standing in opposition to catechisms and manuals of formal belief and paying little attention to the systematic and detailed transmission of the information of faith. This approach arises from a conviction that the formation of an individual spiritual universe, based on some generalized personal spirituality, takes precedence over conceptual knowledge of doctrine, Scriptures, and initiation into the traditional language of faith. As a result of an understanding that the individual is naturally religious, proponents of spiritual-expressivism conclude that this religiosity needs only an environment of freedom, creativity, and

imagination to come to expression.

The operative image here is not the blackboard but the *mirror*, and the physical place is not the classroom, but the *support group*. The catechist is not a teacher, as

is the case whenever anybody approaches a blackboard, but a *therapist*.

In this model of the RCIA, the spiritual, the affective, and the personal are underscored. It attends to areas of formation other than doctrine. The focus is more psychological than theological, more personal than ecclesial, more emotive than cognitive. It pays considerable attention to the rites and symbols of the liturgy, often utilizing them with great enthusiasm and energy. Its processes are highly communal, in theory and in practice, and it involves the laity in diverse ways in the many features of catechumenal formation.

However, the effects of the spiritual-expressive model on catechesis are deeply problematic.



This model fails to pay adequate attention to doctrine, generally attending instead to the exploration of personal experience. A lectionary-based catechesis can unfortunately foster this tendency. Deacon Owen Cummings points out that “the spiritual-expressive approach fails because of its inability to initiate men and women adequately into Christian faith, into Christian understanding and Christian practice. Spiritual-expressive catechesis . . . misunderstands the very nature and process of formation. [It is] too naive, and . . . overly optimistic about the ability of . . . unmediated religious experience to achieve the level of mature Christian faith.” Deacon Cummings continues that catechesis in this framework “operates on the conviction that a few direct experiences . . . suffice to develop the religious skills” that adults require. Where this happens, he says, “faith is self-legitimizing, impervious to examination or argument, and has its home in the private imaginings of the believer or in the sheltered world of religious communities.”

In the spiritual-expressive model, liturgy comes to be regarded as playing a merely functional role in Christian life. The Catholic worship system is not revered as the objective action of God through Christ in His Church, but instead is seen as a symbolic guide to the expression of an inner spiritual state, so that the focus is no longer the worshiping Church but the self; awe is attached not to the liturgy but to a personal interiority. This focus on the priority of the inner and the personal creates the view that divine grace is available without sacramental mediation. Sacraments are not understood to mediate God’s grace, as traditional Catholic theology holds, but only to articulate, express, and celebrate divine grace already present and active in the world. When connected with the anti-ritual and anti-sacramental bias of North American culture, itself derived from Protestantism, the rites and symbols of the liturgy are instead sometimes viewed as potential threats to authentic spirituality. For these reasons, liturgical rites are used rather functionally, being regarded as aids to inner personal spirituality. The rites and symbols of

the liturgy are consequently regarded as temporary, provisional, secondary, and experimental. They lose their revered, solemn, God-bearing status. As a natural result, a great deal of experimentation occurs in the rites of the RCIA.

Finally, a poor ecclesiology is at work. The Church is seen as a community of like-minded people on a spiritual journey that sometimes leads them into the Church and sometimes out of the Church. The result is that no great value is attached to strong, lifelong commitment to the Church. The staying power of Catholics formed in this model can be very poor indeed.

The extent to which this model of Christian initiation is operative should not be exaggerated. Yet the “spiritual-expressive” model is widespread in American Catholicism today, especially at the level of popular liturgical and pastoral theology. It is strongly promoted in many liturgy and catechetical offices and organizations at diocesan and national levels, as well as in existing literature, workshops, and conferences on Christian initiation. The philosophical and cultural movement represented by the spiritual-expressive model has generated and encouraged the deeply negative phenomena, both in cultural and ecclesial life, of radical subjectivism, emotivism, and individualism. The effects of these upon the whole range of Christian institutions has been decidedly negative.

The Bible, the sacraments, the spiritual tradition, established forms of religious life, and the RCIA are easily rendered devoid of their authoritative character and become instead little more than conceptually-limited, time-conditioned, cultural aids for the expression of personal spirituality. The operation of spiritual-expressivism is one of the most fundamental causes of disorder and disorientation in the life of the Church and its formative ministry at the present time.



The Third Model: Sacramental-Acculturation

The RCIA exists to advance *all* the crucial dimensions of initiation: the spiritual, moral, and Biblical as companions to the doctrinal; communal life as the formative context for initiation; the responsibility of the laity to work with ordained clergy in Christian formation; and liturgical and sacramental elements as central to the whole process from beginning to end. The most adequate model to achieve these ends can be called the “sacramental-acculturation” model.

If the focus on the first model is doctrinal and apologetic, and the focus on the second is the Christian expression of interior spirituality, the focus of the third model is the sacramental life of the Church and the need for the prospective Catholic to be acculturated into that sacramental life. The word “sacramental” is used here primarily in the ordinary sense of the word, having in the forefront particularly the sacraments of initiation. It is also used, however, with the awareness that the sacraments incorporate us into the Church, which is the sacrament of Christ, and into Christ, Who is the sacrament of God.

“Acculturation” means that the prospective believer has to be initiated into the sacramental culture of the Church. Acculturation has to take place in the way that one moves from one culture to another and learns the new culture; it is cultural literacy. The sacramental economy forms and affects the religious experience and

reality of a community and of its individual members. In the spiritual-expressive model, the experience of the Divine comes first and the sacramental expression comes second. In the sacramental-acculturation model the reverse is true; the sacramental expression comes first and the spiritual experience is the result.

The sacramental system, therefore, is a culture in which an individual moves, requiring interiorizing a set of skills by practice and training. Learning how to feel, how to act, and how to think in conformity with a religious

tradition is a process that leads an individual to his or her true self. Learning the story of salvation history, of God acting in history, allows an individual to experience and interpret himself or herself, and the world, in its terms. Becoming a Christian is a matter of learning, interiorizing, and practicing the Scriptures, doctrines, sacraments, prayers, moral traditions, spiritual writings, and communal protocols of the Church. To become a Catholic is to

be initiated into the culture and language of Catholic sacramental life.

If the image of the doctrinal-apologetic model is the blackboard, and the image of the spiritual-expressive model is the mirror, then the image of the sacramental-acculturation model is the *icon*, the living presence of God and His holy ones in our midst. If the place of the first model of formation is the classroom, and the place of the second model is the support group, then the place of the third model is the *worshiping assembly*. Finally, if in the first model the catechist is a teacher, and in the





second model the catechist is a therapist, then in the sacramental-acculturation model the catechist is a *saint*, in the New Testament sense: the holy one.

In the sacramental-acculturation model, the strengths of the first two models are conjoined and their weaknesses avoided. For example, rather than seeing catechesis as the process of identifying and giving expression to the interior religious intuition of individuals, as spiritual-expressivism holds, catechetical formation is a profound, comprehensive, and dynamic immersion in the whole tradition of the Church. The task of religious formation, then, is an internalization of the tradition through immersion into the liturgical-sacramental, Scriptural, doctrinal, and moral culture of Catholicism. This view of catechesis embraces what spiritual-expressivism resists: the transmission of information, memorization, detailed religious literacy, and the initiation of the person into the complexities of the tradition, even before the possibility of whole understanding. (It is also the way to teach children doctrines that they cannot yet understand. They begin to interiorize this language, slowly learning its meaning and how to speak it and make it their own.)

Furthermore, in the sacramental-acculturation model, the rites of the RCIA are neither edifying ceremonies to be used minimally, as the first model tends to do, nor human fabrications to be experimented with at will, as the second model tends to understand them. They are, rather, divinely-ordered actions crucial to the process of conversion to Christ. The formative character of the Church's sacramental system is thus strongly underlined.

In this model, there is a clear understanding that, without sacramental and liturgical mediation, the mysteries of salvation have no presence in the world. Without liturgy and sacraments, therefore, the construction of the Catholic Christian world simply does not take place. Conversely, through them, Catholic

Christianity creates its culture and establishes and maintains and advances its outlooks, attitudes, responses, and motivations in all areas of human life. Christian sacramentality precedes, holds authority over, and is critically necessary to the experience of divine presence, activity, and grace. A person has only become a Christian when he or she has been acculturated into the sacramental reality of the seven sacraments, leading into the Church as sacrament, leading to encounter with Christ as sacrament.

Moreover, liturgy is not merely the symbolic celebration of spiritual experience, but the divinely-ordained mediation, and the basis of the very possibility, of that experience. The sacraments are not human creations but "the masterworks of God" (see CCC 1116) for the salvation of the world. The sacramental life is a diverse, multifaceted system that emerges from the creative act of God in history, a marvelous drama of signs and symbols, words and actions, music and imagery, times and seasons, prayers and places that constitutes the very shape of God's presence and activity in the world.

Finally, in the sacramental-acculturation model, the sacramental life of the Church is not in any way separated from the rest of ecclesial life, but stands at the heart of Christian life as its source and its summit. Thus, to be acculturated to the sacramental life of the Church is to be acculturated to its whole moral, spiritual, doctrinal, and practical life, to the living tradition of Catholicism. Alexander Smaymen, the distinguished Russian Orthodox theologian, never tired of saying that "Christ's Church is not an institution with divine mysteries, but a divine mystery with institutions". This summarizes the ecclesiology of the sacramental-acculturation model very well.

The sacramental-expressive model is not simply a return to the catechetical theory and practice of the Church before the Second Vatican Council. It is, rather, the renewal of the Church's fundamental intuition about the nature of catechesis that also takes into account



the genuine insights into human formation offered by modern philosophy, the social sciences, and culture theory. It gives full play to doctrinal and apologetic aspects of catechesis while also giving the elements that the doctrinal-apologetic model neglect--the ritual, the communal, and the practical--more attention. The sacramental-acculturation model does not diminish the genuine values of the spiritual-expressive model either. The elements of experience and the importance of the personal and the affective are incorporated without falling into self-exploratory, introverted, and privatized subjectivism.

There is nothing ultimately novel in the sacramental-acculturation model. It is the model that is implicit in the RCIA itself, the model that most adequately accounts for all the aspects of the prayers, the texts, and the rites

found in the ritual book. It incorporates all the central elements of the Church's theology and its sacramental structure. It had its ancient expression in the catechetical instructions of Sts. Hippolytus, Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Augustine. Its early modern exponents were the fathers of the modern liturgical movement, for whom catechesis and liturgy were woven together in a rich and vigorous conception of Catholic culture. The Church is fundamentally a baptismal, Eucharistic reality, and from this all else in the life of the Church flows. It is into this great mystery that the believer is called, and it is this great mystery that all the institutions of the Church, each and every one of them, exist to serve. The RCIA has no other purpose than the service of the holy mystery, the saving sacrament, of Christ present and active in His living Body.

Conversion Process into Catholicism: Three Approaches

Excerpts taken from a seminar given by **Monsignor Francis Mannion** at the 1997 St. John Bosco Conference in Ohio: “Rationale for the Catechumenate: Initiation in the 21st Century.” Adapted with permission.

CATECHESIS APPROACH (DOCTRINAL - APOLOGETIC)

A. DESCRIPTION

A cognitive, propositional approach presenting to the inquirer a set of informative truths about the religious realities of Catholicism. Even though catechisms were used in the Golden Age of Liturgy (4th Century), this approach gained momentum after the decline of the 4th and 5th century catechumenate and the beginning of the scholastic era, culminating in the post-reformation emphasis on doctrine/apologetics. It may often have over emphasized the institutional juridical model of Church (see Cardinal Avery Dulles’ work on this subject). Catholicism is approached in a logical, philosophical manner.

B. WEAKNESSES OF THIS APPROACH

1. Although this method provides a good, thorough, and concise presentation of the faith, bringing adults into membership as quickly as possible, it gives a very low profile to the pastoral, liturgical, and communal aspects of the conversion process.
2. Historically, this approach did not provide Rites and prayers or stages of conversion in order to assist the catechumen in the conversion process and into a liturgical orientation to life.

C. STRENGTHS OF THIS APPROACH

1. Provides a strong doctrinal knowledge to the inquirer.
2. Easily tailored to the needs, social background, and level of education of the individual.
3. Emphasizes and explains clearly Catholic identity, the distinctives of Catholicism, and the expectations of Catholic practice.
4. In a compelling manner, it accounts well for the truth.
5. It requires of the new Catholic a life-long commitment and definite moral expectations.

SUMMARY:

This instruction model has been successfully used by the Church in bringing thousands of people into Catholicism. The new OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation) is intended by the Church not to supplant or replace this model, but rather to enrich and strengthen the entire conversion process by organically and carefully introducing Rites and blessings, culminating in the Easter sacraments, in the context of the Catholic community, and the dedicated and informed assistance of personal sponsors.





A. DESCRIPTION

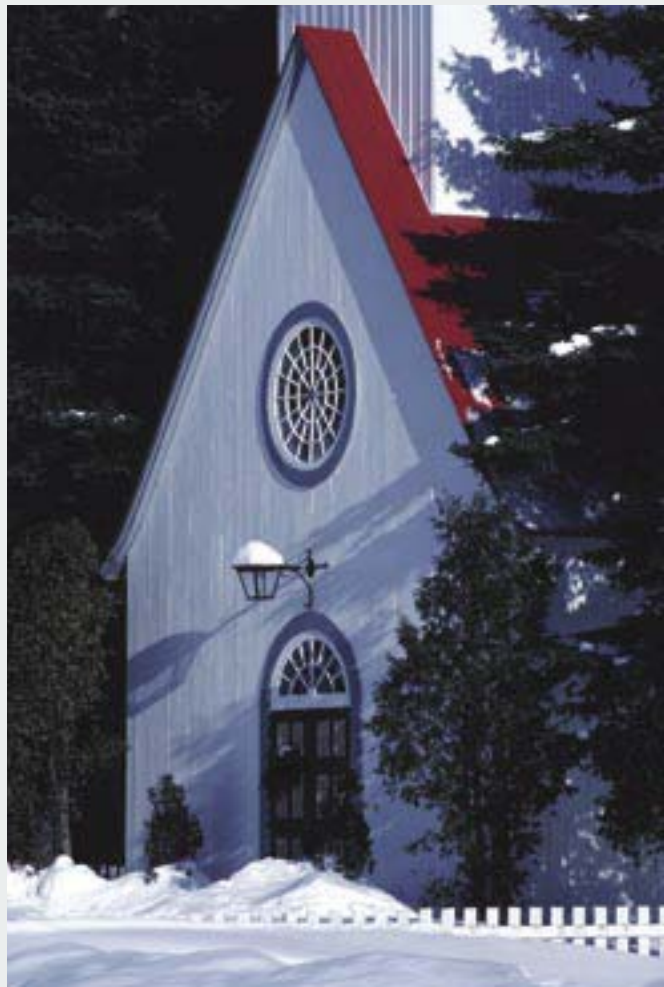
This approach uses the OCIA as a means by which the “spirituality” of the individual is brought to expression and given shape. The focus tends to be psychological, rather than theological, personal rather than ecclesial, emotive rather than cognitive. It is characterized by a personal, intense search for meaning. This approach is based on the theory that the experience of the Divine is immediate, interior, and anterior to religious tradition, rituals, doctrines, and symbols. Such exterior elements of religion may be related to as only expressions of one’s personal, deeper, pre-conscience relationship with God. Consequently, one finds God in the depth of the soul, and may or may not find an adequate expression in a given Church or tradition.

B. WEAKNESSES OF THIS APPROACH

1. It can devolve into radical subjectivism, individualism, and emotivism. It can tend to render the Scriptures, sacraments and Tradition void of their authoritative character because they may be presented as cultural aids or time-conditioned, and merely expressions for one’s personal spirituality.
2. The liturgy could be viewed as a symbolic guide for the articulation of one’s inner spiritual state, having only a functional role in the Christian life. Rather than the sacraments being viewed as objective acts of Christ in and through his Church, the shift is to the inner self as the arena of the sacred: God will reveal himself not in Baptism, Confirmation, or Eucharist, nor in his Word, but in the depths of one’s enlightened self.
3. The Rites may be considered temporal, secondary, provisional, and experimental, potentially losing their God-bearing status.
4. This approach may tend to become anti-doctrinal, making limited or peripheral use of catechisms and manuals of belief and transmission. It may also become anti-clerical, seeking to mitigate or minimize emphasis upon certain ecclesial arrangements for service in the people of God and the Mystical Body.

C. STRENGTHS OF THIS APPROACH

1. It is careful to discover the presence of God’s grace already working in the life of the catechumens and identifying God’s presence and activity in one’s personal history.
2. Enthusiasm about the use of the new Rites in the OCIA.
3. Highly communal both in theory and in practice.
4. Active involvement of laity in every aspect of the process.





A. DESCRIPTION

This approach seeks to immerse the inquirer into Catholicism through a process of learning and interiorizing the sacred Scriptures, doctrines, sacraments, prayers, moral traditions, spiritual readings and communal practices of the Catholic Church. The inquirer is initiated deeply into the culture and language of Catholic sacramental life.

B. WEAKNESSES OF THIS APPROACH

The weakness is not with the approach itself, but rather is seen in the lack of a proper understanding of the nature and efficacy of sacraments among people today. Without a sacramental sense of reality, ritual becomes only an empty form. Thus, there is a need for remedial education to bring the faithful to a foundational level from which to comprehend the significance and importance of this approach.



C. STRENGTHS OF THIS APPROACH

This approach incorporates the three aspects of formation which should permeate the Catechumenal process:

1. Liturgical Formation

This approach focuses on the liturgy for initiation, and the associated Rites of the Catechumenate. It holds that the Rites and sacraments are anterior to, hold authority over, and are critically necessary to the inner experience one may have of the Divine presence. In this approach, the sacraments are not secondary human creations, but rather “God’s masterpieces for the salvation of the world” (CCC 1091). They are seen as divinely ordered actions crucial to the process of conversion to Christ and being incorporated into God’s own life.

2. Catechetical Formation

Actual catechesis is seen as an organic part of the celebration of the Rites and the involvement of the entire Christian community. Rather than being simply conceptual, the catechesis is a profound, comprehensive, and dynamic incorporation of the person into the whole tradition of the Church. It assists the internalization of that Tradition through immersion into the liturgical, Scriptural, spiritual, doctrinal, and moral culture of Catholicism. In this way, the personal and affective elements of catechetical formation come into play with the ritual, communal, and sacramental components.

3. Pastoral Formation

Pastoral formation is seen as integral to the catechesis and liturgical incorporation of participants. It involves the entire community of the faithful, inviting people to come and see, moving them to the initial stages of faith—an encounter with Jesus, turning away from sin, and finding a home in the Church. As the pastoral work continues through the process, the aim is to move participants from initial motivation to firm conviction, with strong elements of fellowship and spiritual direction. This is to include strong support and encouragement for participants to deepen their spiritual life and the life of charity, a work that is to continue following the participants’ acceptance into the Church. The above indicates that the catechumenal process must necessarily be a microcosm of the parish in the participation of both clergy and laity.

SUMMARY:

This approach sees the Eucharistic celebration as the “source and summit” of the entire life of the Church, and intimately connected with the personal and catechetical aspects of the conversion process. The prayers, text, and Rites of the OCIA are best found in this approach in which catechesis and liturgy are intimately connected in the rich Catholic culture. The OCIA is understood to exist in order to serve the mystery of the Church with its institutions as the living Body of Christ on earth.

The Catechumenate: Paradigm for All Catechesis

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: SCOTT SOLLUM

Stages of evangelization	Evangelization: Evangelization; initial catechesis	Evangelization: Systematic catechesis; full delivery of the Deposit of Faith	Evangelization: Spiritual/moral formation	Evangelization: Ongoing catechesis & being a witness to others
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1 | A Process Slow and in Stages

The fundamental principle of the catechumenal model:

- There is a need to have an initial conversion *before* receiving systematic catechesis and sacramental preparation (see *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) 276).

The catechumenate is *slow and in stages* – a process:

- *First*, hear the primary proclamation (the *kerygma*) → *then* slowly learn how to apply the Gospel.
- It's a *progressive process* – it deepens relationships with Christ (*i.e. conversion*).
- The process of evangelization is in *stages* or essential moments (GDC 47–49).

The principles of the catechumenate, in the GDC	Missionary activity	Catechetical activity	Pastoral activity
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- These moments can be repeated.
- Notice that the meaning of evangelization is broad; catechesis is a *moment* within evangelization.

2 | Pastoral, Catechetical, and Liturgical Components

All catechesis should be catechumenal – this is not a new idea.

- I. Pontifical Council for the Family (see *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage 2; Familiaris consortio* (FC) 66)
- II. The Second Vatican Council
 - Recognizing the paganized culture, the Council commissioned the renewal of the catechumenate, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), which is based on a process of slow and progressive stages.
- III. *Familiaris consortio*
 - There are three phases for marriage preparation, which follow the catechumenal model.

The principles of the catechumenate, in FC	Remote preparation	Proximate preparation	Immediate preparation	[Marriage]
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While catechesis is present in every phase, these aspects are also present in each catechumenal stage:

- *Pastoral*: mentorship and discipleship relationships
- *Catechetical*: deepening understanding of divine Revelation
- *Liturgical*: sacramental life

3 | Going Deeper through Distinct Stages

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults <i>The Catechumenate</i>	Pre-Catechumenate	Rite Acceptance — Welcoming	Catechumenate	Rite Election — Cont. Conversion	Purification & Enlightenment	Rite Sacraments of Initiation	Mystagogy (the Neophyte year)
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- Keep in mind the differences in *pastoral*, *catechetical*, and *liturgical* formation in each stage.
- The RCIA is a paradigm for understanding this process of evangelization.
- *For a more detailed description of these stages, please see the larger chart.*

The Catechumenate: Paradigm for All Catechesis

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: SCOTT SOLLOM

Stages of evangelization	Evangelization: Evangelization; initial catechesis	Evangelization: Systematic catechesis; full delivery of the Deposit of Faith	Evangelization: Spiritual/moral formation	Evangelization: Ongoing catechesis & being a witness to others
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4 | Imitating God's Pedagogy

The catechumenate is the paradigm for all catechesis (GDC 90).

- This does not mean, however, that everything we do in RCIA *must* be imitated in every other catechetical endeavor (GDC 91):
 - "Post-baptismal catechesis, without slavishly imitating the structure of the baptismal catechumenate...draw[s] inspiration from 'this preparatory school for the Christian life,' and...[is] enriched by those principal elements which characterize the catechumenate."

God Himself works in slow stages: That's the way God works in the Church and our lives.

- Dei verbum* 16: The Old Testament's prophecies and covenants are a foreshadowing to prepare for Jesus, the fullness of the Father's Revelation.
- God's pedagogy is in slow stages as shown in Divine Revelation, beginning with Adam and Eve and through the covenants that are fulfilled by Jesus in His Paschal Mystery.

Try to implement the catechumenal model in your catechetical programs.

- The goal is to help others become witnesses, disciples in the world for all to gain eternal life.

The principles of the catechumenate, in a youth group	"Drop in" (Wednesday afternoons)	Catechesis (Sunday nights)	Deeper (Saturday, once a month)
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5 | Fostering Missionary Discipleship

Summary of key points

- The catechumenate is the paradigm for all catechesis.
 - Through it, we understand that catechesis is a *moment* in the process of evangelization.
- The catechumenal model is a progressive process, slow and in stages:
 - Meet people where they are *and* move them deeper into the spiritual life.
- In every stage are pastoral, catechetical, and liturgical aspects, centered on the Paschal Mystery.
- We are called to *be* disciples and also to *make* missionary disciples.
- This (the catechumenal model) is how God works; this how the Church works.

References

- GDC 276: "This link is, in a certain sense, more evident..."
- GDC 276: "In situations requiring 'new evangelization,'..."
- GDC 47: "The Church, while ever containing in herself..."
- GDC 49: "The process of evangelization, consequently..."
- GDC 49: "...missionary activity directed toward..."
- Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage 2*: "Especially where the environment has..."
- RCIA 244: "This is a time for the community and the..."
- RCIA 244: "...through meditation on the Gospel..."
- GDC 90: "Given that the *missio ad gentes* is the..."
- GDC 91: "Post-baptismal catechesis, without slavishly..."
- Dei verbum* 16: "God, the inspirer and author of both..."
- Catechesi tradendae* 18: "Catechesis is one of these moments - a very..."

The Catechumenate: Paradigm for All Catechesis

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: SCOTT SOLLOM

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	STAGE ONE			
Stages of evangelization <i>Using the catechumenate (RCIA) as a model</i>	Evangelization: Evangelization; initial catechesis			Outward sign of initial conversion:
	<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Give a sense of the Christian community</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Centered on the initial proclamation of the kerygma, the Good News</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Introduce what prayer is and how to pray; introduce what the liturgy is</i>	The individual wants to learn more about the faith
	Aiming for <i>initial conversion</i>			
Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) <i>(The Catechumenate)</i>	<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Give a sense of the Christian community</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Centered on the initial proclamation of the kerygma, the Good News</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Introduce what prayer is and how to pray; introduce what the liturgy is</i>	Rite of Acceptance Rite of Welcoming An explicit statement that the individual is interested —to some extent— in pursuing the faith
	Pre-Catechumenate			
The principles of the Catechumenate, as applied in the <i>General Directory for Catechesis</i>	Missionary activity			
The principles of the Catechumenate, as applied in <i>Familiaris consortio</i>	Remote preparation			
The principles of the Catechumenate, as applied in a Youth Group setting	“Drop in” (Wednesday afternoons)			

Conversion, the aim of all catechesis, is a progressive process, slow and in stages

STAGE TWO				STAGE THREE			
Evangelization: Systematic catechesis; full delivery of the Deposit of Faith (Christian fundamentals)			Outward sign of deeper conversion:	Evangelization: Spiritual/moral formation			Outward sign of moral conversion:
<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Help the individual to bear witness to the faith in his/her life</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Unpack the kerygma fully; give a comprehensive catechesis</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Participate in liturgy, the sacramental life of the Church</i>	The individual wants to permanently commit to Christ and change his/her life in order to live out the Gospel	<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Help the individual to root out sin and make more room for Christ</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Continuing catechesis, but less intensive; focus on moral formation</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Participate in liturgy, the sacramental life of the Church</i>	The individual actively lives in such a way that he/she has left (is actively leaving) any serious sin and is pursuing Christ
Aiming for deepening conversion				Aiming for a conversion in the moral & spiritual life			
<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Help the individual to bear witness to the faith in his/her life</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Unpack the kerygma fully; give a comprehensive catechesis</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Participate in liturgy; minor rites</i>	Rite of Election Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion An explicit statement that the individual desires to fully commit his/her life to Christ and His Church	<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Help the individual to root out sin and make more room for Christ</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Continuing catechesis, but less intensive; focus on moral formation</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Participate in liturgy; Scrutinies (rites that provide a time to grow deeper in the awareness of sin and the need for God's never-ending love and grace)</i>	Sacraments of Initiation The rites through which the individual becomes fully initiated into the Body of Christ and commits to live the Christian life forever
Catechuminate				Purification & Enlightenment			
Catechetical activity							
Proximate preparation				Immediate preparation			
Catechesis (Sunday nights)							

STAGE FOUR			
Evangelization: Ongoing catechesis & being a witness to others			Outward sign of ongoing conversion
<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Help the individual to practice works of charity</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Ongoing catechetical formation</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Participate in liturgy, the sacramental life of the Church</i>	The individual is daily trying to seek out the Lord and live the Christian life.
Aiming for <i>ongoing conversion</i>			
<u>Pastoral</u> <i>Help the individual to practice works of charity</i>	<u>Catechetical</u> <i>Ongoing catechetical formation; meditation on the Gospel</i>	<u>Liturgical</u> <i>Participate in liturgy, the sacramental life of the Church</i>	The individual is daily trying to seek out the Lord and live the Christian life.
Mystagogy (the Neophyte year)			
Pastoral activity			
[Marriage]			
Deeper (Saturday, once a month)			

Glossary of RCIA Terms

Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens

This is a minor Rite, normally offered during the period of the catechumenate at times determined by the pastor or RCIA leader. This Rite is for catechumens (unbaptized) only, using the Oil of Catechumens. Given to strengthen the catechumens with actual grace, anointings are usually celebrated less frequently than blessings and minor exorcisms. Only a priest or a deacon may anoint catechumens, and this ordinarily takes place after the homily in a celebration of the Word of God, although it may be done outside of this context.

Blessings

Although common outside of an RCIA context, blessings in a catechumenal setting are one of the minor Rites normally offered during the period of the catechumenate at times determined by the pastor or RCIA leader. These prayers of the Church are given to strength the catechumens and candidates, and are usually offered at the conclusion of a celebration of the Word (although other contexts are allowed). The celebrant of a blessing may be a priest, a deacon, or a lay catechist (if deputed by the diocesan bishop).

Breaking Open the Word

See *Reflection on the Word*.

Catechesis

The apostolic work of passing on (literally “echoing down”) the truths of the faith in an organic and systematic way, so that the believer may understand, confess, and live that faith as a disciple of Christ, having been initiated into the fullness of Christian life through an encounter with God in worship, with Christ the teacher, and the communion of other believers.

Catechetics

The science and art of studying how to do catechesis.

Catechumen

A person who is preparing for Baptism. This term is used for a person who has taken part in the Rite of Acceptance following the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate, until the time when he or she goes through the Rite of Election.

Catechumenal

Anything about the Christian initiation process, or things related to it.

Catechumenate

1) The entire process of Christian initiation, as restored by the Second Vatican Council. 2) The extended period of instruction and preparation following the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming and preceding the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion, the purpose of which is pastoral formation and guidance aimed at training participants in the Christian life. It includes a thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life.

Candidate for Confirmation and the Eucharist

A person who has been baptized as a Catholic and who now is preparing to complete his or her Christian initiation by receiving the sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Candidate for Full Communion

A person who has been validly baptized in a separated ecclesial community and who now is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. This term is used for a person who has taken part in the Rite of Welcoming following the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate. Following sacramental Confession, for reception into full communion, a candidate makes a profession of faith, is confirmed, and receives the Eucharist. In the case of an Eastern Christian (Orthodox), no liturgical rite is required, but simply a profession of Catholic faith.

Christian Initiation

The formal name for the means by which unbaptized and baptized individuals are brought into full communion of the Catholic Church through the reception of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

Convert

1) To experience a change of heart from unbelief to Christian belief. 2) One who has so converted. This term should not be used with reference to a baptized Christian who is received into the full communion of the Catholic Church, but only in reference to a person who receives, or has received, Baptism in the process of becoming a Catholic.

Coordinator

A person on the RCIA team who is responsible for a specific aspect of the Christian initiation process, for example, the precatechumenate coordinator or the sponsor coordinator. See also ***RCIA Leader***.

Elect

An unbaptized person (catechumen) who has gone through the Rite of Election signifying their being chosen for the sacraments of initiation. This term applies to the period that begins with the Rite of Election to the time until the person is baptized.

Evangelization

1) The mission of the Catholic Church, and each of its organizations and members, to proclaim by word and deed the Good News to all peoples, in all places, in all times, with the commands to repent (be reconciled with God) and be baptized (put on the new self) (see EV 2). 2) The broad array of life circumstances and experiences that has brought a person to the Christian initiation process. 3) Part of the formal name for the first period in the Christian initiation process, the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate; “evangelization” describes the process of proclaiming the Gospel to inquirers until they freely have made a decision to become members of the Church (see RCIA 37).

Facilitator

A member of the RCIA team who is responsible for either Reflection on the Word sessions (see Chapter 8 of this *Manual*) or small-group sessions (see Chapter 20). This person is responsible for guiding a dialogue and discussion among those participating in the Christian initiation process without intruding himself or herself into the discussion.

Godparent (Godmother, Godfather)

1) A person, chosen by a catechumen (unbaptized person), who is a companion on the journey after the Rite of Acceptance. 2) A person, chosen by a candidate (baptized person), who is a companion on the journey after the Rite of Welcoming, called “sponsor” in the RCIA ritual book to accommodate normal English-language use of this term when the candidate is preparing for Confirmation but not Baptism (see Chapter 19 of this *Manual* for a full explanation of the way the ritual book uses the terms “godparent” and “sponsor”). Often the godparent will have been the sponsor up to the point of the first major Rite. The role of godparent is significant in the work of incorporating the participant into the parish community, in witnessing to the Christian life, and in being at the service of the conversion process both before and after initiation occurs.

Initiation Ministry

The work of service by clergy and laity related to the RCIA process.

Inquirer

A person, unbaptized or baptized, who participates in the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate, up to the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming.

Leader

See *RCIA Leader*.

Lent

A time of preparation for the celebration of the Paschal mystery, this liturgical penitential season begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday prior to the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The "solemn 40 days" of Lent begin on the First Sunday of Lent (when the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion are celebrated) and normally coincide with the period of purification and enlightenment.

Minor Exorcisms

One of the minor Rites normally offered during the period of the catechumenate at times determined by the pastor or RCIA leader. These prayers of the Church highlight the struggle between flesh and spirit, the importance of self-denial in reaching God's kingdom, and the unending need for God's help; they impact the action and effects of God's enemy on an individual's life. The celebrant of a minor exorcism may be a priest, a deacon, or a lay catechist (if deputed by the diocesan bishop).

Minor Rites

Rites beginning after the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, which include minor exorcisms, blessings, and (for catechumens only) anointings with the Oil of Catechumens; special celebrations of Liturgies of the Word; Scrutinies for the elect; a Penitential Rite for candidates; the Presentation of the Creed; the Presentation of the Lord's Prayer; and the Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday.

Mystagogy

The final period of formal instruction (literally a "deepening in the mysteries") in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, lasting for seven weeks from Easter to Pentecost. This time is also referred to as the period of post-baptismal catechesis.

National Statutes

Guidelines specific to the United States for the implementation of the Order of Christian Initiation, promulgated by the bishops of the United States. These guidelines are published in the back of most editions of the RCIA ritual book.

Neophyte

A person who has entered the Catholic Church (at the Easter Vigil or at another time). The term applies to all new Catholics until the following Easter, or for a full year following their initiation, if it occurs at a time other than the Easter Vigil. If a distinction needs to be made, former elect can be referred to as "newly-baptized" and former candidates can be referred to as "newly-received."

Neophyte Year

The first year that a person is a Catholic, from the point of his or her initiation to the first anniversary of that event. The initial seven weeks of this year are collectively referred to as the mystagogy period.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum)

1) The Christian initiation process for adults as a whole (also "RCIA process"). 2) The Latin title for the magisterial document containing the ritual book and accompanying guidelines (also "RCIA ritual book"). Some parishes use "OCIA" rather than "RCIA" to refer to the Christian initiation process for adults.

Order of Christian Initiation of Children

- 1) The Christian initiation process for unbaptized children of catechetical age as a whole (also “RCIC process”).
- 2) Part II, Section 1 of the ritual book in its English-language edition. Some parishes use “OCIC” rather than “RCIC” to refer to the Christian initiation process for children.

Participant

- 1) Used in a general sense, a person, unbaptized or baptized, who is receiving catechesis at any stage of the RCIA process. 2) More specifically, all persons, unbaptized and baptized, who have gone through the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, as distinct from an inquirer, who has not gone through either Rite.

Penitential Rite

A Scrutiny Rite for baptized candidates, normally celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent. It is given to assist them in their preparation for their first Reconciliation and their reception into full communion with the Church. This Rite is sometimes called a Scrutiny.

Period

One of the four stages of the Christian initiation process, beginning with the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate, then the period of the catechumenate, then the period of purification and enlightenment, and finally the period of mystagogy and the neophyte year.

Precatechumenate

The first period of instruction in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, prior to the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming. Its formal name is “period of evangelization and the precatechumenate.” This is a period of indeterminate length that ends when it is decided that an inquirer is ready to participate in the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming.

Preparation Rites

A set of minor Rites, held on Holy Saturday prior to the Easter Vigil. These Rites include: the Ephphetha Rite, the Recitation of the Creed, and the Rite of Choosing a Baptismal Name. The Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer can also take place at this time if it has been deferred, immediately following the Recitation of the Creed.

Presentations

During the period of purification and enlightenment, the elect (as well as uncatechized baptized Christians) may be presented with the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer through special Rites. Both presentations can be done during the period of the catechumenate if it is more convenient.

Purification and Enlightenment

The third period of instruction in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, following the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion. It normally coincides with the Lenten season. It is a period of more intense spiritual preparation for initiation at the Easter Vigil.

RCIA

The acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. This acronym can refer to the catechumenal process as a whole (also “RCIA process”), or to the magisterial document containing the ritual book and accompanying guidelines (also “RCIA ritual book”).

RCIA Leader

The person within a parish or other organization (such as a university or military chaplaincy) who is responsible for all aspects of the Christian initiation process for adults. This could be the pastor, or another priest of the parish, a deacon, a religious brother or sister, or a paid or volunteer layperson delegated this task by the pastor. This person might be called, for example, the RCIA director or RCIA coordinator. In larger parishes, there may be separate directors or coordinators for stages of the RCIA process such as precatechumenate coordinator and coordinator of the neophyte year.

RCIA Team

Collective term for all individuals, both clergy and laity, who are involved in any aspect of the RCIA process in a parish or other organization (such as a university or military chaplaincy). In larger parishes, there may be separate teams for the precatechumenate period, the catechumenate period, and the neophyte year; in this book, these teams are all referred to as the “RCIA team.” See also *Coordinator*.

RCIA Ritual Book

The liturgical rites book formally entitled *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

RCIC

The acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children. This acronym can refer to the catechumenal process for children as a whole (also “RCIC process”), or to that section of the RCIA ritual book containing the Rites for Children and their accompanying guidelines. Although there is no separate set of initiation liturgies designed for adolescents (therefore the term RCIT is not to be used), many parishes have a separate process for initiating teenagers, often referred to as a “teen catechumenate.”

Reflection on the Word

An informal term used to describe the time following the dismissal of the catechumens at Sunday Mass after the Liturgy of the Word. This time, ordinarily lasting the remaining duration of the Mass, is to provide an opportunity to discuss the Mass readings for that Sunday with a facilitator, and to experience more fully the impact of the Scriptures in their lives. Since RCIA participants cannot yet come to the Table of the Eucharist, the Church seeks to feed them more richly on God’s Word. This opportunity is normally for those who have entered into a relationship with the Church through the Rite of Acceptance (catechumens), and would conclude at some point shortly before a person’s initiation.

Rite of Acceptance

This Rite ends the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate and begins the period of the catechumenate for unbaptized inquirers.

Rite of Welcoming

This Rite ends the period of evangelization and the precatechumenate and begins the period of the catechumenate for baptized inquirers.

Rite of Election

This Rite ends the period of the catechumenate and begins the period of purification and enlightenment for unbaptized participants. It should normally take place on the First Sunday of Lent, and is normally presided over by the bishop of the diocese.

Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion

This Rite is for the baptized. It ends the period of the catechumenate and begins the period of purification and enlightenment for baptized participants. It should normally take place on the First Sunday of Lent, and is normally presided over by the bishop of the diocese.

Ritual Book

The liturgical rites book formally entitled *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Sacraments of Initiation

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. For the unbaptized, they are usually conferred together at the completion of a suitable period of formation, ordinarily at the Easter Vigil. For the baptized, completion of initiation means reception of the sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist, or both, preceded by first reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Scrutinies

Three minor Rites for the elect (unbaptized) during Lent, given to assist them in their preparation for the sacraments of initiation, specifically to foster a deepening repentance for sins and desire for God's mercy. They are normally celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. The Penitential Rite for baptized candidates on the Second Sunday of Lent is also sometimes called a Scrutiny.

Sponsor

1) A person who is a companion on the journey for either a catechumen (unbaptized person) or candidate (baptized person) through the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming. 2) The godparent of a candidate after the Rite of Welcoming (see Chapter 19 of this *Manual* for a full explanation of the way the RCIA ritual book uses the terms "godparent" and "sponsor.") The initial sponsor may also serve as a godparent for the remainder of the catechumenate. The role of a sponsor is significant in the work of incorporating the participant into the parish community, in witnessing to the Christian life, and in being at the service of the conversion process both before and after initiation occurs.