



The Roman Catholic  
*Archdiocese of* Washington

**RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION  
OF ADULTS (RCIA)  
COORDINATOR GUIDE**

**OFFICE FOR CATECHESIS**

**MARCH 2022**



## VISION FOR THE RCIA

Evangelization and catechesis are at the heart of the catechumenal process. Evangelization begins the conversion process. Catechesis takes up the work of building upon and deepening that initial conversion. “Initiatory catechesis, being comprehensive and systematic, cannot be reduced to the circumstantial or the occasional” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 21c). At the same time, formation for the Christian life comprises and surpasses mere instruction (*CT*, 22, *CCC* 1231). The catechumenal process strives to form, inform and transform. Robust initiatory formation incorporates the inquirer into the community, which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith professed.

In the apostolic exhortation: *On Catechesis in Our Time*, Pope Saint John Paul II, reminds us that careful consideration must be given as we strive to help people “believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and so that believing they might have life in His name” (*CT*, 1). Charged with the mission to build up the Body of Christ, five words stand out for consideration: comprehensive, systematic, transforming, initiatory, incorporates.

The catechumenal process should provide an apprenticeship in the Christian life by handing on the necessary knowledge, habits, and attitudes for a lived relationship with Christ and His Church that grows day by day. Learning what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ requires that one be formed not only through facts, but also through lived faith, which is expressing love and care for others in daily actions and continued growth in relationship with God. Therefore, the catechumenal process should provide thorough and authentic catechesis partnered with prayer, service, and communal life that deepen the relationship with the community.

The comprehensive and systematic nature of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is manifested in the four periods and corresponding liturgical rites that mark the transition from one period to another. The catechumenal process begins with a Period of Inquiry / Precatechumenate, followed by a Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. The Period of the Catechumenate culminates with the Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion. The Period of Purification and Enlightenment is followed by the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, which is usually celebrated at the Easter Vigil. Finally, the Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis / Mystagogy transitions the neophyte into the Christian life within their parish community.<sup>1</sup> The remainder of this guide explores the four periods of the process and corresponding rites.

This guide is designed to assist you in developing and implementing the catechumenal process in your parish. It serves as a standard for review and evaluation, as well as, a planning tool. At the same time, it allows the flexibility to respond to the needs of small and large parishes and a variety of cultural settings.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition*, ed. International Commission on English in the Liturgy and Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 14.



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## BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

### Vision for the RCIA

Preparation for implementation of the catechumenate should begin with a broad understanding of the vision for the process as outlined in the RCIA Ritual Text. The following citations outline the scope and aim of the process.

[4.] The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the Paschal Mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.

[5.] The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.

[6.] This journey includes not only the periods for making inquiry and for maturing, but also the steps marking the catechumens' progress, as they pass, so to speak, through another doorway or ascend to the next level.

[8.] The whole initiation must bear a markedly paschal character, since the initiation of Christians is the first sacramental sharing in Christ's dying and rising and since, in addition, the period of purification and enlightenment ordinarily coincides with Lent and the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy with the Easter season. All the resources of Lent should be brought to bear as a more intense preparation of the elect and the Easter Vigil should be regarded as the proper time for the Sacraments of Initiation. Because of pastoral needs, however, the Sacraments of Initiation may be celebrated at other times (see nos. 26- 30).<sup>2</sup>

### Four Periods, Three Liturgical Rites

Each of the periods of the initiation process has a particular focus (e.g. evangelization, catechesis, spiritual preparation, and reflection on the experience of the sacraments), which must be presented through regular (i.e. weekly, monthly) formation, as well as, opportunities for experiencing the lived reality of the Catholic Christian faith through prayer, service, adoration, etc. Those responsible for initiation ministry (clergy, initiation coordinator, parish staff, and RCIA team members) should work together to determine how these periods will be implemented in the parish to reflect the particular focus of each period of the catechumenate.

**The Period of Precatechumenate / Inquiry** is to be a time of proclaiming the Good News of salvation and introducing inquirers to the Christian way of life. As the name denotes, the period strives to answer the inquirers' first questions. Attentive listening, Scripture sharing, Christian witness, and testimony are the primary components of this period. Because individuals may contact the parish expressing an interest in becoming Catholic at any time, parishes should have a mindset of "ongoing inquiry." Inquiry meetings may take the form of regular (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) gatherings or one-on-one conversations with a

<sup>2</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition*, ed. International Commission on English in the Liturgy and Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 3-4.



coordinator or other team member. Regardless of the format, having an ongoing inquiry process in place assures that whenever an inquirer contacts the parish, they will be welcomed and invited to begin the process.

**Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens:** This liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marks the beginning of the catechumenate proper. In a public celebration, the candidates declare their intention and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ in the Catholic Church. This rite is designated for inquirers who, through sufficient and necessary time, feel prepared to take the next step in the initiation process.

**The Period of the Catechumenate** is the primary time for a systematic and complete exposition of the Catholic Faith. In addition to the tenets of the Faith, the catechumenate should serve as an apprenticeship in the life of Christian moral life, prayer and charity.

**Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion:** This liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First or Second Sunday of Lent, formally ratifies each catechumen's readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation. The catechumens, now the elect, express their desire to receive the Sacraments of Initiation in the near future, typically at the Easter Vigil. Candidates also express their desire to enter into full communion with Christ's Church, and the Church recognizes their readiness for completing initiation.

**The Period of Purification and Enlightenment** normally corresponds with Lent and should model the practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that mark the Church at this time. Gatherings should take on a retreat atmosphere, focusing on prayer and conversion as called for in the Gospels proclaimed at the Scrutinies (purification) and the Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer (enlightenment).

**Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation:** This liturgical rite, usually celebrated at the Easter Vigil, initiates the elect (formerly catechumens) into the Catholic Church through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup> Candidates are also received into communion with the Church through Confirmation and the Eucharist.

**The Period of Mystagogy** immediately following the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation focuses on reflection on the Sunday Gospels and recalling the experience of initiation to deepen the neophyte's understanding and appreciation for the sacramental life. Discipleship and the call to witness and evangelize are primary elements of this period.

<sup>3</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition*, ed. International Commission on English in the Liturgy and Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 14.

## Those We Catechize: Discerning Catechumens and Candidates

It is important to know the baptismal status and understand the faith experience of persons coming forward for initiation.

**Catechumens** – Persons preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Following the Rite of Election, they may be referred to as “the elect.”

**Candidates for Full Communion** – Persons who were baptized in another Christian denomination and are preparing to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church through Confirmation and Eucharist.

**Candidates for Completion of Initiation** – Persons who were baptized Catholic, but did not complete the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

Though not technically included in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the parish will also need to consider how it will serve adult Catholics seeking only the sacrament of Confirmation.

**Candidates for Confirmation (Baptized Catholics)** – Some people who express interest in Christian initiation are baptized Catholics who have made their First Confession and First Eucharist but were never Confirmed. The Christian initiation process is not technically for them, since they have already received these sacraments. If there are several individuals in this situation, consider starting a separate, shorter program to prepare them for Confirmation. If they do participate with the catechumens and candidates, they should understand that they would not participate in many of the liturgical rites proper to the initiation process because of their status.

Canon law states that Catholics seeking only Confirmation are ordinarily to be confirmed by the bishop. In the Archdiocese of Washington, this typically takes place in one of three ways:

1. They can attend the Archdiocesan celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost, at which the Archbishop presides (date, time, and location as well as registration details are sent by the Office for Worship).
2. They can be Confirmed when the Archbishop or other bishop comes to confirm the young people of the parish.
3. A priest may request a bishop to Confirm adults at the parish at another time.

If none of these options are possible, this group of baptized Catholics can be confirmed at the Easter Vigil, but permission must be requested from the Chancery for the validity of the sacrament. (cf. SNP, p. 22)

**Forms:** See Appendix A-18 for Form RCIA-G – Request for Faculties to Confirm Baptized Catholics.

## Clergy Involvement

Make every effort to involve the clergy in the initiation process on a regular basis. At a minimum, a coordinator should schedule regular meetings with the pastor or clergy to keep them up to date on the progress of the catechumens and candidates.

The RCIA Ritual Text indicates, “Priests have the responsibility to celebrate the initiation sacraments and rites, attend to the pastoral care and instruction of the catechumens, and approve the choice of godparents” (cf. RCIA Intro, n. 13). Their participation in the formation process should include opportunities that nurture relationship and that will ultimately enrich the celebration of the sacraments.

A good approach to ensure regular clergy participation is to make a calendar/list of specific events when you would like to request their involvement. If you have multiple groups (adults, children, language groups), be sure to invite clergy to be present with each cohort group. Additionally, opportunities for all groups to meet with clergy could provide a nice opportunity for them to come together outside the celebration of the liturgical and sacramental rites.

### **Some ideas for clergy involvement include:**

- Highlight the RCIA and participants in a homily or pulpit announcements
- Participate in initial interviews
- Help in the selection of catechists and catechetical texts
- Affirm the choice of sponsors
- Attend/teach catechetical sessions
- Celebrate a teaching Mass
- Give a tour of the church/sacristy
- Celebrate the minor rites during the Catechumenate
- Preside at the Presentations during the Period of Purification and Enlightenment
- Lead a topic at a Day of Reflection / Retreat
- Participate in the discernment process in preparation for each Rite
- Celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation with candidates prior to their Rite of Reception into Full Communion and for neophytes, soon after their celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
- Be part of the budgeting process
- Provide input on an annual evaluation of the initiation process
- Attend “field trips” around the parish (the sacristy, the church, the rectory) or to other sites

## Organizing Catechumenal Ministry

“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

“Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators and witnesses of the faith” (*Directory for Catechesis*, 135, b).

RCIA Coordinators are appointed by pastors to lead the coordination of the parish catechumenal process. This ministerial responsibility calls for truly competent and trained personnel so that Christ is proclaimed and the teachings of the Church authentically communicated, such that the Gospel comes to life in each participant.

The following expectations outline the core competencies for those serving as RCIA Coordinators in the Archdiocese of Washington. These competencies may assist you in understanding the scope and responsibilities of serving in this ministry. Openness to ongoing formation is essential for leaders to grow in service of this dynamic calling.

### RCIA Coordinator Competencies

At a minimum, RCIA Coordinators should be certified catechists in the Archdiocese of Washington. Academic formation in theology, catechesis, or related field are preferred.

The coordinator must be able to:

- Faithfully explain and effectively convey the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church regarding Scripture, doctrine, morality and spirituality;
- Understand and appreciate the Church’s understanding of the catechetical mission as outlined in the major catechetical documents of the Church, especially the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*;
- Articulate and appreciate the Church’s vision for the catechumenal process, especially as outlined in the RCIA Ritual Text, including the liturgical aspects of the RCIA;
- Exemplify strong pastoral skills of listening and collaboration;
- Assist RCIA team members in their understanding of the Church’s teaching by referring them to appropriate documents, and, where necessary, directing them to further formation through available courses and workshops;
- Continuously evaluate the catechetical needs of those in their care as they discern appropriate formation models;
- Communicate with RCIA team members in an appropriate and supportive manner, providing the team with necessary information and opportunities for continued formation;
- Identify and form sponsors in their specific ministry within the catechumenate.

Attention to detail, familiarity with the paperwork associated with the catechumenal process, scheduling, planning, communicating effectively (both in written and verbal form), and the ability to create and stay on budget are essential to an effective RCIA Coordinator.

## Building an RCIA Team

“Usually one person is designated to be responsible for the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in a parish – the initiation coordinator. The coordinator could choose to do most of the implementation alone. The results would be a definite vision of church, ministry, initiation – all of which would probably suggest a very privatized experience of Church – and one burnt-out person. Of its very nature, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is communal and its implementation is communal” (Thomas Morris, *The RCIA: Transforming the Church*, pg. 72).

Encourage the parish community to carry out their call to evangelization by inviting and praying for those in the catechumenate. Among the faithful, work with a core team of disciples committed to the implementation of the process. Building a team will allow you to implement the catechumenate with a communal approach by involving others in the initiation process.

**Involve the faithful** by encouraging parishioners to pray for and invite interested individuals (family members, friends, co-workers) to consider participating in the Christian initiation process.

Invite parish groups to collaborate in the initiation process by providing hospitality and facilitating parish engagement. Consider involving the following groups:

- Altar/Holy Name Societies
- Evangelization Core Team
- Finance Council
- Parish Council
- Prayer Groups
- Small Christian Communities (small groups gatherings)
- Parish Welcome Committee

**Assemble and train a Core Team** to assist with the many Christian initiation responsibilities (cf. *The RCIA: Transforming the Church*, pgs. 73ff). Members of this team should serve as liaisons to other ministries (music, liturgy, etc.) as they serve to connect the parish with the initiation process. A robust team member would include:

- *RCIA / Initiation Coordinator*
  - Oversees all aspects of the initiation process
- *Member of the pastoral staff*
  - Provides support if the RCIA Coordinator is not a member of the pastoral staff
- *Formation Coordinator*
  - Coordinates formation of catechists based on identified needs
- *Prayer / Liturgy Coordinator*
  - Coordinates components of the liturgical rites and celebrations with the parish music director and/or other liturgical ministers

- *Communication / Publicity Coordinator*
  - Coordinates communication efforts between those in the initiation process, the parish, and the local community
- *Sponsor / Godparent Coordinator*
  - Identifies and forms the potential Sponsors/Godparents in their core responsibilities
- *Hospitality Coordinator*
  - Oversees room set-up and refreshments for each gathering

## Identify and Form Potential Sponsors and Godparents

“Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidate’s moral character, faith, and intention” (RCIA, n. 10).

“It is the responsibility of godparents to show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness, and to guide the candidates’ progress in the baptismal life” (RCIA, n. 11).

Sponsors have the responsibility to help incorporate catechumens and candidates into the parish, to witness the Christian life to them, and to pray with and for them. Sponsors and godparents can be instrumental witnesses in helping catechumens and candidates become acquainted with the responsibilities of a Catholic life.

Identifying parishioners to serve as sponsors and godparents should be an ongoing process so that the parish has a variety of sponsors to serve any given year. As you identify and invite people to serve as sponsors, it is important to be very clear about the responsibilities of the role. It may be helpful to create a “Sponsor Information Packet” and/or offer a Sponsor/Godparent formation seminar to clarify expectations.

Sponsors must meet the canonical requirements for Godparents (cf. CIC 893):

- be confirmed and practicing Catholic
- be at least 16 years of age
- not be the father nor the mother of the catechumen or candidate

An inquirer may want their spouse or fiancé to serve as their Sponsor and/or Godparent. While Canon Law does not prohibit this arrangement, it is good practice to assign them a parish Sponsor. This person can journey with the inquirer through the catechumenal process and will be a person with whom they can share concerns/difficulties that may be difficult to share with a spouse or fiancé. The inquirer can still have their spouse or fiancé serve as Godparent.

**Forms:** See Appendix A-15 for Form RCIA-H – Sponsor/Godparent Information Form.

## Foster Parish Evangelization and Engagement

Christian Initiation is an ongoing process and inquirers should be welcomed throughout the year. Depending on the initiation model used, there may be certain times when a new “season” is beginning. Establish various methods to get the word out to potential participants.

Encourage everyone in your parish to support the promotion of the catechumenal process by participating in one or more of the following ways:

- **Pray** – Ask the Lord to inspire you with the courage and conviction to invite others to consider the faith. Make sure that intercessions at Sunday/daily Mass regularly include prayers for those who God is calling to consider becoming Catholic.
- **Share your story** – Be “ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence prepared” (1 Peter 3:15). Sharing the testimony of how God has worked in your life is a powerful evangelizing tool. How would you explain why you are Catholic and how God has worked in your life in 1 minute? 5 minutes? 30 minutes?
- **Invite** – Ask a family member, friend or co-worker if they have thought about becoming Catholic. Invite them to go to Mass with you. Make sure you have information about your parish (e.g. a brochure) to offer them if they are to express interest.
- **“Go Public” with your faith** – Our unspoken witness can inspire others to consider the faith. Do you make the sign of the cross in restaurants? Do you have a crucifix, a picture of Mary, a patron saint, or the Pope in your office / home? Are you ready to explain why if someone asks you?

Be an inquirer-friendly parish. Make it easy for inquirers to learn more about the process. Ensure that all clergy / staff members can easily connect people with the appropriate coordinator when inquiring about the Catholic Church/becoming Catholic. Include an “Are you interested in becoming Catholic” link on your parish website. Create an informational brochure about the catechumenal process and place it in the vestibule about the Church.

Inspire the entire parish to see the RCIA as an opportunity for evangelization. Have your parish participate in local community events. Take a look at your parish liturgies and events to ensure that newcomers feel welcome. Make sure the local community is aware of the services that the community can take advantage of – holiday giving, food assistance, etc.

### Some advertising and invitations ideas include:

- Place announcements in the parish bulletin/outdoor marquee/bulletin boards
- Distribute “What is RCIA?” invitation/informational pamphlets
  - Send at least one to each parishioner each year. Ask them to share the pamphlet with someone they know. Place an invitation to the catechumenal process in the bulletin for each weekend in the fall, Christmas and Easter
  - Have informational pamphlets available at the church for visitors
- Use the leverage of the initiation liturgies of Lent and the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter to spark individuals to consider becoming Catholic
- The Easter season is an excellent time to invite inquirers to consider participating in the Christian initiation process

- Encourage parishioners, team, etc. to invite potential inquirers:
  - Mention RCIA in homilies and celebrant's comments
  - Reach out to invite people who are not Catholic, but who are already in the parish database, to consider becoming Catholic: spouses and fiancés of Catholics, parents of parochial school or Religious education/CCD children
  - Word of mouth from team and previous participants

## Schedule Events and Reserve Space

An essential element of implementation of the catechumenate is scheduling. Place dates on the parish calendar and reserve spaces/rooms for Christian Initiation sessions, rites, and other events. The following events are typically part of the RCIA process. Early planning will help you avoid scheduling conflicts with other parish events and regular activities (e.g. religious education/CCD), holidays, etc. Be sure to share a schedule of events with inquirers early in the process.

- **Weekly Meetings** — Most Christian initiation groups meet weekly, either on a weekday evening or on Sunday. Depending on group size, you may find the need to reserve several rooms. Additionally, if you want to have small group discussion, you will need spaces for cohorts to meet.
- **Outreach Opportunities** — Incorporate opportunities to participate in social justice activities sponsored by the parish or other organizations. It is particularly helpful to encourage participation in Lenten social justice activities.
- **Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming** — This Rite is celebrated at least once, preferably two or three times, each year as inquirers conclude the Period of Precatechumenate and are ready to enter the Catechumenate proper. If celebrated only once, it generally takes place on the First Sunday of Advent.
- **Dismissal Rite and Breaking Open the Word** — These sessions typically take place weekly during the Period of the Catechumenate and continue through initiation. Be sure to clarify the Mass(es) at which this will happen, where the groups will go following the dismissal, and who will lead these sessions.
- **Rite of Sending** — This optional Rite usually takes place on the First Sunday of Lent, in preparation for the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion.
- **Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion** — This Rite takes place on the First and Second Sundays of Lent at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Northeast Washington. Parishes attend the Rite on the date assigned by the Office for Catechesis. Parish assignments are sent to RCIA Coordinators in the summer to assist with early planning.



- **Scrutinies (for those who are not baptized) and Penitential Rite (for the baptized)** — These liturgies take place during the Sunday Mass on the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent:
    - **Second Sunday of Lent:** Penitential Rite of Candidates (RCIA 464)
    - **Third Sunday of Lent:** First Scrutiny for the Elect (RCIA 150)
    - **Fourth Sunday of Lent:** Second Scrutiny for the Elect (RCIA 164)
    - **Fifth Sunday of Lent:** Third Scrutiny for the Elect (RCIA 171)

Parishes may choose to do the Penitential Rite for Candidates with one of the Scrutinies for the Elect.
  - **Presentations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer** — The Rite offers flexibility in celebrating the presentations. These liturgies are preferably celebrated in the presence of a community of the faithful, but can take place at the catechetical sessions or at a special celebration during the third and fifth weeks of Lent respectively.
  - **Retreats / Days of Reflection** — Many parishes schedule a retreat experience (one day or overnight) during Lent or at other times of the year to help the catechumens and candidates spiritually prepare for the Rites or the Easter Sacraments.
  - **The Sacrament of Reconciliation** — Baptized Christian participants in the RCIA (Catholics, Protestants or Evangelical Christians) are to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation prior to receiving the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter. This can take place at a parish communal reconciliation service, a separate time set aside for RCIA participants, or on an individual basis, as the number of participants and circumstances suggest.
  - **The Easter Triduum and the Easter Vigil** — Encourage the catechumens and candidates to participate in the liturgies of Holy Week. Inform them well in advance of the Holy Week schedule. It might be helpful to reserve space for them at the front of the church.
- Holy Saturday is an important day for the catechumens and candidates receiving the sacraments. Encourage them to take the morning as a time of intentional prayer and fasting, as they are able. Plan for them to arrive for the Vigil early in order to allow ample time for them to receive any last minute instructions. As space and time allow, hold a reception following the Easter Vigil to celebrate the newly initiated.
- **Mystagogy Gatherings** — The Christian initiation process does not end with the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, rather, it opens the Period of Mystagogy. This period should be offered – in some form – for the entire first year until the anniversary of the neophyte's baptism or reception into full Communion. The Neophyte Year is an important time for the newly initiated to meet, pray, and continue to learn about the Christian life. It is important to highlight this period from start of the catechumenal process.
  - **Reconciliation for the Newly Baptized** — Encourage the newly baptized to schedule a time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is particularly appropriate during the Easter season.

## Communicate with Initiates, Sponsors, and Team Members

**Communicate Schedule of Events** — Provide a schedule of catechetical sessions, liturgical rites and other initiation-related events to catechumen, candidates and team members. This will ensure everyone knows the outline and expectations of the process.

**Distribute a Contact List** — Make sure everyone involved in the process has a list of team members and sponsors as well as relevant contact information. With prior approval of catechumens and candidates, you may want to share their contact information with others going through the process and those on the team.

Be sure to update this list from time to time as people join or leave the catechumenal process.

## Establish a Budget

A robust RCIA requires both human resources (parishioners and their time) and financial/material resources. Establish a budget so that the pastor, finance council and parish are aware of costs associated with the implementation of the process. Some budget items for consideration are listed below:

- Catechist/Participant resources
- Items for use in the liturgies – candles, white garment, etc.
- Refreshments
- Cards, gifts, etc.
- Stipends for speakers, coordinators, catechists, musicians, etc.
- Photocopies
- Day of Reflection / Retreat Expenses
- Transportation to Events (ex: chartering a bus to attend the Rite of Election)
- Formation for Catechists and other team members

## Resources for Laying the Foundation

Morris, Thomas H. *The RCIA: Transforming the Church, A Resource for Pastoral Implementation*. New York: Paulist Press, 1997.

- See “Part One: Foundational Issues” for coverage of the basics in setting up an RCIA process.

Morgan & Keimig. *RCIA Leader’s Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publication, 2007.

- See “Part IV: The Pastoral Aspects of Christian Initiation” for explanations regarding the RCIA Team, Clergy involvement, Godparents/Sponsors.

Turner, Paul. *Celebrating Initiation: A Guide for Priests*. Franklin Park, Illinois: World Library Publications, 2007.

## PERIOD OF PRECATECHUMENATE / INQUIRY

“The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.”

John 1:35-38

“Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the preceding period of precatechumenate is of great importance and as a rule should not be omitted. It is a time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all.”

RCIA, n. 36

“The Christian faith is, first of all, the welcoming of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ, sincere adherence to his person, and the free decision to follow him.”

Directory for Catechesis, 18

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### Vision for the Period of Precatechumenate / Inquiry

The Period of Inquiry by nature should be flexible to meet the needs of the inquirer. While you have a schedule for gathering, it is not a time for apologetics or systematic formation. This period should be understood as not having a particular beginning or ending, but rather a period responsive to the needs of the individual inquirer.

This is a period of evangelization where the inquirer is given ample time to ask questions. The teaching should be a simple explanation of the *kerygma*. It ought to bring the inquirer, who has to this point expressed initial interest in the Christian faith, closer to Christ – enabling them to make a conscious choice to begin the more formal journey of faith.

### Meet Interested Inquirers

“The initial interview with potential catechumens and candidates is important not only to shape their future formation path but also to uncover potential obstacles such as divorce/remarriage and family hostility” (JTFL, p. 20).<sup>4</sup>

Individuals will contact the parish wanting to find out more about the Catholic Church or about becoming Catholic throughout the year. Once a person has made an initial inquiry, be sure to contact the individual as soon as possible to answer any preliminary questions. During this call/email, ask if they would like to arrange a meeting with you or another team member, priest or deacon. Remember that the idea of coming to a Catholic church and meeting with you or

<sup>4</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Journey to the Fullness of Life*. USCCB Publishing, 2000.

someone else may be difficult for some inquirers. You might offer to meet at a restaurant or other location, if that seems most comfortable for them.

Some inquirers may begin by only wanting to know more about Catholicism. Others will feel strongly that they want to become Catholic. Others will fall somewhere in between. It is important to welcome each person with patience and express the earnest desire to journey with them through this Period of Inquiry.

**Initial Meeting** — The initial meeting is an opportunity for you to get to know the inquirer and learn about his or her needs and concerns. It is also an opportunity for the individual to ask you any questions he or she may have. Be sure to request contact information, if the inquirer is comfortable sharing, so that you can follow up later. It is best to let them contact you if they are interested in taking another step at this time. However, you can ask if you may contact them in the future.

Remember not to make any promises about if or when someone may become Catholic. Many factors can influence the process. It is best to explain that preparation for initiation takes time, and differs for each individual. While initiation often takes place at Easter, it can take place at other times.

Both a sample inquirer interview and information forms are available to help you in this process. It is recommended that the information forms are not used in the initial interview, but after the inquirer has expressed interest in continuing the process. [See Appendix page 45 for a sample interview for the Period of Inquiry.](#)

**FORMS: For Adults**

- [Inquirer Information Form \(Form RCIA-A\), page A-2](#)

**For Children/Teens**

- [Inquirer Information Form \(Form RCIA-I\), page A-11](#)
- [Christian Initiation Information \(Form RCIA-J\), page A-13](#)

**General Instructions**

- [Instructions for Christian Initiation Forms, page A-1](#)

**Determine Formation Needs** — You may get a good sense of an individual's familiarity with the Catholic Christian way of life and/or faith experience during an initial interview.

Once you have a sense of an individual's familiarity with the Christian life and Catholicism, you will be able to develop ways to support them, particularly if additional formation beyond the gathered catechumenal sessions might be helpful.

Baptized inquirers with a great depth of Christian conversion and a degree of religious maturity do not necessarily need to participate in a full catechumenate. (cf. RCIA, n. 331 and NS, n. 31)

**Identify Marriage Issues** — The issue of a previous marriage may pose special pastoral situations for initiation. It is important to identify and begin to address these previous marriage issues in a timely manner. Failure to do so may result in a delay of the initiation process.

At the same time, pastoral sensitivity is paramount in assisting individuals through the annulment process. If an inquirer has been previously married, it is important to connect them with a clergy member who can assist them in working with the Marriage Tribunal.

Persons with previous marriages to resolve may participate in the Christian initiation process through the Period of the Catechumenate; however, they may not be able to celebrate the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion or be baptized or received into the Church if their previous marriage has not yet been adjudicated.

Use the forms listed below to gather basic information about any previous marriages. Encourage them to schedule a time to meet with the pastor or other priest at the parish once this information is gathered.

If a decree of nullity has been previously granted for a marriage, you will need to verify this declaration. A space has been provided on form **RCIA—C** for you to record the appropriate information.

The reverse side of Form **RCIA—D “Christian Initiation Information”** provides a place for you to track the steps taken by an inquirer in the tribunal process.

**FORMS: For Marital Status:**

- Current Marital Status Follow-Up (Form **RCIA—B**), page A-4
- Previous Marriage Information (Form **RCIA—C**), page A-6
- Christian Initiation Information (Form **RCIA—D**), page A-9

## Request Baptismal Certificates

The catechumenal process and rites vary based on baptismal status. Therefore, it is essential to determine whether or not the inquirer has been validly baptized in a Christian tradition. It is important to ascertain the fact and validity of baptism as soon as possible, and request a copy of the baptismal certificate.

**Baptismal Certificate** — A baptismal certificate is requested in order to secure information needed for the baptismal registry in the Catholic parish, namely: full name, parents' names, including mother's maiden name, godparent names, place of baptism, minister of baptism. The baptism certificate typically identifies the matter and form of the baptism, which can be helpful in validating records from less common ecclesial communities.

If there is no certificate available, but the inquirer believes he/she has been baptized, and there are witnesses to that effect (parents, godparents, relatives), or if the inquirer was baptized as an adult, the local parish can issue a baptismal certificate following the preparation of a signed affidavit.<sup>5</sup>

**Valid Baptism** — The Catholic Church recognizes Christian baptisms – with a Trinitarian invocation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as valid. It is important to ascertain the validity of the baptism, namely, "whether the person was baptized with water and with the

<sup>5</sup> Canon 876 “If it is not prejudicial to anyone, to prove the conferral of baptism, the declaration of a single witness who is above suspicion suffices or the oath of the baptized person, if the baptism was received at an adult age.”

Trinitarian formula and whether the minister and the recipient of the sacrament had the proper requisite intentions" (*National Statutes*, n. 37). [See Appendix A-19 for a list of valid and invalid baptisms by Churches and ecclesial communities](#). Note, this list is not an exhaustive list of Churches and ecclesial communities, but does represent many of the more common traditions.

**Conditional Baptisms** — To respect the dignity and indelible character of Baptism, conditional Baptism is conferred only if there is doubt whether one has been baptized or whether baptism has been validly conferred. The decision to conditionally baptize is made after a consideration of the intention of the baptized adult and of the minister of the baptism. (cf. CIC 869). See also RCIA, n. 480.

[See Appendix page 47 for a Baptismal Status Verification Chart.](#)

### The Period of Inquiry: What Takes Place?

Though this period allows for great flexibility in programming as we discern together with the inquirer a genuine will to follow Christ, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* provides general thresholds of conversion that individuals should exhibit prior to the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens through the Rite of Welcoming. Some or all of these dispositions may be present when an inquirer first contacts you. Others may not be immediately present and will grow during this time.

There must be evidence of first faith that reflects:

- Initial conversion and intent to change their lives
- Desire to enter into relationship with God in Christ
- First stirrings of repentance
- Start of practice of calling upon God in prayer
- Experience of Church and some experience of the Christian community

Whether working with uncatechized or catechized persons, some individuals may want to and be able to participate in regular gatherings, while for others, occasional conversations with you, a priest, deacon or team member will be most helpful. Be sure to consider models of accompaniment that respond to the varied needs and realities of the inquirers (work, family commitments, and other circumstances).

## For the Unbaptized Persons, or Baptized but Uncatechized Catholics / Other Christians

Inquirers who have not been baptized or persons who are baptized, either as Catholics or in another Christian denomination, but received relatively little catechesis may need a comparatively similar formation experience.

Precatechumenate/Inquiry meetings should be held, preferably weekly, but at least monthly (in a small group or with the coordinator, clergy or other initiation minister) so that the inquirer may stay engaged at this early phase of his or her faith journey.

## For the Baptized, Catechized Christian

“Baptized and catechized Christians may not need to complete ‘a full program parallel to the catechumenate’” (*National Statutes*, n. 31).

Baptized and catechized Christians may need only “doctrinal and spiritual preparation” before being received into the full communion of the Church. It is best to accompany these inquirers separately from catechumens, though they may profit from many of the resources provided for uncatechized inquirers.

## Keep Attendance Records

While it is to be understood that the inquirers may not be able to attend each initiation event, keeping track of who attends the various sessions and events is helpful:

- It reflects interest in the catechumenal process. If an inquirer does not return, you may want to contact them in the future to see if they are still interested. It does not hurt to invite again, but do not nag or imply guilt.
- If you distribute handouts or other materials, you will know who still needs to receive them.
- Prior to the celebration of the liturgical rites, their interest, as expressed by their attendance and participation in the process, provides an indicator of the inquirer's readiness to celebrate the Rite.



## Preparation for the Rite of Acceptance and/or Rite of Welcoming

### Discern Inquirers' Readiness

The guidelines for the first step for Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (n. 42), suggests interior dispositions whose outward indications show that the fundamental roots of the Christian faith have taken root in the inquirer. As noted in the overview to the Period of Inquiry/Precatechumenate, these are:

- Initial conversion and intent to change their lives
- Desire to enter into relationship with God in Christ
- First stirrings of repentance
- Start of practice of calling upon God in prayer
- Experience of Church and some experience of the Christian community

In preparation for the Rite of Acceptance or Rite of Welcoming:

“...sufficient and necessary time, as required in each case, should be set aside to evaluate and, if necessary, to purify the candidates' motives and dispositions. With the help of the sponsors, catechists, and deacons, pastors have the responsibility for judging the outward indications of such dispositions” (RCIA, n. 43).

This evaluation, or discernment, may take place informally as the coordinator, clergy and sponsors observe an inquirer's growth in the dispositions noted above. It may also take place in a more formal setting, such as a conversation or interview with the inquirer. [See Appendix page 46 for a sample threshold conversation prior to the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcoming.](#)

You might also plan a Retreat or Evening/Day of Reflection prior to the Rite of Acceptance and/or Rite of Welcoming to help inquirers reflect on their readiness to enter the catechumenate.

### Review the RCIA Text for these Rites

See the RCIA text for the instructions for the Rite of Acceptance (n. 41-68, n. 74), the Rite of Welcoming (n. 411-433) or the Combined Rite (n. 505-529).

### Prepare for the Rite

Schedule a meeting with the pastor and/or the priest who will be presiding, and liturgy planner to plan the celebration of this Rite.

Celebrate a prayer service for inquirers to reflect / pray with each other in preparation for the Rite

### Invite family / friends of inquirers and parish prayer companions to the Rite

Plan a reception following the Rite for all to meet the candidates for initiation.

### Gather materials for the celebration of the Rite

The power of ritual and symbols is brought to bear through the liturgical rites of the Christian initiation process. In addition to the liturgical elements for the Rite, you may choose to present the inquirers with a small token as they take this important step on the journey of faith. Giving the inquirers a Bible or cross/crucifix can be a nice addition to the liturgy.

Give participants instructions on the Rite – when and where to meet, what to wear, what will take place

It is important to explain to inquirers the principal ritual elements that will take place at the Rite, especially those in which they will have a response of some sort. However, do not over rehearse so that the celebration of the Rite feels like a performance. For some inquirers, this adds pressure that they must do everything just right. Consider having only the sponsors practice the movement and steps of the Rite. Encourage inquirers to follow the direction of their sponsor and trust that the Holy Spirit is at work.

Reflect on the Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming with the Catechumens and Candidates

This establishes the pattern of mystagogical reflection that can resonate throughout the remaining periods of the catechumenate.

Provide ways for the parish to begin to meet the inquirers

Create a poster with pictures of inquirers (and family or sponsors), a brief biography, etc. for the vestibule of the church or put information in the bulletin with the advance permission of the catechumen and candidates.

## Resources for the Period of Precatechumenate / Inquiry

The following are recommended resources for the accompaniment of inquirers. Any or all of these resources can be used in conjunction throughout the inquiry period.

### **Resources for answering questions of uncatechized inquirers:**

Altemose, Charlene MSC. *The RCIA and You*. Liguori Publications, 1999.

*Journey of Faith*. Liguori Publications, 2019.

- The “Inquiry” handouts from this series begin to answer inquirers’ questions and give them a sense of the Church. *Journey of Faith* is available for adults, teens, and children in English and Spanish.

*Come to the Water: The Adult Journey to Baptism* (DVD with online study guide available) Catholic Communication Campaign, 2005. USCCB Publications.

“The Search.” The Search. Augustine Institute, 2020.  
<https://www.thesearchbegins.org/>.

### **Testimonial resources to support the accompaniment of Baptized and catechized individuals**

Hahn, Scott and Kimberly. *Catholic and Christian Rome Sweet Home*. Ignatius Press, 1993.

Madrid, Patrick. *Surprised By Truth*. Basilica Press, 1994.

*The Coming Home Network*. Coming Home Network, 2019, <https://chnetwork.org/>

### **Resources for leaders**

Kreeft, Peter. *Three Philosophies of Life, Ecclesiastes: Life as Vanity, Job: Life as Suffering, Song of Songs: Life as Love*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989.

- Recommended for those seeking answers to the question on human suffering

Gallagher, Michael Paul. *Faith Maps: Ten religious explorers from Newman to Joseph Ratzinger*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2010.

- Essays on the lives of different Catholic figures inquirers may relate to

## PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

Matthew 22:35-40

"When a human being comes within God's reach, he or she is called to respond with the obedience of faith and to adhere with the full asset of the intellect and will, freely welcoming the 'gospel of the grace of God.'"

Directory for Catechesis, 17

Catechesis in a *kerygmatic* and missionary vein...is a pedagogical journey offered in the ecclesial community, which leads the believer to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, through the word of God, liturgical action, and charity, integrating all the dimensions of the person so that he may grow in the mentality of faith and be a witness of new life in the world.

Directory for Catechesis, 65

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### Vision for the Period of the Catechumenate

The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life.<sup>6</sup> In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity. This is achieved in four ways:

1. By a suitable catechesis that provides intellectual and spiritual formation by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful. The catechesis should be planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, addressing the needs of the participants, reflecting the liturgical year, and solidly supported by prayer and celebrations of the Word. Robust catechesis provides the catechumens with both an appropriate understanding of Church teachings and precepts, and a profound sense of the mystery of salvation rooted in the Paschal Mystery.
2. Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the catechumens and candidates experience conversion as they grow in relationship with Christ and His Church. This transition brings with it a progressive change of outlook and conduct, and therefore should become manifest by means of its social consequences. Since the Lord in whom they believe is a sign of contradiction, the newly-converted often experience divisions and separations, but they also taste the joy that God gives without measure.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary *Ad gentes*, no. 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 13.

3. The Church, like a mother, helps the catechumens on their journey by means of suitable liturgical rites, which purify the catechumens little by little and strengthen them with God's blessing (RCIA, 75.3).
4. Celebrations of the word of God are arranged for their benefit, and at Mass they may also take part with the faithful in the Liturgy of the Word, thus better preparing themselves for their eventual participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Ordinarily, however, when they are present in the assembly of the faithful they should be kindly dismissed before the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins (unless their dismissal would present practical or pastoral problems). For they must await their baptism, which will join them to God's priestly people and empower them to participate in Christ's new worship.

### Form Catechumens and Candidates in the Christian Life

The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that, while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety, also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults provides general directives regarding the formation that individuals should receive prior to the Rite of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion. Formation should be adapted to fit the catechetical needs of each individual.

#### Areas of Formation for the Catechumenate

The guidelines for the Period of the Catechumenate (n. 75-80) suggest four areas of formation in the Christian life that should take place in this period so that the dispositions manifested at the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance or Rite of Welcoming are brought to maturity. (Cf. n. 75)

Thus, in this period, it is the Church's responsibility to provide catechumens and candidates with...

1. "A suitable catechesis...planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the Word" (n. 75.1)
2. A familiarity with the "Christian way of life" (n. 75.2)
3. Celebrations of the "liturgical rites" (n. 75.3)
4. An understanding of how to "spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives" (n. 75.4)

In the Christian initiation process, pastors, coordinators and catechists share in the Church's mandate to "baptize all nations" and "teach them all that [Jesus] commanded" (Cf. Matthew 28:18-20). It is therefore important to assure that inquirers receive the Church's teaching in its fullness. In addition to being taught the truths of the Faith, catechumens and candidates should be shown how to apply these truths to their lives.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition*, ed. International Commission on English in the Liturgy and Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 37-38.

### **Systematic Catechesis**

“Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of Himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living, active tradition (*Catechesis Tradendae*, 22).”

At the same time, catechesis must be attentive to the culture and environment of those being catechized so that the truths of faith can be applied to life (inculturated) in a meaningful way. Methodologies, imagery and prayer experiences should likewise be an expression of the communal life. Catechesis on elements of popular piety, central particularly in the lives of immigrants, should be incorporated as these forms of religiosity often reflect a real thirst for God.

The Church does not mandate a specific order or curriculum for catechetical instruction throughout the RCIA process. As the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) explains: “The selecting of a particular order for presenting the [Gospel] message is conditioned by circumstances and by the faith level of those to be catechized” (n. 118). To that end, clergy, coordinators and catechists should work together to determine the order and manner for presenting the truths of the faith in a systematic manner that aligns with the needs of the catechumen during that particular cycle.

A guiding principle for ordering the presentation of the faith begins with the hierarchy of truths as “some truths are based on others as of a higher priority and are illumined by them” (GDC, 114). The relational nature of the following truths should serve as the core of catechetical programming:

1. The Blessed Trinity
2. The Person of Jesus
3. The Paschal Mystery
4. The Dignity of the Human Person
5. The Church

See Appendix page 48 for a list of catechetical themes based on the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## **The Liturgical Rites**

### **Celebrations of the Word of God** (cf. n. 81-89)

Celebrations of the Word of God can take place in a variety of formats, two typical settings are:

#### 1. **During Sunday Mass**

Catechumens participate with the parish community in the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass. Before the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins, they may be dismissed to reflect on the Word of God through breaking open the Word with other catechumens.

#### **Breaking Open the Word of God**

Intentional, reflective conversation on the Scripture and homily is often called “Breaking Open the Word.” While there is no specific format for these gatherings, many parishes gather the catechumens to unpack the Word of God. During this guided conversation, catechumens and candidates, reflect on the Scripture readings and discuss what they heard, how it challenged them, and how it applies to teachings they have heard in catechetical sessions, etc.

#### 2. **Celebrations held in conjunction with catechetical instruction**

Gatherings for catechesis may begin or end with a celebration or prayer reflection on the Word of God, designed to focus on the catechetical theme that is discussed, or present the Gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday for reflection.

**Minor Exorcisms**, (n. 90ff) **Blessings** (n. 95ff), and **Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens** (n. 98ff) **expressly for the Period of the Catechumenate** are optional and should take place according to the guidelines in the RCIA text.

## **Evangelization**

The Church exists to evangelize. “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity” (EV, 14). As we are recipients of the gift, we are called to share that gift with others. Therefore, an important thread to weave throughout catechetical formation is an understanding of the baptismal apostolate, namely that all the baptized have a responsibility to witness to the Gospel in word and deed.

## **Incorporate Ritual Elements to your Methodology**

From the beginning of the catechumenal process, consider incorporating ritual elements from the Easter Vigil (Scripture readings, psalms, the Litany of the Saints, the Paschal Candle, the baptismal font, etc.) throughout the formation of catechumens and candidates. For example, draw intentional connections to the ritual symbols – water, fire, oil – and how they relate to various aspects of Baptism. Likewise, a presentation on the universal call to holiness offers a great opportunity

to discuss the Communion of the Saints, which will be expressed in the Litany of Saints at the Easter Vigil. This pedagogical model helps the catechumens and candidates blend understanding of the faith with liturgical experience.

### Adapted Formation for the Baptized, Catechized Christian

As previously noted, formation for the catechized, baptized Christian may be significantly abridged. After celebrating the Rite of Welcoming, the baptized, catechized Christian may need only minimal instruction in the Catholic tradition. He or she might receive catechesis on some or all of the topics outlined in the considerations given above. Particular focus on Catholic understanding of the Eucharist, devotion to Mary and the saints, communion with the pope, vocation and sacramental marriage might need additional explanation.

Formation for the baptized, catechized Christian does not necessarily need to happen at the same time as the catechumenate, since the Rite of Reception could take place at an appropriate time of the year, for example, Epiphany, the Feast of Christ the King, or the parish's patronal feast in addition to the Easter Vigil. However, it can happen in conjunction with the preparation of the catechumens if the needs of the parish and/or the candidate necessitate combining the two groups.

An essential element of formation is the importance of incorporating the candidate into the life of the parish. Candidates entering into communion with the Church from a different Christian tradition may need additional support in integrating with the liturgical and parish community.

### Determine Catechumens'/Candidates' Readiness to Receive the Sacraments of Initiation

"Do you wish to enter fully into the life of the Church through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist?" (*RCIA*, n. 132)

Prior to the celebration of the Rite of Election or Call to Continuing Conversion, the catechumen or candidate should have experienced "a conversion in mind and action." They should also have developed "a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching" and "a spirit of faith and charity" to live the Catholic faith in its fullness (*RCIA*, n. 120).

Christian discernment is the process of sorting out God's call in one's life and is intimately connected to the process of conversion, namely responding and allowing God to invite us into ever deeper relationship. Throughout the *RCIA*, the catechumens/candidates should discern the various movements and invitations from God to enter into communion through the Sacraments of Initiation. Discernment is self-knowledge that gives rise to decision — in this case whether this particular time is the right time to receive the initiation sacraments. Discernment is not a logical systematic analysis nor is it simply a good feeling. Discernment draws from the understanding that, "revelation is an initiative of God's love, and is directed toward communion" (*DFC*, 12). The team supports the process of discernment through their observations on the catechumens'/candidates' responsiveness to the promptings of the Spirit to live a gospel life. Such discernment needs to include questions concerning their prayer life, inner adherence to the Church, a sense of the mystery of salvation, a willingness to bear witness to the faith, a desire to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church, to follow the inspirations of grace, to practice love of neighbor even at the cost of self-renunciation — all of which will become evident in a change in outlook and conduct (cf. *RCIA*, n. 75).



In preparing for the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, the catechumens and candidates need to know the elements of the Rite. They should also know what will be asked of them.

If a catechumen or candidate does not feel ready to participate in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, offer them opportunities to continue their formation in the catechumenal process.

### Prepare for the Rite of Sending

This optional rite calls on the parish community to express approval and support of the catechumens and candidates. The parish sends them forth to the Rite of Election and/or Call to Continuing Conversion with the assurance of the parish's care and support.

In the Archdiocese of Washington, catechumens sign the Book of the Elect during, or immediately after this rite in preparation for the Rite of Election when their names will be read in the presence of the Archbishop.

#### Review the RCIA Text for this Rite

See the RCIA text for the instructions for the Rite of Sending for Catechumens, the Rite of Sending for Candidates, or the Combined Rite.

#### Prepare for this Rite

Schedule a meeting with the pastor and/or the priest who will be presiding, and the liturgy planner, to plan the celebration of this Rite.

### Prepare for the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

#### The Date of the Celebration

Each year, the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion is celebrated on the First two Sundays of Lent at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The Office for Catechesis assigns parishes to one of the two liturgies. Parish assignments are sent to the designated RCIA Coordinators via email in the summer to allow for early planning. Contact the Office for Catechesis if you have a question about your parish assignment.

#### Register Catechumens/Candidates for the Rites

All catechumens, candidates, sponsors and RCIA team members must be registered in order to ensure reserved seating at the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion. Parish RCIA Coordinators will receive registration information and forms in December. This mailing includes instructions for the Rite, directions to the Shrine, information about parking, and a checklist of things to do on the day of the Rite. The names of all catechumens and candidates registered by the deadline will be included in the program for the Rite.

If someone in your group has a special need (e.g. wheelchair access, sign-language interpreter, large print materials, etc.) please contact the Office for Catechesis as soon as possible so accommodations can be made available.

Because seating is limited, families of the catechumens and candidates must sit in general seating.

### Review the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion with Catechumens, Candidates, Godparents and Sponsors

Because this may be the first time the catechumens and candidates may see the Basilica, it is helpful to review logistics and provide an overview of the Rite itself. Discuss the following elements with all who will be attending the Rite so that the catechumens and candidates can participate more readily:

- Take this opportunity to share with them a little information about the Archbishop and the auxiliary bishops of our Archdiocese. The episcopal mottos of each bishop are a great teaching tool for mission. Discussing the Archbishop also provides an opportunity to explain ecclesial communion in the Church of Washington and why this Rite is celebrated with catechumens and candidates from across the Archdiocese.
- This liturgy is a gathering of the Church of Washington with all of its rich diversity. Note that many different cultures that will be represented and explain that the some of the readings and other parts of the Rite will be in multiple languages as a way of recognizing and including these many cultures. Programs will be available to assist participants follow along throughout the Rite.
- Note that this is not a Mass – Scripture readings are proclaimed and a short homily make up the Liturgy of the Word prior to the Rite.
- Invite the catechumens to reflect on God’s work in their lives – particularly the time(s) they heard God call them by name. Remind them that God provides grace for the journey and when the Archbishop calls the elect to the sacraments, he does so in God’s name.
- Explain that the catechumens’ names will be called and that the catechumens and their godparents should follow the instructions to come forward that will be given during the Rite. In particular, remind catechumens, godparents and sponsors that they will be asked to respond to the questions of the Archbishop.
- Explain to the candidates that their names will not be called individually, because God through their Baptism has already called them. When the parish coordinator announces the parish name, they will come forward with their sponsors.

### Reflect on the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion with elect and candidates.

Plan time soon after the Rite to listen to the initiates’ experiences. This is another opportunity to practice mystagogy by asking questions such as: what did you see, how did you feel when your sponsor placed their hand on your shoulder, what was it like to be called forward, etc.

## Attend to Administrative Issues

### Remind the Pastor to Request Faculties to Confirm Baptized Catholics

As the Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, a priest can validly confer this sacrament *only* if he has the faculty to do so. “If during the celebration of the Easter Vigil [or at any other time] a priest intends to confirm a Catholic previously baptized but uncatechized, and who has participated in the parish's RCIA process, he must make this request in writing to the Vicar General in the Curia. This delegation is required for the validity of the sacrament” (Cf. *Archdiocese of Washington Liturgical Norms and Policies*, p. 22).

This request should be made at least one month prior to the scheduled celebration of Confirmation in order to allow a sufficient amount of time for the Chancery to respond.

**Form:** See Appendix A-18 for Form RCIA-G – Request for Faculties to Confirm Baptized Catholics.

**Re-Distribute Contact Lists and Schedules** — Remember to provide an updated contact list of team members and sponsors with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to all catechumens and candidates. It is also helpful to remind the participants of upcoming events on the RCIA calendar. Reiterate the importance of the Period of Mystagogy and the neophyte year.

## Resources for the Period of Catechumenate

### **Leader/Catechetical Resources**

Ospino, Hoffsman. *Interculturalism and Catechesis: A Catechist's Guide to Responding to Cultural Diversity*. The Essential Catechist's Bookshelf. Twenty Third Publications, 2017.

*Association for Catechumenal Ministry*. Liturgy Training Publications, 2007.

“Symbolon: The Catholic Faith Explained.” Symbolon. Augustine Institute, 2018.

### **Participant Resources:**

Foley, Leonard OFM. *Believing in Jesus*. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994.

*RCIA Participant's Book*. Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM), 2007.

Redemptorist Pastoral Publication. *Handbook for Today's Catholic*. Liguori Publications, 2004.

Redemptorist Pastoral Publication. *Your Faith: A Popular Presentation of Catholic belief*. Liguori Publications, 2004.

Rev McBride, Alfred. *Essentials of the Faith*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2002.

### **Resources for Breaking Open the Word:**

A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication. *The Word Into Life* (Cycle A, B, C). Liguori Publications.

Hamma, Robert M. *A Catechumen's Lectionary*. Paulist Press, 1988.

Living with Christ. *Sunday Missal* (Designed for each liturgical year). Twenty-Third Publications.

Living the Word, *World Library Publications*

The Word Among Us (Monthly Publication), *The Word Among Us*

Sunday Dismissals for the RCIA, *Liturgical Press*

We Send You Forth: Dismissals for the RCIA, *World Library Publications*

## PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

“Jesus...said to [the woman], ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’”

John 4:5-15

“Prayer is first of all a gift from God; in fact, in every one of the baptized ‘the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words’ (Romans 8:26). Catechesis has the task of educating the believer for prayer and in prayer, developing the contemplative dimension of the Christian experience.”

Directory for Catechesis, 86

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### Vision for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

[138] The period of purification and enlightenment, which the rite of election begins, customarily coincides with Lent. In the liturgy and liturgical catechesis of Lent, the reminder of baptism already received or the preparation for its reception, as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the Paschal Mystery, in which each of the elect will share through the sacraments of initiation.<sup>9</sup> For both the elect and the local community, therefore, the Lenten season is a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery.

[139] This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, *consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction* [emphasis added], and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior. The celebration of certain rites, particularly the scrutinies (see nos. 141-146) and the presentations (see nos. 147-149), brings about this process of purification and enlightenment and extends it over the course of the entire Lenten season.

[140] Holy Saturday is the day of proximate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation and on that day the rites of preparation (see nos. 185-192) may be celebrated.

### Assist the Elect and Candidates in Preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation

As this period aligns with Lent, so too, the focus of the period should model the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The season of Lent provides an opportunity for deeper conversion as the Church is called to repentance and renewal as she reflects on the Paschal Mystery. Furthermore, the Church aids the elect and candidates in this period through liturgical and spiritual formation focused on the rites and traditional disciplines of this season.

The systematic catechesis of the catechumenate should be scaled back after the Rite of Election or Call to Continuing Conversion so that the elect and candidates can focus on spiritual

<sup>9</sup> See Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity *Ad gentes*, no. 14

preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation. How this shift in focus takes place will vary depending on the number and needs of the elect and candidates. However, one simple way to mark the change in focus during this period is to modify the structure of the gathered sessions.

**Some suggestions for reshaping the focus of this period include:**

- Use a different prayer style exclusively for this period
- Meet in a different place, at a different time, with different environment, e.g. meet in the Church, if using a classroom setting – change the lighting, incorporate a prayer space, etc.
- Consider inviting other leaders for this period (Purification & Enlightenment Team)
- Forgo offering snacks, or serve simpler food, e.g. pretzels (which have their origins as Lenten food) to model the fasting nature of the season
- Spend more time in quiet reflection/journaling, etc.
- Focus on scriptural images and ritual elements (e.g. laying on of hands) from the liturgical rites
- Incorporate the Book of the Elect. This could be displayed in a prominent place in the church, and/or at a designated prayer table at each gathered session

See Appendix page 49 for an outline of Scriptural themes, Rites, and recommended ideas for Lent to assist you in planning for this period.

## Prepare for the Scrutinies for the Elect and the Penitential Rite for Candidates

“The scrutinies...are rites for self-searching and repentance and...are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good” (n. 141).

The Scrutinies for the elect are celebrated as they prepare for baptism on the Sundays of Lent:

- Third Sunday of Lent—1st Scrutiny
- Fourth Sunday of Lent—2nd Scrutiny
- Fifth Sunday of Lent—3rd Scrutiny

The Penitential Rite should also take place on the Sundays of Lent. Keep in mind that the Scrutinies are to be celebrated *only* by the elect. The Penitential Rite is reserved for candidates. Maintaining this distinction reinforces the Baptismal dignity of the candidates.

For candidates preparing to be received into full communion at Easter, the Penitential Rite is celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent. For candidates to be received at another time of the year, this Rite is celebrated several weeks prior to their reception to ensure adequate time for the candidate to celebration the Sacrament of Penance.

### Review the RCIA Text

See the RCIA text (beginning at paragraph 150) for the outline, ritual text, and rubrics for the Scrutinies and the Penitential Rite.

### Prepare for the Rites

Arrange a meeting with the pastor and/or other priest who will be presiding at these liturgies as well as musicians and other liturgical ministers (e.g. lectors) at least four weeks prior to the celebration of the Rites in order to clarify responsibilities, logistics and schedule for the Rites.

## Prepare for Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer

"The Church lovingly entrusts to [the elect] the Creed and the Lord's Prayer...the heart of the Church's faith and prayer...in order to enlighten the elect...The Creed, as it recalls the wonderful deeds of God for the salvation of the human race, suffuses the vision of the elect with the sure light of faith...The Lord's Prayer fills them with a deeper realization of the new spirit of adoption by which they will call God their Father" (RCIA, n. 147).

### Purpose of the Presentations

The Creed contains what we believe and the Lord's Prayer embodies how we pray. As such, they are treasures we pass on to the elect and candidates as they make their immediate preparations to receive the sacraments.

For those who are baptized, the Presentation of the Creed recalls the faith attested to at baptism and the responsibility to deepen that faith. The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer reminds the baptized that they are already children of God through baptism.

### Participants in the Presentations

The Presentations are made to the elect and for candidates who do not have the practice of reciting the Creed or praying the Lord's Prayer (cf. NS, n. 31). However, you may want to include everyone in the Presentations. It is particularly meaningful to have the sponsor/godparent be part of these treasures of the faith.

### Timing of the Presentations

Preferably, the Presentations are celebrated in the presence of the community of the faithful, within Mass. The Presentation of the Creed typically takes place during the third week of Lent (cf. RCIA 148). The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer typically takes place during the fifth week of Lent (cf. RCIA 149). Though generally celebrated during Lent, one or both of the presentations can be celebrated during the catechumenate period to mark a catechumen's progress in formation (cf. RCIA 104).

### Ritual form for the Presentations

See RCIA, n. 157-163 and 178-184. The Presentations are comprised of a Liturgy of the Word highlighting the significance of the Creed or Lord's Prayer in the life of the faithful. Verbal proclamations of these prayers by the community often comprise an important part of the Rite. You may want to also give the elect a copy of the Creed and Lord's Prayer in some written form (e.g. a certificate.)

## Prepare Candidates for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

"The candidate, according to his or her own conscience, should make a confession of sins beforehand, first informing the confessor that he or she is about to be received into full communion. Any confessor who is lawfully approved may hear the candidate's confession" (RCIA, n. 482).

Prior to the candidates' reception of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, they are to receive catechesis and preparation for the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation.

Only the candidates – those already baptized, or seeking full communion with the Church – should celebrate the Sacrament of Penance prior to the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. The elect do not make a sacramental confession because they are not yet baptized. Baptism is the gateway to all the other sacraments. Both elect and candidates should be encouraged to begin the practice of the daily *Examen*.

### **Some ideas for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation may include:**

- Invite candidates to participate in a parish penance service. This experience reflects the communal dimension of sin and forgiveness. Namely that the Sacrament of Penance reconciles the penitent with God, the community and self.
- If candidates would prefer more time for their confession, encourage them to schedule an appointment with a priest for individual confession.
- The Sacrament of Penance can be celebrated at a place of pilgrimage such as the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception or the Franciscan monastery. However, the first celebration of Penance is preferably occurs at the parish of initiation as record of the sacrament is needed.

## Prepare for the Preparation Rites and Easter Vigil

The Church encourages the elect and candidates to spend the day of Holy Saturday before the evening Easter Vigil in prayer and reflection. If possible, they are to observe a fast. If you would like to gather the elect and candidates, the Rite offers a few options: Presentation of the Creed and/or Lord's Prayer (if deferred from earlier in the period), the Ephphetha Rite and choosing a baptismal name. The Preparation Rites provide an opportunity for the initiates to gather for prayer as they prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation.

### **Review the RCIA Text for the Preparation Rites and Easter Vigil**

See the RCIA text for the guidelines and the rubrics for the Easter Vigil (For elect only: n. 206-243; For elect and candidates: n. 562-594) or for the Rite of Reception (For candidates only either at another time of the year: n. 487-498, or n. 499-504, outside of Mass.) If there are only candidates to be received into full communion and this takes place at the Easter Vigil, use the combined Rite (n. 562-594) omitting the elements proper to baptism of the elect.

### **Prepare for the celebration of the Easter Vigil or Rite of Reception**

Arrange a meeting, several weeks in advance, with the pastor and/or other clergy who will preside at this liturgy as well as musicians and others (e.g. liturgy committee, representatives of liturgical ministries) prior to the celebration of this Rite in order to discuss how the it will be celebrated.



### Plan prayer/reflection opportunities for Holy Saturday

In addition to the Preparation Rites, you may wish to celebrate some or all of Morning Prayer or the Office of Readings on Holy Saturday.

### Ensure that the celebrant and liturgical ministers have the script for the Sacrament of Baptism, Rite of Reception and Confirmation

In addition to the text of the rite, invitations, explanations, instructions, etc. are helpful to provide direction and timing to the participants, ministers and assembly. The presider, deacon, music director and RCIA team leader should all have a copy of the script.

### Review the Easter Vigil ritual with Elect and Godparents, Candidates and Sponsors

While it may not be necessary or advisable to “run through” the entire liturgy for the Easter Vigil, it is helpful to walk through some of the basic elements of the Vigil with the elect and candidates and their sponsor and/or godparents. It is also highly recommended to review the ritual with parents of children/youth participating in the liturgy.

The elect and candidates are encouraged to experience the Easter Vigil by following the lead of their godparents and/or sponsors instead of memorizing it in advance. To make this possible, godparents and sponsors should be well-rehearsed for their role. It is helpful to distribute information to sponsors about what to expect, and how best to assist the elect and the candidates to prepare for the sacraments.

### Plan a reception following the Easter Vigil

A reception following the Vigil provides an opportunity for the parish community to welcome and rejoice with its newest members. Invite parish organizations – even those not actively involved in the catechumenal process – to host a reception. Encourage those who have been baptized or received into full communion from previous years to attend.

## Resources for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

*Foundations in Faith: Purification and Enlightenment.* RCL Benziger, 2017.

- The “Purification and Enlightenment” section has Lenten sessions for all three cycles of the Liturgical year.

Hans, Christoffersen. *The Community Believes: An Introduction to the Creed for RCIA.* Liguori Publications, 2003.

*Journey of Faith.* Liguori Publications, 2019.

- The “Enlightenment” handouts from this series guide the elect and candidates through a self-reflection as they prepare for the Easter sacraments. The series also includes resources for a Lenten retreat.

McGrath, Elsie Hainz. *The Community Prays: An Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer for RCIA.* Liguori Publications, 2003.

## PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

“But you are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises’ of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were ‘no people’ but now you are God's people; you ‘had not received mercy’ but now you have received mercy.”

1 Peter 2: 9-10

“A catechist is...a teacher and mystagogue who introduces others to the mystery of God, revealed in the paschal mystery of Christ; as an icon of Jesus the teacher, the catechist has the two-fold task of transmitting the content of the faith and leading others into the mystery of the faith itself. The catechist is called to open others to the truth about human beings and their ultimate vocation, communicating the knowledge of Christ and at the same time introducing them to the various dimensions of the Christian life, unveiling the mysteries of salvation contained in the deposit of faith and renewed in the Church's liturgy.”

*Directory for Catechesis*, 113 b

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### Vision for the Period of Mystagogy

[244] The third step of Christian initiation, the celebration of the sacraments, is followed by the final period, the Period of Post-baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy. This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests (pastors) should give them thoughtful and friendly help.

### Mystagogy / Postbaptismal Catechesis

The need for a mystagogical journey springs from the fundamental structure of the Christian experience, from which three essential elements emerge:

1. the interpretation of the rites in the light of the salvific events in keeping with the Tradition of the Church, reinterpreting the mysteries of the life of Jesus and His Paschal Mystery in particular relation to the entire course of the Old Testament;
2. an introduction to the meaning of liturgical signs, so that mystagogic catechesis may reawaken and educate the sensibilities of the faithful in the language of signs and actions, that together with the word, constitute the rite;
3. the presentation of the meaning of the ceremonies in relation to the whole of the Christian life, in order to emphasize the liturgy's connection to the missionary responsibility of the faithful and to increase the awareness that the believers' existence is gradually transformed by the mysteries celebrated” (*Directory for Catechesis*, 98).

In mystagogy, or post-baptismal catechesis, the liturgical celebration, particularly the Sacraments of Initiation, are recalled, reflected upon and “unpacked.” The focus of mystagogy is centered on the neophytes' experience of the sacraments; that is, from the lens of one who has participated in the Paschal Mystery. Mystagogical catechesis has been compared to the peeling of an onion, revealing more and ever richer layers. Mystagogy intentionally explores the many

“layers” of the liturgical celebration – the lived experience, the historical richness of the rites, the “re-presenting” of God’s saving power in the sacraments. In this process, neophytes gain a deeper insight in the faith. The job of the “mystagogue,” or the one who “guides into mystery,” is to create an environment for the neophytes to consider, reveal or peel back the layers of the mysteries experienced in the sacraments.

Because this is a time for the “community and neophytes to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery” (RCIA, 244), the primary place for this mystagogical catechesis is at the Sunday liturgy, with the homilist as the primary mystagogue. However, it is important to provide additional opportunities outside the Eucharist celebration for the neophytes to gather and reflect on their experience of the sacraments, and the initiation process in general, as a group.

### Formative Aspects of the Period of Mystagogy

The RCIA team, sponsors and godparents and parish community should offer new members of the Church support as “they begin to walk in newness of life.” The guidelines for the Period of Mystagogy explain that the neophytes are aided in “deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it a part of their lives” through:

- sharing in the Eucharist
- meditation on the Gospel
- and doing works of charity (RCIA, 244)

In addition to these three elements of the mystagogy period, postbaptismal catechesis should include ongoing formation in the faith, focused on the application of Catholic Social teaching and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

#### **Sharing in the Eucharist**

The Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Christian life. The Sunday Gospel readings of the Easter Season provide material for reflection for the Period of Mystagogy. Consider the following when preparing for the celebration of Sunday Mass with the neophyte:

- **Special places in the congregation for the neophytes and their families** – If the neophytes sat together in one particular place during the catechumenate, continue the practice of reserving pews for them and their families, at one or several Masses of the Easter Season (cf. RCIA, n. 248).
- **Lectionary Readings** – The readings from the Lectionary are particularly suited to the neophytes’ experience of the Christian life. Consider providing the neophytes, and the entire parish, with resources to use for reflection on these Scripture readings. In particular, highlight the power of the Paschal Mystery and the call to discipleship reflected in the early Church. This could be included in the parish bulletin or sent out through a variety of social media platforms.
- **Homily** – As previously noted, the homilies during this season are particularly significant in aiding the neophytes and the entire parish community in their daily lives and their experience of the sacraments.
- **General Intercessions** – While it is important to pray for the elect and candidates throughout the catechumenal process, it just as is important to continue to pray for the

neophytes after their initiation (Cf. RCIA, n. 248). Include an intercession each week that focuses on the neophytes and the witness of their new life in Christ.

- **Music** – Celebrate the Easter Season with songs that contain “Alleluias” and reflect images of baptism and life in Christ as suggested by the Scripture readings each week. Use songs from the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday to reinforce the joyful nature of the season.

### **Meditation on the Gospel**

The readings of the Easter Season are rich with images that reveal the intimate relationship between the Lord and His people (e.g. the Good Shepherd; the Vine and the branches). These passages also reflect the responsibility to share and witness to the Good News – “Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!”

Gather the neophytes weekly for mystagogical reflections following Mass, or at different times throughout the week to reflect on the Sunday Scripture readings.

### **Doing works of charity**

We must stress the importance of living the Christian faith throughout the initiation process. Neophytes should be encouraged to put their faith into action through works of charity – in the parish and beyond.

You may have already provided occasions for the neophytes for Christian service that are available, both in the parish and in the community at large. Helping them to become active in a parish group, ministry, etc. will incorporate them into the community and their ongoing apprenticeship in Christian living.

### **Some ideas for acts of service may include:**

- Invite various parish ministries to make brief presentations at a mystagogy session. The witness of other parishioners will help the neophytes understand the scope of opportunities to serve as key to encouraging participation
- Inform initiates about a parish Ministry Fair or plan one if one does not currently take place
- Organize an opportunity for the neophytes to serve together. Make sure to incorporate prayer and reflection prior to and/or following service opportunities
- Gather the neophytes into small groups that have communal meals, service, and prayer

## Give Witness; Share Stories

With initiation and the transformative experience of the catechumenate fresh in their hearts, mystagogy provides an ideal opportunity to help the newly initiated become comfortable with sharing their story. Invite the neophytes to share a particular moment of their experience of conversion.

Encourage the neophytes to focus on how God has been at work in their lives. Whether they focus on one moment of the initiation process or some other transformative moment, it is important that they tell their story so that those who listen will hear how God has made a difference in their lives.

Invite the neophytes to an evening of reflection to assist them in developing their stories, and practice sharing their witness with others. [See Appendix page 51 for steps on how best to lead a gathering of this kind.](#)

## Welcome the Neophytes to Parish Life

"To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests (pastors) should give them thoughtful and friendly help" (RCIA, n. 244).

While the parish community has been a part of the entire initiation process, in this period the community should show its joy by actively welcoming in the newest members of the Body of Christ. The following suggestions offer ideas to help the parish community welcome the neophytes.

- Provide information for the parish, sponsors/godparents, and liturgical ministers about mystagogy. Catholics who were baptized as infants have not had the experience of adults who are baptized or received into full communion with the Catholic Church; therefore, it is helpful to form the faithful in their baptismal promises throughout the Easter season.
- Aid sponsors/godparents in supporting the neophyte. While the sponsor or godparent has journeyed with the neophyte up to this point, the time after initiation is critical for ongoing engagement, particularly with the godparents. The importance of supporting the neophyte as he or she puts the Christian life into practice is essential.

Coordinators should keep in touch with sponsors and godparents during the neophyte year. Godparents especially should be reminded their responsibility continues after initiation, and should be assisted in their mission to accompany the neophytes. The following ideas may help encourage sponsors/godparents in their service:

- Discuss the Scriptures for Sundays / feast days
- Answer, as appropriate, questions or concerns about living the Catholic life
- Talk about “current topics” in the media, etc. from a Catholic perspective as asked to do so by the neophyte
- Pray together
- Invite the neophyte to participate in service together
- Reflect on the experience of the Sacraments of Initiation and the Christian initiation process (e.g. Celebrate anniversaries of the various rites, etc.)

- Encourage neophytes to register in the parish. Be sure to have the neophytes register in parish, if they have not already done so. This simple practice helps them to feel connected to the parish and to the Church.

Create an initiation database to track those who have been initiated through the RCIA process. You might use this information to send an anniversary note/card on their Baptism day, or the day they were received into full communion.

- Introduce the Initiates to the parish community. If you have not had a chance to display photos of the initiates up to this point in the initiation process, the Period of Mystagogy is another time to do so. You could also write a brief article for the bulletin introducing the neophytes to the parish.

### Prepare for the Sacrament of Penance for the Newly Baptized

“Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ’s grace, erases original sin and turns a man back toward God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle” (CCC, 405).

Neophytes may be apprehensive about celebrating the Sacrament of Penance. Encourage the neophytes to approach the sacrament. Inform them of the regular times in which the sacrament is available and how it can be scheduled at other times. Offer to help them prepare for the sacrament by providing guiding materials (i.e. Examination of Conscience).

### Celebrate the End of the Period of Mystagogy

“To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis [mystagogy], some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter Season near Pentecost Sunday” (RCIA, n. 249).

A special gathering can be celebrated in conjunction with a Sunday Mass, Sunday Vespers, parish community celebration, etc.

Invite those who came into the Church through the catechumenal process in previous years to the Easter Vigil and to the celebration at the end of the Period of Mystagogy. Their presence and witness can be a source of encouragement to the newly baptized and newly received.

#### **Some celebration ideas include:**

- Host a Dinner/Social/Picnic/Mass for all involved in initiation ministry, their spouses and families
- If a Mass is celebrated, the newly baptized and newly received can take on roles in the liturgy as appropriate: greeters, musicians, ushers, lectors, or presenters of gifts. Incorporate music used during the initiation process, as appropriate
- Invite neophytes, team members, sponsors, godparents from previous years to join the celebration
- Encourage neophytes and team members to recall highlights from the past year
- Thank those who have served in initiation ministry, and celebrate God’s work through all who have been involved in the initiation process
- Give catechists and team members small gifts or certificates of appreciation. Recognize anyone who is leaving the team. Thank spouses for their support as well

## Stay Connected During the Neophyte Year and Beyond

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

### Ongoing Formation

While one strength many participants feel about the initiation process was “being connected to a community,” they often feel “that there are few or no ongoing formation opportunities after their reception into the Church” (JTFL, p. 57). They may desire “more opportunities to further their own faith formation” (JTFL, p.39). It is essential to help the newly initiated find opportunities to continue to grow in the faith, and to have questions about living the Christian life answered. [See Appendix page 52 for suggested catechetical themes for ongoing formation.](#)

While the parish/the initiation team/sponsors and godparents may be able to offer some opportunities for ongoing formation and growth in the Christian life, you also need to help new initiates to seek out and participate in retreats, conferences, etc. at the parish, Archdiocesan level and outside the Archdiocese.

**Some ideas for ongoing formation may include:**

#### Prayer and Spiritual Growth

- Devotions such as Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction, the Rosary at the parish or elsewhere
- Prayer experiences such as a Charismatic Prayer Group
- Liturgical Season celebrations during Advent and Lent – include prayer and an experience like making an Advent wreath or a Lenten family cross
- Blessings that celebrate life events – marriage, expecting a child, a new home, etc.

#### Community

- Participate in parish events (e.g. parish picnic, concert, fundraisers, etc.) archdiocesan events (e.g. the annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine, etc.)
- Visit the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, the Franciscan Monastery, the National Shrine of John Paul II, other Catholic parishes or parishes of other Rites such as the Byzantine Catholic and Ukrainian Catholic Churches
- Suggest that the initiates participate in a parish Bible study group
- Suggest that initiates join parish small groups
- Encourage the newly initiated to check in regularly with one another
- Encourage them to find common interests outside the parish



### **Ongoing Formation**

- Inform new initiates about adult faith formation opportunities in your parish or other local parishes
- Hold meetings for catechesis about current events, and pressing questions about the faith
- Attend archdiocesan formation opportunities (Theology on Tap, Faith Foundations Courses, etc.)
- Take advantage of online education opportunities

### **Evaluate**

Evaluation is essential to building a strong catechumenal process – time for the team to discuss and evaluate are essential.

Provide feedback opportunities for each of the various team members – clergy, team, catechists, sponsors/godparents, initiates, etc. – to discuss their experience of the initiation process. This could take the form of small or large group discussions, one-on-one meetings, written evaluations, or a combination of the above.

Review the feedback with humility as you identify things to “keep”, “change” and “add” for the future. Take notes and incorporate changes into the process for the upcoming year.

See Appendix page 53 for a list of questions to help guide your review of the process.

## Resources for the Period of Mystagogy

*Faith Series*. Paulist Evangelization Ministries, 2020.

*Foundations in Faith: Mystagogy*. RCL Benziger, 2017.

- The “Mystagogy” handouts offer guided prompts for the neophytes to reflect on the Paschal Mystery.

Hahn, Scott and Mike Aquilina. *Living the Mysteries: A Guide for Unfinished Christians*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2003.

- This book was a devotional for the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost. Using the wisdom of our Church fathers, these reflections invite the newly initiated to break open the mysteries they have participated in through the sacraments of initiation.

*Journey of Faith*. Liguori Publications, 2017.

- The “Mystagogy” handouts from this series guide the newly initiated on a reflection on their mission to be witnesses of Christ, while encouraging them to continue growing in their understanding of the faith, and in communion with the Church

## APPENDICES

### Supplemental Resources

## Guided Conversations for the Period of Inquiry

### At the Beginning of Inquiry

The period of inquiry is a time of discernment. We must provide spaces where the inquirers feel comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns. The RCIA team should also have opportunities in place for individual conversations with the inquirers to get a sense of their initial faith and determine their motivation for beginning the catechumenal process. These conversations can be both informal and formal. At least one “official” conversation is encouraged.

In this period, we invite the inquirer to talk simply and directly about his or her lived relationship with God. If we take the time to listen first to where people have been and where they are now, we can more effectively encourage and support them on the journey of faith.

A threshold conversation is a simple tool that can facilitate this dialogue. This conversation is a supportive, inviting, open-ended and prayerful act of listening evangelization. The focus is on listening to the other. It is essential to set aside the desire to share our own story. It is important to recognize this is not counseling or apologetics – this is an opportunity to listen. There will be time for instruction and sharing later on in the process.

Threshold questions can lead to a fruitful conversation. These questions should be open-ended – avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Remind the person you are speaking with that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts. Sample threshold questions include, Can you describe your relationship with God at this point in your life? Can you tell me the story of your relationship with God thus far?

After you have listened attentively, you may go deeper by asking the questions listed below as appropriate. Depending on the responses received, not all listed questions need to be asked.

- Do you believe in God?
- What kind of God do you believe in? (does response reflect personal/impersonal)
- Do you believe in the possibility of a relationship with this God?
- Do you have a relationship with this God? What kind of relationship?
- Do you identify with a religious tradition? What tradition?
- What has been your experience of church?
- Are there bridges of trust in your life regarding Christ, the Church, the faith, or a committed Christian you know?
- Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?
- Where do you see yourself on this spiritual journey: curious, seeking, open to faith, intentional disciple? <sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from: *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*, Sherry Weddell.

## Before Entering the Catechumenate

As the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcoming approaches, invite inquirers to discern their readiness for participation in the Rite. As with the threshold conversation, use questions that are supportive, inviting, and open-ended. Encourage the inquirer to share their experiences of God and His Church throughout this period. Invite them to share how their experience and understanding of Jesus has evolved.

You may want to begin this conversation with the same threshold questions you used at the beginning of the period of inquiry, or you can develop your own questions in light of your experience with the inquirer.

After you have listened attentively, you may go deeper by asking the questions listed below as appropriate. Depending on the responses received, not all listed questions need to be asked.

- What has been your experience of the gathered sessions? Which ones have affected you most? What have you enjoyed most? What has challenged you most?
- Can you see changes in your relationship with God? Can you see changes in your relationship with your family or friends during this time?
- What kind of changes have you noticed take place in you? Have you experienced any moral struggles in your life caused by our gathered sessions? Do you understand and accept the Church's teachings on morality and social issues?
- What has been your experience of prayer? What has been most powerful in your prayer life.
- Do you have a sense of belonging to this community? Have you engaged with the community in prayer?
- Do you feel drawn to receive the Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church?
- Are you willing to embrace the demands and delights of discipleship? Do you wish to take the next step in the initiation process?

**Note:** Some inquirers may not be ready to enter into the period of the catechumenate at the time the parish typically celebrates of the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcoming. This is okay; there is flexibility on when to celebrate this rite. Explain to the inquirer the meaning of the next period in the process, and assure them that if they are not ready to move forward at this point, it is fine. Together, you will continue the journey until they feel comfortable moving into the period of the catechumenate.

You may want to conclude this conversation by explaining the questions that will be asked of the inquirer during the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcoming. This is also a good time to share some of the text of the prayers of the ritual. It is important to let the inquirer know that even as they make this public declaration, the Church is praying with and for them.

A final question could be,

- Do you understand the importance of this step, and the commitment you are making in the Rite of Acceptance/Rite of Welcoming? Are you prepared to publicly state your wish to continue in formation to become Catholic and receive the sacraments of initiation?

It is important to note that this is acceptance into the catechumenate; it does not mandate that they then “complete” the rest of the initiation process, nor does it mandate that they feel fully prepared for the reception of the sacraments. We are looking for confidence in taking the next step as they continue to deepen their relationship with Christ and the Church.

## Baptismal Status Verification

Gathering information on the baptismal status is an important part of the inquiry process. It is important to determine the status of each inquirer early on. While you may have a combined catechumenal process, catechumens or candidates will have different formation needs and participate in different Rites. Once you have determined the baptismal status of the inquirer, refer to the table below to identify catechumenal status.

**Note:** If the inquirer has been baptized, it is essential that you obtain a copy of the baptismal certificate early in the process.

Description of Initiate's Situation	Action To Be Taken	Inquirer's Status
Never baptized.	N/A	Catechumen
Baptized in a denomination that <b>does not</b> use the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.	N/A	Catechumen
Baptized in a denomination that <b>does</b> use the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.	N/A	Candidate Seeking Full Communion
Baptized as an infant in a denomination that <b>does</b> use the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Cannot procure a baptismal certificate, but a witness can attest to it.	"Create" a baptismal record.	Candidate Seeking Full Communion
Baptized as an infant in a denomination that <b>does not</b> use the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Cannot procure a baptismal certificate, but a witness can attest to it.	Baptize the individual conditionally. <sup>+</sup>	Candidate Seeking Full Communion
Baptized as an adult in a denomination that <b>does not</b> use the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or the denomination is unknown.	Baptize the individual conditionally. <sup>+</sup>	Candidate Seeking Full Communion
Baptized as an infant, but cannot procure a baptismal certificate and there are no witnesses/other proof (whether denomination is known or unknown).	Baptize the individual conditionally. <sup>+</sup>	Candidate Seeking Full Communion
Baptized Catholic – Never received Confirmation and Eucharist.	Obtain copy of Baptismal Record	Candidate Completing Sacraments of Initiation
Baptized Catholic – Received Eucharist, but not Confirmation.	Obtain copy of Baptismal Record (including Eucharist notation)	Candidate seeking Confirmation* <i>May need to attend Pentecost Mass</i>

<sup>^</sup> See Appendix, page A-19 for a list of Churches and ecclesial communities and whether or not their baptism is considered valid.

<sup>+</sup> See National Statutes for the Catechumenate, n. 37.

## Catechetical Formation for the Period of the Catechumenate

“The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*...will provide every catechist with sound help for communicating the one, perennial deposit of faith within the local Church, while seeking, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to link the wondrous unity of the Christian mystery with the varied needs and conditions of those to whom the message is addressed” (*Directory for Catechesis*, 119).

Using the *Catechism* as a guide, clergy, RCIA Coordinators and catechists should determine an organic and systematic order for presenting the truths of the faith in a manner that aligns with the needs of the catechumens and candidates. The catechetical themes listed below are listed as they appear in each of the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but are not necessarily in the order in which they should be presented. Integrating the movements of what we believe, how we celebrate, how we live and how we pray as outlined in the *Catechism*, catechists should help catechumens and candidates apply these principles to every day decision making. In particular, the moral code of the *Catechism* should be presented as it applies to living one’s vocation, as well as ramifications for evangelization and witness in light of this new way.

<b>Profession of Faith</b> ( <i>What we believe</i> )	<b>Celebrating the Christian Mystery</b> ( <i>How we celebrate</i> )	<b>Life in Christ</b> ( <i>How we live</i> )	<b>Christian Prayer</b> ( <i>How we pray</i> )
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our Desire and Capacity for God</li> <li>- Divine Revelation</li> <li>- Scripture and Tradition</li> <li>- Faith</li> <li>- Creation</li> <li>- Sin</li> <li>- Jesus: The Incarnation, Redemption and Second Coming</li> <li>- Holy Spirit</li> <li>- Work of the Trinity in the Resurrection</li> <li>- Marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic</li> <li>- Mary: the Mother of God</li> <li>- Universal Call to Holiness</li> <li>- Communion of Saints</li> <li>- Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liturgical and Sacramental Life of the Church</li> <li>- Sacraments of Initiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sacrament of Baptism</li> <li>▪ Sacrament of Confirmation</li> <li>▪ Eucharist: Theology of the Mass</li> <li>▪ Eucharist: Structure of the Mass</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Sacraments of Healing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sacrament of Reconciliation</li> <li>▪ Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Sacraments at Service of Communion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sacrament of Matrimony</li> <li>▪ Sacrament of Holy Orders</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Man’s Vocation – Life in the Spirit</li> <li>- Dignity of the Human Person</li> <li>- Call to Beatitude</li> <li>- Free Will</li> <li>- Moral Conscience</li> <li>- Living the Virtues</li> <li>- Sin and Gods Mercy</li> <li>- Moral Life – Life in the Human Community</li> <li>- Common Good</li> <li>- Moral Law</li> <li>- Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy</li> <li>- Vocation of Chastity</li> <li>- Life Issues: Euthanasia, Abortion, Suicide, Physician-Assisted Suicide, Just War</li> <li>- Human Sexuality: Contraception/Natural Family Planning, Reproductive Technologies, Same-sex attraction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Universal Call to Prayer</li> <li>- Types of Prayer</li> <li>- The Lord’s Prayer</li> </ul>

## Planning for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

*The elect must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church, and they are expected particularly to progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance. (RCIA, 142)*

A spirit of meditation and reflection should mark the period of Purification and Enlightenment. Careful planning will ensure fruitful reflection opportunities, helping the elect and candidates experience the Rites more fully. If possible, create reflection opportunities for both the elect and the candidates together, as well as opportunities for each cohort to reflect separately. Be sure to provide opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the candidates.

The table below provides an outline of the scriptural themes and rites celebrated during Lent to assist you in planning. Note – determination of readiness to participate in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion (RECC) should be made before Lent.

Additionally, the RCIA team should help the elect and candidates participate in the disciplines of Lent—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving/charity. Consider the ideas below the chart as ways to incorporate the elect and candidates in the parish’s Lenten practices.

The following chart outlines the rites and Gospel readings for Cycle A:

1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent – Gospel of Matthew 4:1-11 – <i>The Temptation in the Desert</i>	
Sunday	<b>Rite of Sending</b> Reflection on the Rite of Sending  <b>Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion – If assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent*</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Week	Reflection on the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion Preparation for the Penitential Rite
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent – Gospel of Matthew 17:1-9 – <i>The Transfiguration of Jesus</i>	
Sunday	<b>Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion – If assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent*</b>  <b>Penitential Rite (primarily for Candidates)</b> Reflection on the Penitential Rite
2 <sup>nd</sup> Week	Preparation for 1 <sup>st</sup> Scrutiny
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent – Gospel of John 4:5-42 – <i>The Woman at the Well</i>	
Sunday	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Scrutiny</b> Reflection on the 1 <sup>st</sup> Scrutiny
3 <sup>rd</sup> Week	<b>Presentation of the Creed for Elect (and Candidates, if applicable)</b> Preparation for the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Scrutiny



4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – Gospel of John 9:1-41 – <i>The Man Born Blind</i>	
Sunday	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Scrutiny</b> Reflection on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Scrutiny
4 <sup>th</sup> Week	Preparation for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Scrutiny
5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – Gospel of John 11: 1-45 – <i>The Raising of Lazarus</i>	
Sunday	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Scrutiny</b> Reflection on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Scrutiny
5 <sup>th</sup> Week	<b>Presentation of the Lord's Prayer to Elect</b> (and Candidates, <i>if applicable</i> )
<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Reflection on the Scriptures
<b>Holy Thursday</b>	Reflection on the Scriptures
<b>Good Friday</b>	Reflection on the Scriptures
<b>Holy Saturday</b>	<b>Preparation Rites</b> ( <i>if applicable</i> ) <i>The elect are to be advised that on Holy Saturday they should refrain from their usual activities. They should spend the day in prayer and reflection, and, as far as they can, observe a fast.</i>  <i>If you choose to gather with the elect and candidates, the focus should be on reflection and prayer. There are optional Rites – Ephphetha, Lord's Prayer, Creed and Baptismal Name – that may be considered.</i>
<b>Easter Vigil</b>	<b>Sacraments of Initiation for Elect and Candidates</b>
<b>Period of Mystagogy</b>	<b>Reflection on the experience of the sacraments – formal Mystagogy should last entire Easter season, with informal Mystagogy for entire neophyte year.</b>

Some ideas to engage the elect and candidates in the practices of Lent include:

#### **Prayer Ideas**

- Meditate on the Lord's Prayer / Creed
- Stations of the Cross
- Spend time in front of the Blessed Sacrament
- Begin or increase personal and/or family prayer

#### **Fasting Ideas:**

- Choose a Lenten Fast from something (not just food) or add a virtuous practice
- Attend parish Lenten meal
- Find ways to develop a spirit of fasting e.g. try to regularly eat a smaller meal, limiting sweets, fasting from television, fasting from unkind comments toward one another

#### **Almsgiving/Charity Ideas:**

- Find a service opportunity and serve
- Drop money saved by fasting in the poor box at Church
- Make an extra donation to a favorite charity
- Communicate with relatives or those with whom they are estranged
- Learn more about opportunities to assist the poor, homeless, unborn

## Witnesses of Life in Christ – Faith Sharing for the Period of Mystagogy

Jesus was a master storyteller. Through stories, he invited his listeners to make a connection between their lives and the life of faith to which He was calling them. His stories brought about transformation, as the eyes and hearts of the listener were opened to a new understanding of life and love. The readings we hear throughout the Easter Season – the foundation for the period of mystagogy – are full of life-changing encounter stories that pass on to us the journey of those whose hearts were opened to the Lord. These stories are examples of the transformative conversion that happens in the life of every person today who encounters Christ and follows Him.

The Gospel stories of encounter and conversion may resonate with the experiences of the neophytes in their own journey of faith. With the transformative experience of the sacraments still fresh in their hearts, the period of mystagogy provides an opportune time for the neophytes to reflect upon their faith journey and growth in the Christian life. Invite the neophytes to reflect on their first stirrings of faith – moments of particular grace during the catechumenal process and their initiation. Building on this experiential reflection, invite them to share their conversion stories. Be mindful that many people have some reservations about sharing their story. Follow the prompts below as you help the neophytes form and shape the narrative of their journey of faith, helping them to articulate those moments that opened the door to a lived relationship with Christ.

Begin by explaining the basic elements of dynamic storytelling. The following may be helpful:

“All good stories have many layers – think about the success of the *Shrek* films, they can be enjoyed and have meanings for children, teens and adults. In reflecting on our personal story we can develop a narrative that forms the foundation of which layers can be drawn upon depending on the situation and audience.”

Highlight the elements common to every engaging story:

- Platform – what was life like
- Tilt – what changed the status quo
- Consequences – what happens as a result
- Resolution – how to deal with situation
- New Platform – what is life like from this new point

Explain to the group how Jesus is the master storyteller, the One from which we learn to tell our stories. As an exercise, have the neophytes work, alone or in small groups, to identify the elements above in one of Jesus’s stories from Scripture. You can use the Gospel of John 1:35-41 as an example, or choose your own Gospel story.

After reading the Gospel story and responding to the prompts above, have the neophytes apply the same principles to their own journey of faith. Invite them to consider their own “four o’clock moment.” Ask the neophytes to identify and consider the elements in their faith story (Note: Some participants may have more than one four o’clock moment. Ask them to focus on just one for this exercise). Invite them to write out the story. When everyone has had time to reflect and write, ask the participants to take turns sharing their stories with each other. If there is some hesitancy, you may want someone from your team to begin by sharing his or her story.

Consider hosting a story telling session for neophytes to practice sharing their stories with other members of the parish community. You may want to extend a special invitation to sponsors and RCIA team members to join the gathering and listen to the stories of the neophytes. In listening, the evangelizers are often profoundly evangelized by the neophytes’ witness of faith. This opportunity to listen to the neophytes is a great gift for those who have been on the journey with them, accompanying and praying for them.

## Formation Opportunities for the Period of Mystagogy

The distinctive spirit and power of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community.

RCIA, 247

The *Directory for Catechesis* describes the Period of Mystagogy as the stage in which the newly initiated “moved always by the Spirit, nourished by the sacraments, by prayer and by the practice of charity, and assisted by multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith...realize the desire of Christ: ‘Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect (*Directory for Catechesis*, 35).” Through regular participation in the sacraments, daily prayer, acts of service, and ongoing faith formation – the newly initiated grow in their deepening appreciation of the Paschal Mystery. The faithful should aid the continual growth in faith of the newly initiated. To that end, the parish should develop pastoral initiatives to support their continuing faith journey.

A primary focus of the Period of Mystagogy is the integration of mystagogical catechesis – the ‘unpacking’ of the Paschal Mystery. With the transformative experience of the sacraments fresh in their hearts, mystagogical catechesis guides one into the mysteries of the faith. Mystagogical reflection provides a space for the newly initiated to grow in understanding of the Christian mysteries as they are integrated more fully into the Christian community

Incorporate mystagogical catechesis in your schedule for the year following initiation. These gatherings need not be formal sessions, but they should be intentional in their integration of prayer, reflection, and time for sharing in the communal life.

The following catechetical themes may guide your planning. Note: These themes are in no particular order; planning should strive to meet the needs of the neophytes.

- Sacraments – particularly catechesis on the Sacrament of Penance
- Eucharist – source and summit of our faith
- Scripture – Practice of *Lectio Divina*
- Marian Devotions or other pious practices
- Prayer – ongoing and growing relationship with God
- Church, the Body of Christ – Communion of Saints
- Universal Call to Holiness – lives of virtue grounded in the Beatitudes
- Ongoing conversion – daily *Examen*
- Vocation – responding to our call to serve Christ and His Church
- Evangelization – bearing witness to new life in Christ
- Catholic Social Teaching – disciples of Christ in the world
- Inter-religious dialogue – relationship with other faith traditions

Nourished by the sacramental experience, prayer, service, and ongoing formation, the newly initiated continue to grow as faithful disciples of Christ in the Church and the world.

## Evaluation of the Catechumenal Process

After the celebration of Pentecost is an opportune time to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the parish catechumenal process. Take the time to honestly acknowledge what worked, and identify what needs improvement. The following questions may guide you in your review.

Model of Implementation	Strength	Weakness
<b>Inquiry</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the process for connecting inquirers with the RCIA team clearly articulated? What is the timeframe for response?</li> <li>Is this period sufficiently staffed with volunteers?</li> <li>Do we allow this period to extend based on the needs of the inquirer? What options are available to inquirers that do not feel prepared for the catechumenate?</li> <li>How do we determine inquirers readiness for the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens? Who is involved in this determination?</li> <li>How do we prepare our inquirers for the Rite of Acceptance?</li> </ul>		
<b>Catechumenate</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we prepare the catechumens, candidates, and the parish for the liturgical rites?</li> <li>Do we create time to reflect on these rites after they take place?</li> <li>How long and how often are the gathered sessions? Is this sufficient?</li> <li>What is the content of instruction? Who determines this? Are resources appropriate? Is something missing?</li> <li>What non-instructional opportunities (prayer experiences, service projects, “field trips”) do we provide for the catechumens and candidates during this period?</li> <li>Is staffing sufficient?</li> <li>If we dismiss the catechumens from Sunday Mass, how often do we do so?</li> <li>How do we ritualize dismissal?</li> <li>What takes place at Breaking Open the Word?</li> <li>What tools do we use to determine growth in the Catholic faith and in relationship with Christ?</li> <li>Who is responsible for determining readiness for participation in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion? Is more than one person involved? Who has the final determination?</li> </ul>		
<b>Purification and Enlightenment</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What happens during Lent? Does this period look different from the catechumenate? How so?</li> <li>Is there sufficient time for interior reflection and prayer built into each gathering?</li> <li>Do we celebrate all of the Scrutinies? How and when?</li> <li>Do we celebrate the Presentations? How and when?</li> <li>Do we celebrate the Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday? How?</li> <li>What retreat experience do we offer? How could it be improved?</li> </ul>		

<b>Celebration of the Sacraments</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there particularly powerful moments in the Vigil? Can we recreate those in future years?</li> <li>• Was something missing/lacking that we should improve next year?</li> <li>• Who is on the Easter Vigil planning team?</li> <li>• How do we prepare the elect/candidates for the Vigil?</li> </ul>		
<b>Mystagogy</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long do we gather the neophytes for mystagogy?</li> <li>• What do we do during this time?</li> <li>• What is the expectation of engagement for the newly initiated? How and when is this engagement communicated?</li> <li>• Do we involve sponsors/godparents? If yes, how so?</li> <li>• Do we involve the parish faithful? If yes, how so?</li> <li>• Are the newly initiated encouraged to take leadership of prayer, etc. throughout this period?</li> </ul>		

<b>Organizational Structure of the RCIA</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>RCIA Team</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the designated parish coordinator for the catechumenal process?</li> <li>• Who are the members of the RCIA team?</li> <li>• Should new team members be invited?</li> </ul>		
<b>RCIA Adapted for Children</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we initiate children of catechetical age/teens who need to prepare for baptism or for reception into full communion?</li> <li>• How do we adapt the process for children?</li> <li>• How does the RCIA adapted for children collaborate with the RCIA for adults?</li> <li>• Who is responsible for this ministry?</li> <li>• Are the Rites celebrated together?</li> </ul>		
<b>Sponsors/Godparents</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are sponsors/godparents identified and recruited?</li> <li>• What formation and support do they receive?</li> <li>• What is the expectation for their engagement and accompaniment after the Easter Vigil?</li> <li>• Do we have a pool of potential sponsors?</li> </ul>		
<b>Parish Involvement</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the parish community engaged in the catechumenal process? Do they know what the RCIA process is?</li> <li>• Are parishioners encouraged to invite people to consider the catechumenal process?</li> <li>• Do clergy use homilies and/or parish bulletin to teach the parish community about the catechumenate?</li> </ul>		

Christian Initiation Forms

# Instructions for Christian Initiation Information Forms

The enclosed forms have been developed to help you obtain important information about those who inquire about Christian Initiation in your parish. A description of each form follows:

## **Inquirer Information Form (Form RCIA-A)**

This form requests basic contact information, religious history, marital status and family information. N.B. **This is the only form that inquirers should complete by themselves.** The coordinator, a member of the clergy or another initiation minister should complete any other applicable form(s) in an interview format with the inquirer once he or she has completed this form.

## **Current Marital Status Follow-Up (Form RCIA-B)**

If an inquirer is engaged, married or divorced and not re-married, there are specific questions that he or she should be asked to determine if there are marriage-related issues that will need to be addressed. Complete the appropriate section of this form with the inquirer in an interview format.

## **Previous Marriage Information (Form RCIA-C)**

If an inquirer and/or an inquirer's fiancée(e) or spouse has been previously married, use this form to gather some basic information to determine the status of the previous marriage(s). Question (c) asks specific questions to verify if a Declaration of Nullity has been granted.

It will be best to complete the appropriate section(s) of this form with the inquirer and/or the inquirer's fiancée(e) or spouse in an interview format, so that you can explain why you are asking certain questions. Keep in mind that previous marriage situations, no matter what the current status, must be treated with pastoral sensitivity.

## **Christian Initiation Information (Form RCIA-D)**

The first two sections of this form provide a place to record the dates and other significant information regarding an inquirer's participation in the Christian initiation process for sacramental record keeping purposes. Use the reverse side of this form to record the dates on which the steps of the annulment process have been completed, if applicable.

## **Child/Teen Inquirer Information Form (Form RCIA-I)**

This form requests basic family contact information, religious history, and preferred learning style of children/teen inquirers. The form should be completed in consultation with the child/teen's parents.

## **Child/Teen Inquirer Information Form (Form RCIA-I)**

The first two sections of this form provide a place to record the dates and other significant information regarding a Child/Teen inquirer's participation in the Christian initiation process for sacramental record keeping purposes. Use the reverse side of this form to record Sponsor/Godparent information.

**Tips for using these forms:** It may be helpful to photocopy each form on a different color of paper in order to easily distinguish between forms. Keep the forms for those who are currently participating in the Christian initiation process in a three-ring binder so that you can insert additional forms as needed. When someone receives the sacraments of initiation, these forms contain all of the information needed for completing the parish sacramental records.



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# Inquirer Information Form

*Information is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission.*

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth (City, State, Country, if not USA): \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Contact Information

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Daytime) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening/Weekend) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Other) \_\_\_\_\_

Parish where you are participating in the RCIA program: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Religious History

1. What, if any, is your present religious affiliation? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you ever been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am not sure.

*If you answered "Yes" to Question 2., please provide the following information:*

(a) In what denomination were you baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Date or your approximate age when you were baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Place of Baptism (Name of church/denomination): \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Address, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

(e) City and State, if known; Country, if not USA: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Father's Name (first & last): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Mother's Name (first & [maiden] & last): \_\_\_\_\_

5. If you were Baptized Catholic, did you receive any of the following sacraments?

☐ Penance (Confession)

☐ Eucharist (First Communion)

☐ Confirmation



### III. Current Marital Status

---

*Check the appropriate statement below and provide any information requested beneath the statement.*

☐ 1. I am single and I have never been married.

☐ 2. I am engaged to be married.

(a) Your Fiancé(e)'s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Your Fiancé(e)'s Current Religious Affiliation (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

(c) For you:     ☐ This is my first marriage.     ☐ I have been married before.

(d) For your fiancé(e):   ☐ This is his/her first marriage.   ☐ My fiancé(e) has been married before.

☐ 3. I am married.

(a) Your Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Your Spouse's Current Religious Affiliation (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

(c) For you:     ☐ This is my first marriage.     ☐ I have been married before.

(d) For your spouse:   ☐ This is my spouse's first marriage.   ☐ My spouse has been married before.

(e) Date of Marriage \_\_\_\_\_

(f) Place of Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 4. I am married, but separated from my spouse.

☐ 5. I am divorced and I have not remarried.

☐ 6. I am a widow/widower.

### IV. Family Information

---

*List the name(s) of any children or other dependents. (e.g. Daughter—Jane; Stepson—John.)*

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

# Current Marital Status Follow-Up

**Inquirer's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Depending on the responses given in **Section III. Current Marital Status**, you may need to complete additional information or ask follow-up questions as indicated below.*

## If the Inquirer responds...“2. I am engaged to be married.”

### 1. Look at Questions (c) and (d)

If either the inquirer and/or the inquirer's fiancé(e) has been previously married, complete Section V and/or VI on the **Previous Marriage Information** form with the inquirer/inquirer's fiancé(e). If either party has a previous marriage that has not been adjudicated, the inquirer should be informed of the need to contact the Marriage Tribunal (301) 853-4543 as soon as possible and, if necessary, start a case. The local pastor should be informed of the same.

You will also need to inform the inquirer immediately that no guarantee can be given that any case submitted to the Tribunal might be adjudicated in time for reception into the Church on Holy Saturday of the coming year.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Ask this Follow-Up Question

**(e)** When are you hoping to be married? \_\_\_\_\_

You may need to explain the process of marriage preparation in the Catholic Church and any applicable Archdiocesan marriage policies that may affect a wedding date. (See *Archdiocese of Washington Sacramental Norms and Policies*, pp. 57-74, for more information.)

## If the Inquirer responds...“3. I am married.”

### 1. Look at Questions (c) and (d)

If either the inquirer and/or the inquirer's spouse has been previously married, complete Section V and/or VI on the **Previous Marriage Information** form with the inquirer/the inquirer's spouse. If either party has a previous marriage that has not been adjudicated, the inquirer should be informed of the need to contact the Marriage Tribunal (301) 853-4543 as soon as possible and, if necessary, start a case. The local pastor should be informed of the same.

You will also need to inform the inquirer immediately that no guarantee can be given that any case submitted to the Tribunal might be adjudicated in time for reception into the Church on Holy Saturday of the coming year.<sup>2</sup>

*Continued on reverse side.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Policy Regarding Reception into the Church and Scheduling of Weddings in the Case of Pending Marriage Cases. (Archdiocese of Washington Clergy Newsletter, August, 1999.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**If the Inquirer responds...“3. I am married.” (Continued)**

**2. Ask these Follow-Up Questions**

**(g)** Was your spouse baptized as a Catholic?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

If neither the inquirer nor the inquirer’s spouse was baptized as a Catholic, then no further questions are needed.

If either the inquirer or his/her spouse was baptized as a Catholic, then you will need to ask:

**(h)** Was your marriage witnessed by a Catholic priest or deacon?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

If “Yes,” then no further questions are needed.

If “No,” then you will need to ask:

**(i)** Did you receive a dispensation to have someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon witness your marriage?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No    ☐ I am not sure

If someone was baptized as a Catholic and did not either (1) have their marriage witnessed by a Catholic priest or deacon or (2) receive a dispensation from this requirement, you will need to inform the local pastor to determine if the marriage will need to be convalidated.

**If the Inquirer responds...“5. I am divorced and I have not remarried.”**

**1. Ask this Follow-Up Question**

**(a)** Is your previous spouse alive?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

**“Yes”**—If the former spouse is alive, the inquirer may be received into the Church without having their previous marriage adjudicated. However, the following points must be addressed before taking this route.

While the adjudication of a previous marriage for someone who is divorced and not remarried is not strictly required to be received into the Church, there is a certain advisability for someone in this situation to contact the Marriage Tribunal and start a case, if necessary, if a future marriage is a possibility. If an inquirer chooses not to have a previous marriage adjudicated, the inquirer will need to understand that if he/she is received into the Church and then wants to marry again, he/she will have to have the previous marriage adjudicated at that point and, if the previous marriage is determined to be valid, he/she will not be able to marry in the Church until that marital bond is dissolved upon the death of the former spouse. If the inquirer clearly understands this, then they may be received into the Church.

**“No”**—If the former spouse has died, there is no impediment to the person being received into the Church because there is no existing marital bond. People sometimes think that even if they are divorced and their former spouse has died, they still cannot become Catholic. This is not true.

# Previous Marriage Information

Complete this form if an inquirer has been previously married (Section V) or if an inquirer's spouse or fiancé(e) has been previously married (Section VI, on reverse.)



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Inquirer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## V. Inquirer's Previous Marriage(s) \_\_\_\_\_

- Complete questions (a) to (e) for each previous marriage. Copy form for additional marriages.

### *First Previous Marriage*

(a) Former Spouse's Current Name:

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle/Maiden: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Has your former spouse ever been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am not sure.

If you answered "Yes" please provide the following information:

- In what denomination was your former spouse baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Date of Marriage \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Type of marriage ceremony: ☐ Catholic ceremony ☐ Non-Catholic ceremony

If you answered "Non-Catholic ceremony" please provide the following information:

☐ Religious ceremony ☐ civil ceremony ☐ tribal ceremony

(e) Have you or your former spouse ever petitioned for an annulment from a Church Tribunal?

☐ Yes ☐ No, to my knowledge ☐ An annulment is currently in process

If "Yes," was the annulment granted? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I do not know.

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: City, State (Country, if not USA.): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Declaration of Nullity verified by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### *Second Previous Marriage*

(a) Former Spouse's Current Name:

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle/Maiden: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Has your former spouse ever been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am not sure.

*If you answered "Yes" please provide the following information:*

- In what denomination was your former spouse baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

**(c) Date of Marriage** \_\_\_\_\_

**(d) Type of marriage ceremony:**    ☐ Catholic ceremony                      ☐ Non-Catholic ceremony

*If you answered "Non-Catholic ceremony" please provide the following information:*

- ☐ Religious ceremony    ☐ civil ceremony    ☐ tribal ceremony

**(e) Have you or your former spouse ever petitioned for an annulment from a Church Tribunal?**

- ☐ Yes    ☐ No, to my knowledge    ☐ An annulment is currently in process

If "Yes," was the annulment granted?    ☐ Yes                      ☐ No                      ☐ I do not know.

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: City, State (Country, if not USA.): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Declaration of Nullity verified by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **VI. Previous Marriage(s) of an Inquirer's Fiancé(e)/Spouse** **=====**

- Complete for an inquirer's fiancé(e)/spouse who has been previously married.
- Complete questions (a) to (e) for each previous marriage. Copy form for additional marriages.

**Name of Inquirer's Fiancé(e)/Spouse:** \_\_\_\_\_

### ***First Previous Marriage***

**(a) Former Spouse's Current Name:**

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle/Maiden: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

**(b) Has his or her former spouse ever been baptized?**    ☐ Yes    ☐ No    ☐ I am not sure.

*If you answered "Yes" please provide the following information:*

- In what denomination was his or her former spouse baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

**(c) Date of Marriage** \_\_\_\_\_

**(d) Type of marriage ceremony:**    ☐ Catholic ceremony                      ☐ Non-Catholic ceremony

*If you answered "Non-Catholic ceremony" please provide the following information:*

- ☐ Religious ceremony    ☐ civil ceremony    ☐ tribal ceremony

**(e) Has the inquirer's fiancé(e)/spouse or his or her former spouse ever petitioned for an annulment from a Church Tribunal?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No, to my knowledge      ☐ An annulment is currently in process

If "Yes," was the annulment granted?      ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ I do not know.

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: City, State (Country, if not USA.): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Declaration of Nullity verified by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Second Previous Marriage***

**(a) Former Spouse's Current Name:**

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle/Maiden: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

**(b) Has his or her former spouse ever been baptized?**      ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ I am not sure.

*If you answered "Yes" please provide the following information:*

▪ In what denomination was his or her former spouse baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

**(c) Date of Marriage** \_\_\_\_\_

**(d) Type of marriage ceremony:**      ☐ Catholic ceremony      ☐ Non-Catholic ceremony

*If you answered "Non-Catholic ceremony" please provide the following information:*

☐ Religious ceremony      ☐ civil ceremony      ☐ tribal ceremony

**(e) Has the inquirer's fiancé(e)/spouse or his or her former spouse ever petitioned for an annulment from a Church Tribunal?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No, to my knowledge      ☐ An annulment is currently in process

If "Yes," was the annulment granted?      ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ I do not know.

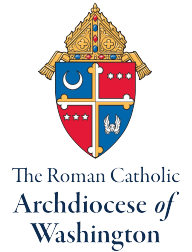
Case No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: City, State (Country, if not USA.): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Declaration of Nullity verified by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Christian Initiation Information

*Use this form to record important dates related to the Christian Initiation process  
and other information for sacramental record keeping.*



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Has not been baptized      ☐ Has been baptized      ☐ Is not sure if he/she has been baptized

Father's First and Last Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's First and Maiden Names: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. For an Unbaptized Person

1. Date of Participation in the Rite of Acceptance: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of Participation in the Rite of Election: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date of Reception of Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Sponsor(s)/Godparent(s): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Priest Conferring Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Confirmation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. For a Baptized Person

1. Baptismal Certificate received by \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of Participation in the Rite of Welcoming: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date of Participation in the Call to Continuing Conversion: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Date of Reception of Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Sponsor(s): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Confirmation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Previous Marriage Information

Use this section to keep a record of the various steps completed in the annulment process. Copy additional pages for additional marriages. The Archdiocese of Washington Marriage Tribunal phone number is (301) 853-4543.

#### 1. Annulment process for ☐ Inquirer ☐ Inquirer's Spouse/Fiancé(e)

- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Pastor/Parish Clergy has been informed.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Inquirer has been informed about annulment process and potential time frame.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Marriage Tribunal has been contacted for annulment paperwork.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Inquirer has submitted paperwork to the Marriage Tribunal.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Marriage has been adjudicated.

Decision: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribunal Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: City, State (Country, if not USA.): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Declaration of Nullity verified by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Annulment process for ☐ Inquirer ☐ Inquirer's Spouse/Fiancé(e)

- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Pastor/Parish Clergy has been informed.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Inquirer and has been informed about annulment process and potential time frame.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Inquirer's Spouse/Fiancé(e) has been informed about annulment process.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Marriage Tribunal has been contacted for annulment paperwork.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Inquirer's Spouse/Fiancé(e) has submitted paperwork to the Marriage Tribunal.
- ☐ \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Marriage has been adjudicated.

Decision: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribunal Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: City, State (Country, if not USA.): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Declaration of Nullity verified by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Child/Teen Inquirer Information Form



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*Information is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission.*

Child/Teen's Name:

First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth (City, State, Country, if not USA): \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Parent/Guardian Information

Parents'/Guardians' Names and present religious affiliation, if any:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Phone No. to Call: (Daytime) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening/Weekend) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Religious History

1. Has your child/teen ever been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am not sure.

*If you answered "Yes" to Question 1., please provide the following information:*

(a) In what denomination was your child/teen baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Date or approximate age when your child/teen was baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Place of Baptism (Name of church/denomination): \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Address, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

(e) City and State, if known; Country, if not USA: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If your child/teen was baptized as a Catholic, check those sacraments he/she has received.

☐ Penance (Confession) ☐ Eucharist (First Communion) ☐ Confirmation

## IV. Family Information

---

List the name(s) of any siblings. (e.g. John—Brother; Jean—Stepsister.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. Learning Style

---

Not all people learn in the same way. You can help your child get as much out of this process as possible by sharing about your child's learning abilities.

**In what ways do you think your child enjoys learning?**

Listening (*Lecture; Storytelling*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Seeing (*Looking at pictures; Identifying symbols; Watching a video.*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reading (*At what grade level does your child read? Does your child enjoy reading?*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Writing (*At what level is your child's writing skills? Does your child like to write stories/keep a journal?*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hands On (*Does your child enjoy doing projects or making crafts?*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Group Work (*Does your child enjoy working with others?*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It will help to know your child's strongest attributes and challenges.

For example: "Mary is very outgoing and gets excited when she is having fun. She becomes quiet when she doesn't understand something. She works well with other children. Mary also has a 30% hearing loss in her left ear. She may not hear you if you are standing behind her and speaking normally."

\_\_\_\_\_

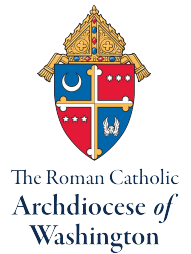
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Child/Teen Christian Initiation Information



*Use this form to record important dates related to the Child/Teen Christian  
Initiation process for sacramental record keeping.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Has not been baptized    ☐ Has been baptized    ☐ Is not sure if he/she has been baptized

Father's First and Last Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's First and Maiden Names: \_\_\_\_\_

## **I. For a Person Who Is Not Baptized** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Date of Participation in the Rite of Acceptance: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of Participation in the Rite of Election: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date of Reception of Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Priest Conferring Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Confirmation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **II. For a Baptized Person** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Baptismal Certificate received by \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of Participation in the Rite of Welcoming: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date of Participation in the Call to Continuing Conversion: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Date of Reception of Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Confirmation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Sponsor/Godparent Contact Information

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Daytime) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening/Weekend) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Daytime) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening/Weekend) \_\_\_\_\_

# Sponsor/Godparent Information

Name: (First and Last) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Please initial after reading the following paragraphs.)* I understand that as a sponsor/godparent I am to live a life in harmony with the nature of this responsibility, meaning, for example, that I regularly attend Mass and receive the Eucharist; I am not in an irregular marriage, etc. I attest that I have received the sacrament of confirmation and that I am at least 16 years old.

I also understand that being a sponsor/godparent is a commitment of time. I will attend weekly sessions for catechesis, the celebrations of liturgical rites and other initiation-related events to the best of my ability.

## I. Contact Information

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Daytime) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening/Weekend) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Other) \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Sacramental History

1. Parish Where You Were Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip, Country if not USA: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Parish Where You Are Currently Registered: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## For Office Use

Godparent/Sponsor for: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date completed Sponsor Formation: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

# Certificate of Sponsorship for

---

*(Name of Catechumen or Candidate)*

I RECOGNIZE that a sponsor/godparent has a special relationship to the person who is to be baptized or confirmed. Along with entire parish community, a sponsor/godparent serves as a model of Christian living for an individual as that person is renewed and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

WITH THAT UNDERSTANDING, I recognize that in order to serve as a sponsor/godparent, a person must:

- ✓ Be a Catholic who has been baptized, received the Eucharist and been confirmed, and who is currently living a sacramental life (*i.e.* attending Mass regularly) and is not in an irregular marriage;
- ✓ Be at least sixteen years of age;
- ✓ Lead a life of faith in harmony with the ministry they are undertaking, and have the intention of undertaking the ministry of a sponsor;
- ✓ Not be a parent of the individual to be confirmed.

**I HEREBY ACCEPT these responsibilities and testify that I fulfill the requirements to serve in the ministry of sponsor/godparent.**

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*Signature of Sponsor/Godparent*

**I HEREBY TESTIFY that** *(name of sponsor/godparent)* \_\_\_\_\_ **is a registered member of** *(name of parish)* \_\_\_\_\_ **and affirm that he/she fulfills all the requirements to serve in the ministry of sponsor/godparent.**

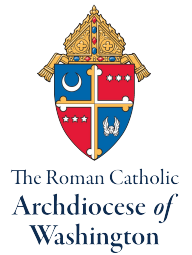
*[Parish Seal]*

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*Signature of Pastor*

*Date*

# Request for Faculties to Confirm Baptized Catholics



## Instructions

“The Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. A priest can validly confer this sacrament only if he has the faculty to do so, either from the general law<sup>1</sup> or by way of a special grant from the competent authority. If, during the celebration of the Easter Vigil a priest wishes to confirm a Catholic previously baptized but uncatechized and who has participated in the parish’s RCIA program, he must make this request in writing to the Vicar General in Curia. This delegation is required for the *validity* of the sacrament.” (Archdiocese of Washington *Sacramental Norms and Policies*, p. 22)

In accord with the Archdiocesan policy reprinted above, please use Form RCIA—G ***Request for Faculties to Confirm Baptized Catholics*** to request faculties to confirm an individual who was baptized as a Catholic. Copy this form onto parish letterhead and complete and return to the Chancery at least one month before the anticipated confirmation date.

**Please observe the following distinctions when requesting faculties to confirm a baptized Catholic:**

**I. A baptized, uncatechized Catholic** is someone who was baptized as an infant but received neither the sacrament of Confirmation nor the Eucharist. In other words, he or she is preparing for the completion of the sacraments of initiation through **both** Confirmation and Eucharist. The Church provides for this individual to participate in the Christian initiation (RCIA) process (cf. “Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist” RCIA, n. 400ff) including certain liturgical rites.

Baptized, uncatechized Catholics may be confirmed at the Easter Vigil (cf. RCIA, n. 409) provided that faculties to confirm these individuals are requested.

**II. A baptized, catechized Catholic** is someone who has received the Eucharist and has lived as a Catholic (e.g. regular attendance at Mass, etc.) but was never confirmed. This individual is not generally included in the above category of “uncatechized.”

Ideally, individuals who only need to be confirmed would participate in a formation program separate from the RCIA. If individuals preparing for confirmation do participate in the RCIA process for the purpose of formation, they would not participate in the liturgical rites.

These individuals would ordinarily be confirmed at the annual archdiocesan celebration of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday, which was instituted for the purpose of confirming the adult Catholics in need of this sacrament. Alternately, these individuals may receive this sacrament at a parish celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation. If an individual cannot attend one of these two events, the pastor may request faculties to confirm these individuals at the Easter Vigil.

Contact the Office of Worship (301) 853-5335 with questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Canon 883 grants the faculty of confirming an adult to a priest who “baptizes one who is no longer an infant or one already baptized whom he admits into the full communion of the Catholic Church.”

OFFICE OF CANONICAL SERVICES  
ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON, **P.O. Box 29260**, WASHINGTON, **DC 20017-0260**  
**TEL: 301.853.5325 FAX: 301.853.7674 E-MAIL: CANONICAL@ADW.ORG**

**REQUEST FOR FACULTY TO CONFIRM BAPTIZED CATHOLICS**

I request the faculty to confirm the following baptized Catholics at the Easter Vigil (or other time) on

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date Parish/City*

Priest who will confer the sacrament: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please print*

(1) Names of baptized, uncatechized Catholics who will also make their First Communion (*Please attach list of names if not enough room here*):

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(2) Names of baptized, catechized Catholics who will only be confirmed (*Please attach list of names if not enough room here*):

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Reason for requesting faculties to confirm Group (2) (*e.g. "Unable to attend Archdiocesan celebration of Confirmation on Pentecost"*):

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\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Priest Requesting Faculty E-mail Fax Date*

**Please return at least one month prior to the anticipated Confirmation date to the above address.  
For Office of Canonical Services Use:**

In accord with Canon 884, §1, I hereby grant the above-named priest the faculty to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to baptized Catholics . **Please note "faculty granted" in the parish register.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Delegate of the Archbishop*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

*Revised 11/2009*



# VALID-INVALID BAPTISMS: A ROMAN CATHOLIC GUIDE - 2014

All references are taken from: JOHN M. HUELS, *The Pastoral Companion: A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry (Third Edition)*, Quincy, IL, Franciscan Press, 2002, pp. 331-333; and from W.H. WOESTMAN, *Canon Law of the Sacraments for Parish Ministry*, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 2007, pp. 367-369.

**VALID:** The following is a list of baptisms which are considered valid, as both water (*pouring, sprinkling, or immersing the one baptized*) and the Trinitarian formula (*“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”*) are used. Also, the minister must intend to do what the Church does when baptizing.

- All Eastern non-Catholics (including all Orthodox churches)
- African Methodist Episcopal
- Amish
- Anglican / Church of England
- Assembly of God
- Baptists
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Church of the Brethren
- Church of Christ
- Church of God
- Congregational
- Disciples of Christ
- Episcopal
- Evangelical
- Evangelical United Brethren
- Liberal Catholic
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Church of the Nazarene
- Old Catholic
- Old Roman Catholic
- Polish National
- Presbyterian
- Reformed
- United Church
- United Church of Canada
- United Church of Christ
- United Reformed
- United Church of Australia
- Waldensian
- Zion

**DOUBTFUL:** The following communities have baptismal practices which are not uniform and are considered to be doubtful, requiring an investigation into each case. Some of their communities have valid baptism, others do not.

- Mennonite
- Moravian
- Pentecostal
- Seventh Day Adventist

**INVALID:** The following is a list (albeit incomplete) of baptisms considered to be invalid, due to a number of reasons.

- All non-Christian groups and communities (Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Baha 'I, Vedanta Society)
- Amana Church Society
- American Ethical Union
- Apostolic Church (“Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God”)
- Apostolic Faith Mission
- Bohemian Free Thinkers
- Children of God (“The Family”)
- Christadelphians
- Christian Community (disciples of Rudolph Steiner)
- Christians of Universalist Brotherhood
- Church of Christ, Scientist (“Christian Scientists”) – **no baptism**
- Church of Divine Science
- Church of David’s Band
- Church of Illumination
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (“Mormons”) – **as of 2001**
- Church of Revelation
- Erieside Church
- General Assembly of Spiritualists
- Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association
- House of David Church
- Iglesia ni Kristo (Philippines)
- Independent Church of Filipino Christians
- Jehovah’s Witnesses
- Masons / Freemasonry - **no baptism**
- Metropolitan Church Association
- National David Spiritual Temple of Christ Church Union
- National Spiritualist Association
- New Jerusalem Church (Swedenborg or “New Age” Church)
- Peoples Church of Chicago
- Plymouth Brethren
- Quakers (“Society of Friends”) – **no baptism**
- Reunification Church (“Moonies”)
- Salvation Army
- Shakers (“United Society of Believers”) – **no baptism**
- Spiritualist Church
- Unitarians
- Universal Emancipation Church