

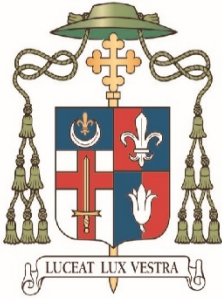
Diocese of Covington



RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual

"Through the sacraments of Christian initiation men and women are freed from the power of darkness. With Christ they die, are buried and rise again. They receive the Spirit of adoption which makes them God's sons and daughters and, with the entire people of God, they celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection," (Cf. **Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Ad Gentes, no. 14**).

RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual (Tuesday, December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception)



DIOCESE OF COVINGTON

Office of the Bishop

1125 Madison Avenue, Covington KY 41011-3115

Phone: (859) 392-1512 • Fax: (859) 392-1508

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

"Through the sacraments of Christian initiation men and women are freed from the power of darkness. With Christ they die, are buried and rise again. They receive the Spirit of adoption which makes them God's sons and daughters and, with the entire people of God, they celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection." (Cf. Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Ad Gentes, no. 14)

The expanding numbers of men and women who participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults are the fruits of our evangelization efforts. They provide a dynamic source of vitality to our parish communities. The pastors and parish directors of the RCIA are to be commended for their dedication and commitment toward these ends. I am grateful for their partnership and collaboration, a sign of sound leadership. Indeed, the entire parish becomes involved in welcoming new Christians expressing our solidarity and unity in Christ.

Each year, as I stand before the Catechumens and Candidates at the Rite of Election, I feel their deep longing and hunger as they search for the truth to set them free (John 8:32); for the Word of God to encourage them; for the Bread of Life (John 6:35) to nourish and sustain them. Their ardent longings have brought them to a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ – Lord and Savior! Through Christian initiation, they are incorporated into the Body of Christ (1Cor. 12:27), the Church. It is through Christ, the one mediator, that the Church was established and is sustained as a communion of faith, hope and charity – a visible community through which truth and grace are transmitted to all its faithful. (Cf. Vatican Council II, Lumen Gentium, no. 8)

Our untiring efforts fulfill the challenge of the "New Evangelization" hoped for by our late Holy Father, Pope Saint John Paul II, as we hasten toward the celebration of a new springtime of Christianity.

This manual provides useful and valuable assistance for parish leadership and RCIA teams. Utilizing the personnel and resources of our Diocese of Covington RCIA Advisory Committee will ensure the vibrant unity of the RCIA journey in every sector of the diocese. In this holy Year of Mercy, on this day, Tuesday, December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, I promulgate the norms and policies of this manual and urge pastors and RCIA teams to implement and utilize them in the most appropriate manner in each parish and institution.

Devotedly Yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Roger J. Foys, D.D.



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Dear Pastors of the Diocese of Covington,

We are happy to present to you this Diocese of Covington RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual for use in your parish RCIA ministry. Our goal is to guide your work and give a clear vision of the process of conversion to the Catholic Faith.

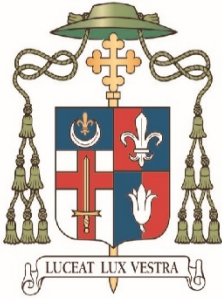
A few years ago at the Cathedral, during the celebration of the Rite of Election, Bishop Foys noticed the absence of a large number of parishes from the celebration. This absence was a cause of concern for Bishop Foys who questioned whether this absence was due to 1) ineffective evangelization at the parish level; or 2) the need for practical help with the implementation of the RCIA process at the parish level; or 3) a combination of both. Because of his concern, in August 2011, Bishop Foys formed the Diocese of Covington RCIA Advisory Committee, which is comprised of clergy, religious, and lay men and women of the Diocese who have experience in RCIA ministry in our parishes. The Bishop charged this committee with the creation of a set of guidelines to assist you and your RCIA leaders with evangelization and the implementation of the RCIA process.

The Diocese of Covington RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual is the result of three years of work by this committee. From the collective wisdom of many from around the diocese, we are pleased to offer this valuable resource to assist you in the implementation of the RCIA process in your parish. It is important to note that the committee had no interest in reinventing the wheel. The Church's instructions and rites are clearly spelled out. The purpose of this manual is to help you put them into practice in your parish.

We pray you will receive this manual as a practical gift which will ease your efforts in bringing people to Christ in His Church to the glory of God!

In Christ,

Diocese of Covington RCIA Advisory Committee



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Dear RCIA Director/Coordinator/DRE,

Since Bishop Foys became Bishop of the Diocese of Covington, he has been assessing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) within the Diocese. He believes that the RCIA, as decreed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and approved by the National Conference of Bishops, is of “vital concern to God’s people, the Church, which hands on and nourishes the faith received from the apostles” (RCIA General Introduction, no. 7). Therefore in the fall of 2011, Bishop Foys directed Isaak Isaak, Director of Department of Catechesis and Formation, to form a Diocesan RCIA Advisory Committee. This Advisory Committee’s purpose was to develop an RCIA manual to assist our pastors, who are our parishes’ chief evangelizers and shepherds of the faith, in implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. You, as an RCIA leader, have the important task of implementing the RCIA with your pastor’s guidance and direction, as well as educating the members of your parish community in their role as evangelizers. Bishop Foys expects that this manual will assist your pastor and you in more effectively implementing the RCIA.

While the RCIA contains required elements, it nevertheless has room for adaptations to fit the needs of different parishes and situations. In light of this reality, Bishop Foys has promulgated this RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual for the Diocese of Covington. It points to the required elements (designated in red) as well as those that can be adapted to best implement the RCIA in all of our parishes, so richly diverse in size, resources, number of inquirers, and many other ways. This manual emphasizes the Pastoral, Catechetical, and Liturgical Aspects of the RCIA process and is organized according to the RCIA ritual book. It includes resource suggestions and Appendices with sample forms to assist you.

The Diocese of Covington RCIA Advisory Committee is available to you as an ongoing resource in implementing the RCIA process in your parish. We are grateful for all you do in your parish with the RCIA. We are grateful to have the opportunity to serve you in this process. May God bless you in this holy work.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Diocese of Covington RCIA Advisory Committee



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Dear Parish Pastors and RCIA Leaders:

We are including in the Diocese of Covington RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual this sample from the Diocese of Lansing which gives some ideas on following a “year-round catechumenate”. While a year-round catechumenate is the ideal, it can be difficult to implement depending on the resources and number of inquirers at any given parish. There are also various ways to put this idea into practice. This sample from the Diocese of Lansing is just one example.

We hope you will find this additional resource useful. While it is not intended to be a “roadmap” or a set of specific directives for use in our diocese, we believe it is one resource among many that may provide you with ideas that for implementing the RCIA your parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Diocese of Covington RCIA Advisory Committee



Diocese of Covington

RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual

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Introduction

I. Introduction

- A. Definition** – The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the process established by the Catholic Church by which individuals become members of the Church. The pinnacle moment of the process is the celebration of the Sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) normally celebrated at the Easter Vigil. In the reception of these Sacraments, an individual becomes a full member of the Catholic Church. However, the RCIA is a spiritual journey which begins well before the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and continues beyond the Easter Vigil and extends into the entire earthly life of every member of the Church.

“The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful.” (RCIA Introduction, no. 4) It consists of four major “periods” punctuated by liturgical rites. In very simple form, the structure of the RCIA looks like this:

Period of the Precatechumenate

Rite of Acceptance

Period of the Catechumenate

Rite of Election

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

Rites (Celebration) of the Sacraments of Initiation

Period of Mystagogy

- B. Implementation** – In implementing the RCIA process, three equally important aspects of the process should be considered: pastoral, catechetical, and liturgical. These three aspects can be explained as follows:
1. *Pastoral Aspect* – The pastoral aspect of the RCIA is critical to the process and to the conversion of the participants both within the RCIA process and during their entire lives as Catholic Christians. The parish community, under the direction and leadership of the pastor and RCIA leader, must begin pastoring the inquirers from the first moment they express interest in the Church. Each person who comes to the RCIA process will differ in his or her lifestyle, state in life, religious background, and motivation for seeking the Church. The pastoral aspect focuses on the individual person

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and where conversion needs to take place in order that their hearts are open to the graces of the Sacraments. We need to know the participants in order to serve each of them as individuals. People will learn about the Church not only from our formal catechesis, but also through our welcome and witness. The parish community should love them into the Church.

Some examples of pastoral concerns that should be given attention during the RCIA process (not a complete list):

- a) Welcoming the participants
- b) Respecting where each person is in the conversion process
- c) Assisting them in the conversion process
- d) Dealing with pastoral issues such as verifying baptismal status, identifying and regularizing marriage irregularities, and identifying and modifying lifestyles incompatible with the faith (e.g., premarital cohabitation, homosexual lifestyles, etc.).
- e) Discerning readiness to move to the next period at each stage of the process

2. *Catechetical Aspect* – The catechetical aspect of the RCIA generally gets the most attention. Often the RCIA is mistakenly viewed as a purely catechetical process – *those classes people take to become Catholic*. While it is not the only aspect of the RCIA, the catechetical aspect is certainly important and is the dominant aspect during the catechumenate stage of the RCIA. It is important to note that catechesis is much more than simply imparting knowledge of the teachings of the faith. The methodology and scope of catechesis varies by the different periods of the RCIA process. These variations will be highlighted throughout this manual.
3. *Liturgical Aspect* – The liturgical aspect of the RCIA refers to the preparation for and celebration of the rites. This includes both the major rites which are the bridges between each stage of the process, as well as the minor rites, such as the Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, the Scrutinies, and blessings and exorcisms. Participation in the Mass and celebrations of the liturgy of the Word within the catechumenate are also considered in the liturgical aspect of the RCIA.

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- a) Pastors and RCIA leaders must pay particular attention to the proper celebration of these rites within the RCIA. While some rites are required and some are optional, as many as possible should be celebrated for the benefit of the catechumens and candidates, who should be given adequate explanation and instruction as to their meaning prior to their celebration. Catechumens and candidates should also have an opportunity to reflect on their meaning, significance and impact on their Christian journey after the rites are celebrated. This understanding and reflection will allow them to experience more profoundly the liturgical aspect of the catechumenate.
- b) Why is this liturgical experience so important for the catechumens and candidates during their formation? We, as Catholic Christians, are a liturgical people. The Latin phrase, *lex orandi, lex credendi* sums this up: the law of prayer is the law of belief. For Catholic Christians, what we pray is what we believe. The beliefs of the Church are present and evident in the liturgy, whether in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, Liturgy of the Hours – the prayer of the Church, the rites proper to the reception of the Sacraments, or any of the other minor rites and blessings given by the Church to her ministers for use in celebrating with her members, including those belonging to the RCIA. The catechesis of the RCIA should enrich and expand on what is already present in the liturgical prayer of the Church.

- C. History** – A brief history of the Catechumenate is available in the Appendix for this section.

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D. A Note Regarding Important Terminology – One encounters the use of both terms *sponsor* and *godparent* when referring to those who support a person seeking full initiation into the Catholic Church. The term *sponsor* is used more often because this encompasses all those who support the catechumens or candidates, while a *godparent* is a term used to describe a more specific subset of the sponsors, who fulfill a very specific role. In other words, every godparent is a sponsor, but not all sponsors will be godparents. A more detailed explanation can be found in section V.A. (“What is a Sponsor?”) of this manual. This manual will use the term *sponsor* throughout to refer to both sponsors and godparents, except where it is necessary to make a distinction.

E. Abbreviations Used in this Manual:

RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Note: all quotations from the RCIA ritual book are taken from the RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS © 1988, Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i> , “Code of Canon Law”
CT	<i>Catechesi tradendae</i> , “On Catechesis in Our Time”; Apostolic Exhortation issued October 16, 1979 by Pope John Paul II
LG	Lumen Gentium “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”, Vatican II
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis
NDC	National Directory for Catechesis
USCCA	United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Notes

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II. The Parish RCIA Team

A. The Church instructs that the RCIA process should involve the **whole community**: “The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place *within the community of the faithful*. . . the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.” (RCIA, no. 4, emphasis added) There should be involvement from the faithful in many aspects of the RCIA process. The catechumens should have an opportunity to meet a variety of people from the parish community who will offer the witness of their Christian lives. Some members of the community should be called to serve on the parish RCIA team, whose role is to assist the pastor and RCIA leader in welcoming, forming, and praying for the catechumens to lead them to become members of the Body of Christ.

B. Discernment and invitation of potential team members

1. Pastors come to know their parishioners through their attendance at weekly Sunday Mass, their participation in parish ministries, and their presence at other various parish worship services. These connections with parishioners are opportunities for pastors to discern potential RCIA team members. Team members should be:
 - a) fully initiated, active, practicing Catholics who are participating in the sacramental life of the Church.
 - b) Catholics who know, believe, and are living their daily lives faithful to the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church.
 - c) Catholics who recognize and accept their own ongoing conversion through daily prayer and frequent examination of their relationships with God and others.
 - d) Catholics who are willing and eager to share their faith experiences with others.
 - e) Catholics who have varying gifts and talents needed within the RCIA process.
 - f) Catholics who are willing to learn more about their Church and the RCIA and to commit themselves to the RCIA process.

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- g) Catholics who are able to work pastorally with the participants, sponsors, RCIA team, RCIA director or coordinator, and the pastor. This involves acting in prudence, charity and humility in matters of catechesis and discernment and ultimately submitting to the judgment of the RCIA Director and Pastor in all matters.
 - h) Some team members may need to meet additional requirements based on their specific role on the team. (See section II.E.6.)
2. If someone other than the pastor will be overseeing the RCIA (director or coordinator), the person should be chosen by the pastor, whether the position is paid or volunteer. An application and interview process should be used. Qualifications for this position should include all those listed for any team member. Additional qualifications for a coordinator or director of RCIA are as follows:
- a) Directors or Coordinators of any RCIA program must hold at a minimum the Advanced Certification Certificate from the Diocese of Covington or a B.A. in Theology, and optimally a Masters in Theology or other related degree. Other specialized education or training may be considered with approval from the Diocesan Director of Catechesis and Formation.
 - b) Previous experience working with the RCIA process as a team member or coordinator
 - c) Knowledge of the RCIA process through past education and experience
 - d) Organizational, leadership, communication, and management skills
 - e) Pastoral skills for working with RCIA non-Catholics, team, parish staff, and parishioners
3. *Identifying and Inviting Potential Team Members*
- a) The pastor, RCIA director, or other existing RCIA team members may identify parishioners who are potential team members and recommend them to the RCIA director.
 - b) The RCIA director would meet with the potential team member to discuss the RCIA process and complete the “Interview Questions for a Potential Team Member” form (Sample form can be found in the appendix for this section).

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- c) The pastor, the RCIA director, and possibly other existing RCIA team members should discern together, and the RCIA director should make a recommendation to the pastor for final approval.
- d) Upon approval by the pastor, the RCIA director should extend a formal invitation to be part of the RCIA team.

C. Education of team members

1. The *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) calls for the initial and ongoing formation of catechists. It states, “Programs of formation should be designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples in Christ,”(NDC, p. 235). In addition to acquiring knowledge and skills, “Catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation.” (NDC, p. 236)
2. The *Code of Canon Law* (CIC) states: “Local ordinaries are to see to it that catechists are duly prepared to fulfill their task correctly, namely, that continuing formation is made available to them, that they acquire a proper knowledge of the Church’s teaching, and that they learn in theory and practice the norms proper to the pedagogical disciplines.” (CIC, no. 780)
3. *Diocesan Catechist Certification Process* – **The requirements outlined in this section must be fulfilled only by RCIA team members who will act as catechists – teaching the faith during catechetical sessions.**
 - a) The *National Directory for Catechesis* states that bishops have the primary responsibility for catechesis in the local church and, more specifically, for the formation and certification of catechists (NDC, p. 218). As the bishop’s delegate, the pastor has a more concrete and practical role to play in carrying out this responsibility. The Directory goes on to state that pastors are to ensure that catechists are well formed for their task (NDC, p. 221). At the parish level, the catechetical leader administers the process which includes a supervision component, a mentoring relationship with his/her catechists, assisting the catechists in the assessment of learning needs, monitoring of progress, record keeping, and submission of applications to the Department of Catechesis and Formation for

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approval and the issuing of the certificate. The catechetical leader also works with the catechists in their ongoing formation process.

- b) To comply with CIC no.780, the Diocese of Covington has established a catechist certification process based on the guidelines of the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC, no. 238) which lists the dimensions of formation as being, knowing, and know-how. Therefore, the requirements for certification focus on spiritual formation, knowledge about doctrine and about the persons who are being catechized, and skill in conveying the Christian message. Designed to promote catechists' growth in faith, it also supplies them with the information and ability to fulfill their responsibilities. Participation in the diocesan catechist certification process is not the only way that formation occurs. Active involvement in parish life offers many opportunities for ongoing spiritual development. However, obtaining certification assures that catechists have met basic standards for their ministry.
- c) Certification as a catechist in the Diocese of Covington is a means of publicly recognizing the commitment that a catechist has made to continuous formation in faith, knowledge and skills. It is the bishop who, through his administrative staff, certifies catechists. Attaining certification attests that the catechist has met a standard of preparation and competency that has been established by the diocese and called for in the *General Directory for Catechesis*. Catechists who become certified can be proud of what they have accomplished and feel confident that they are fulfilling the requirements of the local Church for this vital ministry.
- d) Basic Certification Requirements for Catechists in the Diocese of Covington:
 - (1) Catechetical Process (*Five Hours*)
 - (2) Basic Beliefs (*Five Hours*)
 - (3) Introduction to Scripture (*Five Hours*)
 - (4) Introduction to Catholic Spirituality (*Ten Hours*)
 - (5) VIRTUS Training (*if working with children*)

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- e) Once Basic Certification is achieved, catechists may choose four of the following learning modules for General Certification and complete the remaining four for Advanced Certification:
 - (1) Old and New Testaments (*Ten Hours*)
 - (2) Justice and Peace (*Ten Hours*)
 - (3) Christian Morality (*Ten Hours*)
 - (4) Liturgy and Rites (*Ten Hours*)
 - (5) Sacraments (*Ten Hours*)
 - (6) Jesus (*Ten Hours*)
 - (7) Church History (*Ten Hours*)
 - (8) Church: Vision, Mission, Ministry (*Ten Hours*)
 - f) Basic presentation / teaching skills should be a prerequisite or training should be made available to acquire these skills
4. *Education of Team Members About the RCIA Process*
- a) All members of the RCIA team, regardless of whether they are catechists, should have a knowledge and understanding of the RCIA process. All team members should be able to:
 - (1) demonstrate an understanding of the periods of RCIA and the importance and celebration of the major liturgical rites.
 - (2) recognize the differences between catechumens, candidates in RCIA and make adaptations as needed.
 - (3) incorporate active listening into discernment throughout the initiation process.
 - b) Based on each team member's role, the knowledge and skills to lead or assist with the following tasks may need to be acquired through training at the parish level or through various diocesan workshops or other approved courses.
 - (1) Facilitate a dismissal session based on the Sunday scriptures
 - (2) Facilitate a catechetical session based on a sound catechetical process (catechists only)
 - (3) Plan and lead a service of the Word during the catechumenate, including the presentations, anointings and minor exorcisms

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- (4) Invite and train parishioners in the responsibility to sponsor catechumens and candidates on the RCIA journey
 - (5) Incorporate opportunities for social outreach ministry for catechumens and candidates
 - (6) Promote parish reflection and welcome in the mystagogical period by planning sessions for neophytes and parishioners
 - (7) Design ways to lead the assembly into effective participation in the rites
5. Other resources to assist RCIA team members in developing their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith:
 - a) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 - b) *The Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 - c) *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*
 - d) *General Directory for Catechesis*
 - e) *National Directory for Catechesis*
 - f) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website (www.usccb.org)
 - g) EWTN and other Catholic media outlets

D. Spiritual Formation of Team Members

1. The spiritual formation of catechists was addressed by the Office of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in the document “Guide for Catechists” promulgated by Pope John Paul II in June 1993. Section II of the “Guide for Catechists”, entitled “The Catechist’s Spirituality” addresses the spiritual formation of any catechist and its wisdom and instruction can be applied to the members of the RCIA Team, whether serving as catechists or in another team role.
2. “Catechists must have a deep spirituality, i.e. they must live in the Spirit, who will help them to renew themselves continually in their specific identity.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 6) The catechist’s spirituality “should bear the marks of: openness to God's word, to the Church and to the world; authenticity of life; missionary zeal; and devotion to Mary.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 6)

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- a) Openness to the Word – “The office of catechist is basically that of communicating God's word, and so the fundamental spiritual attitude should be one of openness to this word, contained in revelation, preached by the Church, celebrated in the liturgy and lived out in the lives of saints. This is always an encounter with Christ, hidden in his word, in the Eucharist and in our brothers and sisters.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 7)
- b) Openness to the Church – “As People of God and the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church requires from catechists a deep sense of belonging and responsibility, inasmuch as they are living and active members of it; . . . The catechist's service is never an individual or isolated act, but is always deeply ecclesial.” “Openness to the Church . . . is expressed in the attachment and obedience to the Roman Pontiff, the center of unity and the bond of universal communion, so also to the Bishop, the father and guide of the particular Church.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 7)
- c) Openness to the World – “Catechists, therefore, will be open and attentive to the needs of the world, knowing that they are called to work in and for the world, without however belonging completely to it (cf. Jn 17:14-21). . . they must be thoroughly involved in the life of the society about them. . . But they must keep a supernatural outlook on life and trust in the efficacy of God's word, which does not return to Him without "*succeeding in what it was sent to do*" (Is 55:11).” (Guide for Catechists, no. 7)
- d) Authenticity of Catechesis Through the Life of the Catechist – “The work of the catechists involves their whole being. Before they preach the word, they must make it their own and live by it. . . The truth of their lives confirms their message.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 8) Therefore, catechists must have a lived faith which includes a life of prayer, participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and service to the Church and the larger community.

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- e) Missionary zeal – “. . . catechists should have a strong missionary spirit - a spirit that will be all the more effective if they are seen to be convinced of what they say and are enthusiastic and courageous, without ever being ashamed of the gospel.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 9)
 - f) Devotion to Mary – “One can say with reason and joy that Mary is a *"living catechism"*, *"mother and model of catechists"*” (Guide for Catechists, no. 10) “The spirituality of catechists . . . will be enriched by a deep devotion to the Mother of God.” (Guide for Catechists, no. 10)
3. The following are suggested means by which a catechist may achieve the spiritual formation as described above:
- a) Participate faithfully in Mass and Holy Communion on Sundays and holy days of obligation
 - b) Participate in Mass and Holy Communion daily when possible or meditate on the daily Mass readings
 - c) Make a weekly holy hour or visit to the Blessed Sacrament
 - d) Seek regular spiritual direction from the pastor or parish priest or another qualified spiritual director
 - e) Fulfill the Precepts of the Church
 - f) Pray the Holy Rosary and / or pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet (daily if possible)
 - g) Pray the Morning Offering to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (daily if possible)
 - h) Pray the Morning and Evening Prayer from the “Liturgy of the Hours”
 - i) Pray the Angelus (three times daily at 6:00 am, Noon, and 6:00 pm)
 - j) Engage in daily spiritual reading
 - k) Make an examination of conscience and Act of Contrition daily, upon retiring
 - l) Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a month
 - m) Attend a weekend retreat annually
 - n) Engage in study of and devotion to the lives of the saints, accompanied by regular prayer for their intercession

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- E. Organizing the RCIA team** – The RCIA team may be large or small depending on the size of the parish and the number of catechumens / candidates that the parish usually has in the process. If the team is large, it may be helpful to assign specific roles or tasks to various team members both to keep the process organized and to give each team member a sense of purpose and direction. Each RCIA Director is encouraged to develop a team structure that works for the specific parish and should ensure that all team members are familiar with the duties of their role or position and are properly prepared and trained to carry them out. Below are some possible roles that may be assigned to members of the RCIA team.
1. *Evangelization Coordinator* – Coordinates all efforts to publicize / promote the RCIA process
 - a) within the parish to educate the faithful about RCIA and encourage them to evangelize to their family, friends, neighbors and co-workers.
 - b) to the general public to inform the larger community about the Catholic Church and invite them to *come and see*.
 2. *Precatechumene Chairperson* – Primary team member responsible for the precatechumenate period. Responsibilities may include, but would not be limited to:
 - a) Maintaining contact with inquirers from the time of their initial interview until they celebrate the rite of acceptance and formally enter the catechumenate period
 - b) Inviting inquirers to parish liturgical celebrations and social events
 - c) Meeting with inquirers periodically to help them discern their call to the Church and to answer questions that may arise as they become familiar with the parish community and Catholic worship
 - d) Assisting the RCIA leader in discerning the readiness of the inquirers to celebrate the rite of acceptance and enter the catechumenate period
 - e) Other duties as needed based on parish needs
 3. *Catechumenate chairperson* – Primary team member responsible for the catechumenate period. Since the catechumenate period is the main focus of the RCIA process and the longest period, this position will usually be held by the pastor or RCIA leader.

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- a) Develop an ongoing curriculum for catechumenate sessions and assemble materials and resources for each session.
 - (1) Identify topics to be covered and general resources / materials to be used:
 - (a) Materials for use by catechists in delivering the sessions
 - (b) Handouts or resources for catechumens, candidates and sponsors (e.g., CCC, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) participant handouts)
 - (2) Provide a list of topics and subtopics to catechists so they know what they are expected to cover in each session.
- b) Develop a schedule for catechumenate sessions each year:
 - (1) Identify a time and reserve a location / meeting space for the sessions.
 - (2) Assign catechists for each topic; act as a resource for catechists, providing topic content and resources for developing lesson plans.
 - (3) Have all necessary materials on-hand for each session.
 - (4) Coordinate with hospitality chairperson regarding refreshments or other hospitality needs.
 - (5) Track attendance and arrange for make-up sessions if needed.
- c) Coordinate Sunday reflection on the Word (Sunday dismissal) sessions:
 - (1) Select Mass time for dismissal.
 - (2) Identify a location for the catechumens and candidates to meet for the dismissal session and provide any necessary materials.
 - (3) Identify team members to lead each session and provide any necessary materials for them to prepare for the sessions.
 - (4) Coordinate details of dismissal with presiding priests, musicians, and others involved in liturgy.

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- d) Lead or identify a leader for each catechumenate session to welcome, greet, open and close the session.
 - e) Schedule and plan any minor rites, blessings or exorcisms during this period.
 - f) Plan other catechetical and faith-sharing opportunities throughout this period (e.g., retreats).
 - g) Build relationships with catechumens and candidates and identify any issues, needs or concerns regarding their faith journey; use this in discernment of their readiness for rite of election.
 - h) Communicate with team members and sponsors regarding any issues or concerns that have come to their attention regarding the catechumens and candidates.
4. *Reflection and Discussion Leader* – Leads group prayers, spiritual reflections and discussions which are not catechetical in nature. Examples may include, but would not be limited to:
- a) Precatechumenate reflection / discernment sessions
 - b) Sunday reflection on the Word (dismissal) sessions (See more info in E.5. below.)
 - c) Group reflections or discussions during retreats
 - d) Reflections to prepare for the Scrutiny Rites
 - e) Reflections after major or minor rites
 - f) Other non-catechetical discussions, reflections or sessions as needed
 - g) In order to act in this role, a team member should be on the team for at least one year, attending the above sessions regularly and observing more experienced members of the team in preparation for this role. Catechist Certification is not required, but team members in this role should be encouraged to attend other RCIA workshops or formation opportunities as available and/or suggested by the RCIA leader.

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5. *Sunday reflection on the Word (dismissal) leader* – Lead catechumens and candidates when they are dismissed after the homily at Sunday Mass for reflection on the Word. Facilitate the discussion: be prepared with a knowledge and understanding of the day’s scripture, opening and closing prayers for the session, and thought-provoking questions appropriate to the theme of the readings to stimulate discussion.
6. *Catechist* – Delivers instruction during catechetical sessions. **In the Diocese of Covington all catechists are required to complete basic level catechist certification prior to delivering instruction and continue working toward general and advanced certification in order to continue as RCIA catechists. (See section II.C. “Education of Team Members”).**
7. *Hospitality Chairperson* – Offer hospitality to the catechumens, candidates, and sponsors when they gather. Ideas include, but would not be limited to:
 - a) Be a welcoming presence at catechetical sessions, retreats, etc.:
 - (1) Arrive early & welcome catechumens, candidates and sponsors as they arrive.
 - (2) Assist participants in finding whatever they need (e.g., restrooms, food & drink, handouts, pen or pencil, extra Bible or Catechism, etc.).
 - b) Provide or coordinate the provision of food, drink, and associated supplies.
 - c) Assist everyone in the group (catechumens, candidates, sponsors, and team) in becoming acquainted (e.g., planning icebreaker activities, using nametags, etc.).
 - d) Attend to details of comfort such as the room temperature or seating arrangements.
 - e) Bring any “hospitality” concerns, issues or ideas to the RCIA Coordinator.
 - f) Other duties as needed based on parish needs
8. *Sponsor Coordinator* – Coordinates all activities related to sponsors:
 - a) Discern possible sponsors from the parish:
 - (1) Ask for input from pastor.
 - (2) Interview potential sponsors when identified or recommended.

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- b) Develop and deliver sponsor training.
 - c) Maintain contact with sponsors throughout the RCIA process:
 - (1) Identify any questions or concerns they have.
 - (2) Obtain input regarding the person they are sponsoring for discernment of their readiness to continue to next period.
9. *Mystagogy chairperson* – Primary team member responsible for the mystagogy period.
- a) Assist RCIA leader in planning and scheduling activities during the mystagogy stage of the RCIA.
 - b) Maintain contact with neophytes during the neophyte year.
 - (1) Contact the neophytes during the mystagogy stage (Easter through Pentecost).
 - (2) Maintain regular (at least once a month) contact with the neophytes from Pentecost through the following Easter.
 - (a) Assure them of our continued prayer and support (remind team and sponsors to continue praying for them).
 - (b) Ask them how things are going; find out if they are getting involved in parish life / ministries.
 - (c) Remind them of Sunday Mass attendance, opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and other parish liturgies and devotions (e.g., Eucharistic Adoration, parish missions, special Masses, Holy Days of obligation).
 - (d) Invite them to ask any questions they may have now that they are practicing the faith they learned and received in their RCIA journey.
 - (3) Much of this contact (reminders, etc.) can be done with email or mailings, but there should be some personal contact (either by phone or in person as you see them in the community or at Mass).

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10. *Prayer coordinator* – Works with members of the team and/or other members of the parish to create a network of faithful who will regularly pray for the catechumens and candidates throughout the RCIA process; would establish this group and send reminders or specific prayer requests as needed.
11. *Other positions or chairpersons as needed* – Each parish, based on size and resources, will have its own needs. The above ideas are practical suggestions that could be used in most parish settings. Smaller parishes may not need all of these positions. Larger parishes with more resources and a larger number of catechumens and candidates may require additional organizational structure.

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III. Timing of the RCIA Process

The RCIA is not simply a program of preparation and study, but a process of conversion of heart and mind; therefore, there is no set time frame for an individual to make this spiritual journey. According to the Church, “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.” (RCIA Introduction, no. 5)

A. Precatechumenate

1. “The whole period of the precatechumenate is set aside . . . so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek baptism may mature. During this period, priests and deacons, catechists and other laypersons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the Gospel (see no. 42). The candidates are to receive help and attention so that with a purified and clearer intention they may cooperate with God’s grace. Opportunities should be provided for them to meet families and other groups of Christians.” (RCIA no. 37-38)
2. The precatechumenate should be an ongoing, year-round process such that whatever time of the year a person inquires about the Church, the period of inquiry may begin for that individual. Inquirers should not be ‘put on the back burner’ until ‘the program begins’ at another time of year. As a Church, we want to welcome any individual who makes an inquiry and immediately begin introducing them to Christ.
3. Precatechumenate activities do not need to be limited to formal teaching sessions and do not need to be weekly. These could be as simple as a personal invitation to participate in a parish devotion, liturgical celebration or even a parish social event (opportunities “to meet families and other groups of Christians”). They could be one-on-one “sessions” to answer simple questions about Christ, about the Church or about other aspects of the faith (e.g., a suitable explanation of the Gospel as mentioned in III.A.1 above).
4. See section VII of this manual which addresses the period of precatechumenate in more detail.

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5. The rite of acceptance should be celebrated at various times of the year as inquirers, through a process of co-discernment with the pastor and RCIA leader, are ready to continue to the catechumenate period. “It should not be too early, but should be delayed until the candidates, according to their own dispositions and situation, have had sufficient time to conceive an initial faith and to show the first signs of conversion.” (RCIA no. 18.1, see also nos. 18.2, 18.3)
6. See section VIII of this manual for more detailed information on the discernment process for the rite of acceptance.

B. Catechumenate

1. “The duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances, such as the program of instruction for the catechumenate, the number of catechists, deacons, and priests, the cooperation of the individual catechumens, the means necessary for them to come to the site of the catechumenate and spend time there, the help of the local community. Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough – several years if necessary – for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong.” (RCIA, no. 76)
2. The catechumenate should be an ongoing, year-round process, such that at whatever time an inquirer is ready to celebrate the rite of acceptance and enter the catechumenate period, they may begin participating in the catechumenate immediately.
3. Although there may need to be a set ‘schedule’ for formal catechetical sessions, which most parishes hold during the traditional school year months, Sunday dismissals for reflecting on the Word and other less formal sessions can be scheduled throughout the year. Although it would be optimal to offer these opportunities weekly all year long, they should at a minimum be offered once a month.
4. The sessions outside the ‘formal catechesis schedule’ will be useful for catechumens who are not yet prepared for the upcoming Easter Vigil, either because they joined the process more recently and need additional time for their conversion, or for those who are as yet unable to approach the Sacraments due to an impediment.

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5. See section IX of this manual which addresses the period of the catechumenate in more detail.

C. Purification and Enlightenment

1. This period is well-defined by the ritual book. “The period of purification and enlightenment, which the rite of election begins, customarily coincides with Lent. . . This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction. . .” (RCIA, nos.138, 139)
2. A process of co-discernment should take place involving the RCIA leader, the pastor, the sponsor and the catechumen to determine readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation. A catechumen should not be sent to the bishop for election, and therefore would not enter the period of purification and enlightenment, if he or she is not ready to receive the Sacraments at the upcoming Easter Vigil.
3. See section X of this manual for more detailed information on the discernment process for the rite of election.
4. See section XI of this manual which addresses the period of purification and enlightenment in more detail.

D. Mystagogy

1. The primary timeframe for the mystagogy, or postbaptismal catechesis, is the Easter season, “. . . its main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season.” (RCIA, no. 247) Formal, scheduled sessions or activities should take place throughout the Easter season to assist the neophytes in embracing their new faith and the sacramental life of the Church.
2. “To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday” (RCIA, no. 249). Following Pentecost, additional activities and/or catechesis could be offered.
3. If possible someone (pastor, RCIA leader, or team member) should follow up with the neophytes throughout the neophyte year to ensure their continued participation in the Sacraments. “On the anniversary of their baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment.” (RCIA, no. 250)

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Evangelization

IV. Evangelization

- A. The Church exists to evangelize** – Christ charged his Apostles with the command to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (MT 28:19-20) Therefore, it is our duty to evangelize and bring people to Christ by our own ongoing conversion and by testimony of life (CCC, no. 905; LG, no. 35). This is the first step in the RCIA process – to evangelize those around us so that they will be moved to inquire about the Catholic Church and the RCIA process. The following sections provide guidance and suggestions for a parish’s evangelization efforts.
- B. Evangelizing the parish to evangelize** – The whole parish, every member of the believing community, should heed the words of Christ in the closing of Matthew’s Gospel, and all should be involved in evangelizing and bringing others to Christ in His Church. The following are suggestions for pastors and RCIA leaders to use in order to get parish members more aware of and involved in the RCIA process, thereby raising their awareness of their own need to evangelize.
1. Increase adult faith formation efforts in the parish so that parishioners have a strong foundation of faith. An increased knowledge of our faith would better equip parents, giving them confidence in passing on the faith to their children. This should result in increased retention of educated young adults who are knowledgeable and excited about the faith. *You cannot pass on what you do not have.*
 2. Ask an RCIA team member, sponsor, or new member to give a short witness talk following parish faith-based activities or retreats (e.g., a parish Bible Study). The talk should encourage those on fire with the faith from their recent experience or retreat to go out and invite others to consider the Catholic faith.
 3. Send periodic emails or publish eye-catching notices in the parish bulletin to encourage the laity to fulfill their baptismal responsibility of evangelization. Teach parishioners to take an active role in evangelization and particularly the RCIA process.

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4. Utilize personal witness comments from past RCIA participants to encourage parishioners to invite someone they know to join the RCIA journey of faith. These may be published in parish bulletins, distributed via email, posted on bulletin boards or parish websites, or delivered by witness talks at Masses or other parish gatherings.
5. Invite those who may be considering joining the church to attend parish-sponsored devotionals (e.g., Rosary, Stations of the Cross, and Divine Mercy), speakers, and social events. Then remind the members of the parish to recognize and welcome them.
6. Include a monthly petition in the general intercessions at Masses asking God to send more people to join the RCIA journey and for the success of the RCIA process throughout the year.
7. Call for a parish day of prayer and fasting for more people to enter the RCIA process and for the success of the RCIA throughout the year.
8. Assign parishioners as prayer sponsors to pray for the ongoing conversion of each person in the RCIA process.
9. Display pictures of the catechumens and candidates in church to familiarize the parish with them and with the RCIA process.
10. Ask parishioners to give personal testimonies of faith at RCIA sessions. (e.g., someone who experienced Christ's grace during the anointing of the sick could be a personal witness to the reality and power of this sacrament)
11. Participate in a diocesan 'Evangelization Sunday' event where speakers give a witness about RCIA at Sunday Masses in the parishes and information is made available about the RCIA process in the parish.

C. Invitation – Pastors, RCIA leaders, and others in the parish should look for specific opportunities to invite those who are not Catholic to inquire about the Church through the RCIA:

1. Research all parish records to identify non-Catholic family members. Personally invite people on this list to inquire about becoming Catholic. This can be accomplished by a letter or phone call from the pastor or RCIA leader. Although all parishioners should be encouraged to invite, the priest's personal invitation can be extremely effective.
2. Use funerals as opportunities for conversion or invitation to non-Catholic friends or family members of the deceased.

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3. Use weddings as opportunities for conversion or invitation to non-Catholic friends or family members of the bride and groom.
4. Use sacramental preparation programs or meetings as opportunities to invite non-Catholic family members to consider joining the Church. Information or brochures regarding RCIA should be available at parent meetings for Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation preparation and at Marriage preparation sessions. A brief talk about RCIA could also be given by the pastor or RCIA leader at these events.
5. Invite RCIA neophytes or those who have been through RCIA in the recent past (new members or sponsors) to give brief witness talks at Masses periodically or at least on one Sunday each year. The speaker would share something about his or her spiritual journey in the RCIA and invite others to make the journey. An opportunity should be given to meet the speaker or another person involved in RCIA after Mass and printed information about the RCIA process should also be available. This could be in conjunction with an 'Evangelization Sunday' throughout the diocese or may be something planned at the parish level. The focus should be on inviting non-Catholics to inquire about the Church and Catholics to invite someone to inquire. The priest may even find a way to build a message about evangelization into the homily that day.
6. Build a social event or activity into the early stage of the RCIA process. The social element is important in fostering early cohesiveness within the RCIA group and provides an opportunity for additional invitations to those still considering inquiring.
7. Invite those who are considering RCIA to attend Eucharistic adoration, which is open to people of all faiths. This could result in a conversion experience where God can speak and be heard. During the RCIA process, Eucharistic adoration can help the participants discern whether to enter the next stage of the process.

D. Publicity – The Church, the parish, and the RCIA process should be publicized and "marketed" to the whole community, so that we are constantly extending an open invitation for people to inquire about Christ, the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church.

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1. Have an RCIA brochure available to provide essential information describing the process and contact information. (See “RCIA in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington” brochure in the Appendix of this section.)
2. Use the church marquee to display a message of invitation to inquire about the Catholic Church or to come in and join us for Mass. Change announcements often, get creative.
3. Include a statement on church bulletins and websites which provides information about RCIA and the contact information for the RCIA leader and/or pastor. Be sure people do not have to wait until next September to begin RCIA. Develop a strategy for year round inquiry and pre-catechumenate.
4. Create an RCIA information table in the church or vestibule which contains information on what RCIA is, whom to call, and how to begin the process.
5. Have RCIA business cards available which can be given to anyone interested in becoming Catholic. Cards should give contact information for the pastor or RCIA leader.
6. Utilize social media. Create a Facebook page for RCIA that could include: upcoming events, photos of the participants, links to well-respected Catholic pages such as EWTN, Word on Fire and The Vatican. Create a Twitter account in order to communicate rapidly and provide timely articles to the RCIA group and parish. Facebook and Twitter may be effective in reaching teens and young adults.
7. Priests and all the faithful should speak publicly about RCIA outside of the parishes. Everywhere they go they need to inform people about RCIA.
8. Run ads in the Enquirer, Recorder (and other local papers) on a year round basis.
9. New members of the parish should receive a new parishioner package containing an RCIA pamphlet explaining the RCIA process. *Note:* Include the use of Holy Scripture in material targeted to inviting non-Catholics. This demonstrates the reverence the Catholic Church has for scripture.

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- E. Suggestions to be handled at the Diocesan level for use by parishes:**
1. Utilize Sacred Heart Radio, The Messenger, and local publications to invite people to inquire about the Catholic Church at their local parish. Ads could be run in the spring and summer to generate interest for those parishes that begin their catechumenate in August or September.
 2. Ask RCIA team members or new members to give a short witness talk at all Diocesan marriage preparation (pre-Cana) sessions to extend an invitation to non-catholic participants to inquire about the Catholic Church. This may be more powerful and effective than the future spouse asking or may reinforce an invitation already made by the Catholic future spouse.

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Initial Inquirer Interview

V. Initial Inquirer Interview

A. Welcome the inquirer on behalf of the Church – It is essential that those who desire information regarding entry into the Catholic faith are greeted in a warm and welcoming fashion. Even though the inquirer may only be seeking general information, the welcoming process is best achieved within the context of a formal meeting with the pastor or RCIA leader. At this inquiry stage, the person may not be ready to commit to the RCIA, but rather is taking a ‘snap-shot’ of the process. The purpose of the welcoming interview is primarily to help the inquirer feel at ease, reflecting your desire to offer assistance, providing the necessary information, and answering questions in order to help the inquirer come to a decision regarding entry into the process.

1. The Sunday parish bulletin might be a good way to introduce your parish to the inquirer. Explain what they might find in the bulletin, especially Mass times and times and dates of the RCIA.
2. Introduce the inquirer to the parish web site. It would be beneficial to review what they will find on the web site by providing a quick preview.
3. If time permits, it would be beneficial to escort the inquirer on a guided tour of the parish campus and the Church while explaining the uniqueness of the parish community.

B. Explain the RCIA process (set expectations)

1. A brief summary of the RCIA process in the Catholic Church should be given. This might be best achieved with a printed pamphlet or prepared document outlining the RCIA process and its stages which can be read at their convenience. It is always a good idea to review this information with the inquirer in person. (See “RCIA in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington” brochure in the Appendix of the Evangelization section.)
2. Provide the dates and times of the meetings. If specific dates are not available, the usual day and time of meetings should be given. A past or current schedule would be helpful here so that the inquirer will have a visual means to follow your explanation.
3. Information regarding where the sessions will be held and their length will help the inquirer have a better grasp of time commitment, travel accommodations, and baby-sitting needs.

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Initial Inquirer Interview

C. Gather personal information

1. At some point during the interview, provide the inquirer with a registration form. (suggest use of the “Diocese of Covington Inquirer Information Form” in the Appendix of this section) In doing this you show your hope that they will participate in the RCIA process while assuring them that you will help them along the way.
2. The information gathered should include:
 - a) Inquirer’s faith background and reasons for seeking the Church
 - b) Baptismal status (See “How Baptismal Status Determines if One is an Inquirer, Candidate, or returning Catholic” flow chart in the Appendix of this section.)
 - c) Marital status and marriage history (See “When the One Who Seeks to Become Catholic and/or Their Spouse Have Been Divorced” and “Tribunal Form Determination for Marriage Cases” in the Appendix of this section.)
3. Either at this meeting or at a future meeting, the information gathered on the form should be discussed in more detail in order to get to know the inquirer and his or her pastoral and catechetical needs.
4. If necessary based on the information obtained from the Inquirer Information Form, any necessary steps for dealing with marriage or sacramental issues should be explained at this time or at the next meeting.

- D.** Thank the inquirer for the opportunity to meet with them, offer to follow-up with a letter, phone call or e-mail, and state your willingness to make yourself available if they have a further need of assistance. A future meeting date could be scheduled in order to show your interest in getting to know the inquirer better. A business card would be helpful here.

Notes

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RCIA Sponsors

VI. RCIA Sponsors

A. What is a Sponsor?

1. One encounters the use of both terms *sponsor* and *godparent* when referring to those who support a person seeking full initiation into the Catholic Church. The term *sponsor* is used more often because this encompasses all those who support the catechumens or candidates, while a *godparent* is a term used to describe a more specific subset of the sponsors, who fulfill a very specific role. In other words, every godparent is a sponsor, but not all sponsors will be godparents. A more detailed explanation follows. This manual will use the term *sponsor* throughout to refer to both sponsors and godparents, except where it is necessary to make a distinction.
2. A sponsor accompanies any person seeking full initiation into the Catholic Church.
 - a) Both unbaptized catechumens and baptized candidates must have a sponsor.
 - b) The sponsor should accompany the catechumen or candidate at catechetical sessions, all rites, and other RCIA events (e.g., retreats).
 - c) The sponsor does not need to attend the sessions when the catechumens and candidates are dismissed from Mass to reflect on the Word.
 - d) If desired, the catechumen or candidate may have someone other than the RCIA sponsor be the official witness of the Church at the reception of the Sacraments. (See section 3 below.)
3. The official witness of the Church when a person is baptized or confirmed is called a godparent. “It is a very ancient custom of the Church that adults are not admitted to baptism without godparents, members of the Christian Community who will assist [them] at least in the final preparation for baptism and after baptism will help them persevere in the faith and in their lives as Christians.” (RCIA General Introduction, 8)
 - a) The godparent may be the same person who served as the sponsor throughout the RCIA process, or a different person may be chosen (e.g., a close friend or family member) as a godparent.

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- b) There may be one or two godparents. If there are two, they must be one male and one female. “There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.”(CIC, c. 873)
- c) The godparent(s), if possible, should be present at all rites beginning with the rite of election / call to continuing conversion through the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. If the godparent is not able to be present at any of these rites (e.g., due to illness or living in a distant location) a proxy may be used to stand in for the actual godparent.

B. Discerning and Inviting Members of the Parish to be Sponsors

1. Some inquirers will have a friend or family member in mind to be their sponsor (or godparent). The friend or family member should be interviewed to discern if they meet the minimum canonical requirements and other standards for sponsors and godparents as outlined in section B.3.a) below.
 - a) It is generally not a good idea to have a “significant other” (spouse, fiancé, boyfriend/girlfriend) be the primary sponsor. If this person wishes to accompany the catechumen or candidate on the journey, his or her participation should be encouraged, but another person from the parish should be assigned as sponsor or co-sponsor.
 - b) It is generally not a good idea to have a future in-law be the primary sponsor. This can put strain on the sponsor-candidate relationship or on the future familial relationship.
 - c) A parent cannot be the godparent. (CIC, c. 874.5) A parent may, however, accompany the catechumen or candidate as a sponsor throughout the RCIA process and then choose another person to be the godparent (official witness of the Church) at Baptism. All parties should be aware of this at the beginning of the process.
2. In many cases, the pastor and/or RCIA leader will need to find sponsors for the catechumens and candidates. These should be carefully discerned and selected from the parish faithful. An information form and interview are helpful in this discernment and selection. (See the Appendix of this section for examples of a “Sponsor Information Form” and “Interview Questions for a Potential Sponsor”.)

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3. All sponsors (including godparents) should be screened to be sure they meet the canonical requirements for sponsors, as well as some general standards:
 - a) Canonical requirements per c. 874: To be permitted to take on the function of a sponsor a person must:
 - (1) be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
 - (2) be sixteen years of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
 - (3) be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;
 - (4) not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - (5) not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.
 - b) General standards (helpful in following c. 874.3 above):
 - (1) Fully initiated and active practicing Catholic;
 - (2) Active registered parishioner of the parish, in good standing (parish sponsors); sponsors chosen by the catechumen or candidate may belong to another parish, with their membership and active status verified by their pastor (See B.4. below.);
 - (3) Love for Christ and his Church;
 - (4) Basic understanding of the Church's teaching;
 - (5) Steadfast commitment to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church;
 - (6) Evidence of a lived faith in one's personal life;
 - (7) Strong life of personal and communal prayer;
 - (8) Mature Christian understanding of the meaning of *servant* and *service*;

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- (9) Punctual, flexible, and prepared to make the required commitments;
 - (10) Good communication and listening skills;
 - (11) Openness to new relationships;
 - (12) Ability and willingness not only to share the faith, but to challenge the catechumen or candidate to live the faith;
 - (13) Prudent and able to keep confidentiality;
- 4. Sponsors who are not members of the parish should provide a letter of recommendation from their pastor, certifying that the canonical requirements are met.
 - 5. When interviewing potential sponsors, a job description should be provided, which lists these criteria as well as the specific commitments and responsibilities of being an RCIA sponsor. (See the Appendix for this section for an example of a “Sponsor Job Description”.)

C. Training Sponsors

- 1. Once sponsors are chosen and approved by the catechumen/candidate and the pastor and/or RCIA leader, they should be given instruction regarding their role and responsibilities.
- 2. It would be wise to train additional sponsors in the event that a sponsor becomes unable to fulfill his or her duties.
- 3. Training should be provided at the parish level. (Resources for sponsor training, including a “Sample Outline for Sponsor Training”, are available in the Appendix of this section. Further resources may be available in electronic format through the Diocesan Office of Catechesis and Formation).
- 4. Parish-based training should be conducted by the pastor, RCIA leader or a qualified RCIA team member.

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5. Handouts should be provided to the sponsors for their reference throughout the RCIA process. Some examples are:
 - a) Sponsor Job Description (See the Appendix for this section.)
 - b) Practical Suggestions for RCIA Sponsors (See the Appendix for this section.)
 - c) RCIA Godparent and Sponsor Handbook - Association for Catechumenal Ministry (available through Liturgy Training Publications)
 - d) Guide for Sponsors – Fourth Edition by Ronald Lewinski (available through Liturgy Training Publications)

D. Ongoing Sponsor Formation – Opportunities should be made available for ongoing spiritual formation of sponsors.

E. The Sponsors' Role in Discernment of the Catechumens' and Candidates' Conversion

1. In addition to being a companion on the journey and a witness to the faith for the catechumens and candidates, the sponsors play a role in the discernment of their conversion and readiness at each step of the RCIA process. During the rites, the sponsors (godparents) are asked for their testimony regarding the person they are sponsoring.
2. *Precatechumenate* – The sponsor should get to know the inquirer or candidate and provide “some experience of the company and spirit of Christians through contact with . . . members of the community.” (RCIA, no. 43) The RCIA leader should consult with the sponsor when discerning if there is evidence of “the first stirrings of repentance, a start to the practice of calling on God in prayer, a sense of the Church.” (RCIA, no. 43) These will indicate the readiness of the person to make the first step of the RCIA process at the rite of acceptance or rite of welcome. The sponsor should be prepared to introduce the catechumen or candidate to the Church during this rite.
3. *Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome* – Sponsors will be asked to make a commitment to the formation of the catechumens and candidates: “Sponsors, you now present these candidates to us; are you, and all who are gathered here with us, ready to help these candidates find and follow Christ?” (RCIA, nos. 53 and 513)

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4. *Catechumenate* – The sponsor should be very involved in the RCIA process, attending weekly catechetical sessions and other events, such as retreats or prayer opportunities. These will be opportunities for the sponsors to get to know the catechumens and candidates so they can assist the pastor and RCIA leader in discerning their readiness to continue to the next stage of the process.
5. *Rite of Sending* – This is an optional rite celebrated at the parish to send the catechumens and candidates to the bishop for the rite of election. The sponsors (godparents) will be asked to give testimony to the readiness of the catechumens and candidates to be sent to the bishop for election and to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. For catechumens: “I turn to you, godparents, for your testimony about these candidates. Have these catechumens taken their formation in the Gospel and in the Catholic way of life seriously? ... Have they given evidence of their conversion by the example of their lives? ... Do you judge them ready to be presented to this bishop for the rite of election?” (RCIA, no. 112). For candidates: “As God is your witness, do you consider these candidates ready to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist?” (RCIA, no. 440)
6. *Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion* – Sponsors (godparents) will be called upon by the bishop to further testify to the lives and conversion of the catechumens and candidates. For catechumens: “Have they faithfully listened to God’s Word proclaimed by the Church? ... Have they responded to that word and begun to walk in God’s presence? ... Have they shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined with them in prayer? (RCIA, no. 131 B) For candidates: “Have they faithfully listened to the apostles’ instruction proclaimed by the Church? ... Have they come to a deeper appreciation of their Baptism, in which they were joined to Christ and his Church? ... Have they reflected sufficiently on the tradition of the Church, which is their heritage, and joined their brothers and sisters in prayer? ... Have they advanced in a life of love and service of others?” (RCIA, no. 453 B)

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7. *Purification and Enlightenment* – The sponsors (godparents) are called upon in the rite of election and call to continuing conversion to continue to assist them in their preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation. For the elect: “Godparents, you have spoken in favor of these catechumens: accept them now as chosen in the Lord and continue to sustain them through your loving care and example, until they come to share in the sacraments of God’s life.” (RCIA, no. 133) For the candidates: “Sponsors, continue to support these candidates with your guidance and concern. May they see in you a love for the Church and a sincere desire for doing good. Lead them this Lent to the joys of the Easter mysteries.” (RCIA, no. 454)
8. *Sacraments of Initiation* – The sponsors (godparents) stand with the elect and candidates as the official witnesses of the Church to their celebration of the Sacraments. Their presence signifies the love and support of the entire Church, not just on this occasion, but throughout their lives as Christians.
9. *Mystagogy / Neophyte Year (and beyond)* – The godparents and sponsors continue to have a role in the lives of the newly initiated. They should maintain contact with the neophytes and continue to be a guide and a witness to the faith. “Godparents ... assist the candidates ... and after Baptism will help them persevere in the faith and in their lives as Christians” (RCIA General Introduction, no. 8). “[Godparents] continue to be important during the time after reception of the Sacraments when the neophytes need to be assisted so that they remain true to their baptismal promises.” (RCIA General Introduction, no. 11)

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VII. Precatechumenate (Period of Inquiry)

- A.** This period of evangelization, of unhurried reflection and discovery, focuses on introducing the inquirer to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church through the four Gospels. It is a time of getting acquainted, of building relationships. It has “no fixed duration or structure”. (RCIA, Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults, page 14) During this period, individuals are referred to as *inquirers*. (See Section III “Timing of the RCIA Process” for more information.)
- B. Pastoral Aspect** – Inquirers are searching for life’s true meaning, for answers to the longings of their own hearts. They are seeking the face of Christ within a community of believers. This period guides the inquirers in finding these answers through developing a relationship with God through His Son in the Holy Spirit and with His Mystical Body, the Church.
1. Team members and sponsors should provide an environment of welcome and hospitality in the RCIA meetings.
 2. Team members and sponsors are called to share faith stories.
 3. The team members, sponsors, and parish faith community lead the inquirers to experience the Holy Spirit active in the Christian community through its outreach programs such as food kitchen, Eucharistic Adoration, St. Vincent De Paul Society, and its parish family gatherings such as donut Sunday, parish dinners, men’s/women’s society meetings.
 4. During this period, the inquirers should receive help and attention so that they may purify their intentions and clarify their desires to cooperate with God’s grace (RCIA, nos. 37, 38, 42).
 5. Before the rite of acceptance or rite of welcome is celebrated, there should be a time set aside to meet and evaluate and discern with the inquirers regarding their motives and dispositions. This time may be referred to as the discernment interview. (See “Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming” in the Appendix for this section.) Prerequisites for the rite of acceptance / rite of welcome are:
 - a) Evidence of first faith that has taken place;
 - b) An initial conversion and intention to change their lives;
 - c) Desire to enter into a relationship with God in Christ;
 - d) Calling upon God in prayer;
 - e) A sense of the Church and some experience of community;
 - f) Instructions and practice about this rite;

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- C. Catechetical Aspect** – The inquirer, who has already experienced faith and initial conversion, needs to hear the mystery of Christ proclaimed so that he or she may consciously and freely enter more deeply into a relationship with Christ and His Church.
1. This period offers the opportunity to ask the burning questions that need to be answered in order for the inquirers to cooperate with God's grace drawing them more deeply into the mystery of His love.
 2. Catechesis should focus on the Person of Christ as revealed in the four Gospels.
 3. Catechesis should include sessions on knowledge of God, creation, Divine Revelation, prayer, and the people of God.
 4. Catechesis should direct inquirers to discover the similarities between their life story and the story of Jesus and His Church.
- D. Liturgical Aspect** – “During the precatechumenate period, parish priests (pastors) should help those taking part in it with prayers suited to them, for example, by celebrating for their spiritual well-being the prayers of exorcism and the blessings given in the ritual (nos. 94, 97).” (RCIA, no. 40).
1. A parish may have a preliminary manner of receiving inquirers into the precatechumenate. Without any ritual celebration, the Rite suggests a reception recognizing an expression of a “right intention” toward learning about the Christian faith. (RCIA, no. 39)
 2. Team members and sponsors may begin and end meetings with Catholic prayers that reveal evidence of the spirit of Catholicism that the inquirers are striving to understand and experience. Prayer should always begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.
 3. Prayer and reflection in this period provides the inquirers with opportunities for the “beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching” (RCIA, no. 42) to take root in them in preparation for the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens.
 4. The period of inquiry culminates in the celebration of the rite of acceptance (rite of welcome for baptized candidates).

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VIII. Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome

- A.** After the period of inquiry, when the inquirers are ready, the Church celebrates the rite of acceptance for the unbaptized or the rite of welcome for those validly baptized non-Catholic.
- B. Pastoral Aspect**
1. The celebration of the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens should be delayed until the inquirers have had sufficient time to conceive an initial faith and to show the first signs of conversion. (RCIA, no. 18) (See Precatechumenate section VII.B.1 – 6 for more on discernment of readiness.)
 2. The rite of acceptance is a very significant step, so much so that for the catechumens (the unbaptized), “One who dies during the catechumenate receives a Christian burial.” (RCIA, no. 47)
 3. After the rite of acceptance until their Baptism, catechumens are dismissed after the Liturgy of the Word to break open the Word with a team member or another designated person. Candidates may also be dismissed along with the catechumens. Since they are unable to participate fully in the Eucharist, this gives the catechumens and candidates an opportunity to be nourished by the Word of God and reflect on its meaning in their lives.
 4. This rite can be celebrated as often as needed throughout the year as inquirers are discerned ready to take this step in the RCIA process.
- C. Catechetical Aspect** – Those who are to celebrate the rites should receive instruction about the rite, the details of its celebration, and its significance in their lives and in the RCIA process.
- D. Liturgical Aspect**
1. There is a rite of acceptance to be celebrated only for inquirers (unbaptized). (RCIA, nos. 48 – 74)
 2. There is a rite of welcome to be celebrated only for candidates (validly baptized non-Catholics). (RCIA, nos. 416 – 433)
 3. A combined rite of acceptance and welcome is celebrated when some are inquirers (unbaptized) and some are candidates (validly baptized non-Catholic). (RCIA, nos. 507 – 529) When using the combined rite, it is important to make a distinction between the *baptized* and *unbaptized*. (RCIA, no. 506)

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4. These rites are celebrated within the Sunday Mass when the community is assembled. The inquirers declare their desire to become members of the Catholic Church in the presence of the parish priest and the parish community. The church then welcomes them into the next phase of the RCIA process – the catechumenate. Those who are unbaptized are now *catechumens* and those validly baptized non-Catholic are now *candidates* for reception into the full communion of the Church. The parish community agrees to support the catechumens and candidates. (RCIA, nos. 41-47, 411-415, 505-506)
 5. The RCIA ritual book suggests three possible locations for the beginning of the rite.
 - a) Outside the church building (for rite of acceptance only or combined rite of acceptance and welcome)
 - b) Inside the entrance of the church (for rite of acceptance only or combined rite of acceptance and welcome)
 - c) “. . . with candidates seated in a prominent place among the faithful” (RCIA, no. 416) (for rite of welcome only)
 - d) Some other suitable site
- E.** A priest or deacon, following the ritual rubric, speaks of welcome and joy to the inquirers and/or baptized candidates. (RCIA, no. 48)
1. It is desirable that these rites take part with the entire Christian community or some part, consisting of friends and relatives of the inquirers and/or candidates. The presiding celebrant is a priest or a deacon. The sponsors attend and present the inquirers and/or candidates.
 2. These rites consist of the reception of the inquirers and/or candidates, the celebration of the Word of God and the dismissal of the catechumens and/or candidates. Celebration of the Eucharist may follow.

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IX. Catechumenate

- A.** After the celebration of the rite of acceptance, the inquirers, who are now called catechumens, enter the period of the catechumenate, which is to be ongoing. If, due to limited resources, the baptized candidates seeking full communion are included in the catechumenate, their baptismal status is to be noted and diligently respected. The catechumenate period provides “suitable pastoral formation and guidance aimed at training the catechumens in the Christian life. This is achieved in four ways.” (RCIA, no. 75)
1. A suitable catechesis;
 2. Formation in the Christian life by word and example and the practice thereof by themselves;
 3. Celebration of suitable liturgical rites, most especially celebrations of the Word of God, and the dismissals (also sometimes known as the breaking open of the Word) unless impossible;
 4. By the witness of their lives and the profession of the faith they are to become involved in the apostolic and evangelical work of the Church.
- B. Pastoral Aspect** — The goal of the catechumenate is the conversion of the catechumens to the Christian life.
1. “The duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God” (RCIA, no. 76) and the catechumen’s cooperation with that grace. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong. Therefore its length cannot be set *a priori* and is as long as necessary, several years if need be. (RCIA, no. 76) Care needs to be exercised in this matter lest they lose heart in the arduous journey. (See section II.B. of this manual.) Catechumens and candidates should be clearly embraced and assured that they are already connected to the Church.
 - a) Catechumens are linked to the Church in a special way and are joined to the Church, which already cherishes them as her own. (CIC, c. 206, §1) As members of the order of catechumens, they have the right to a Christian burial (CIC, c. 1183) and may participate in activities proper to Christians, but not those exclusive to the baptized (CIC, c. 206, §2).
 - b) Candidates, by virtue of their valid Christian Baptism, are already one with the Church and seek full communion with her.

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2. The catechumens and candidates should already have sponsors who accompanied them at the rite of acceptance / rite of welcome. Catechumens should be encouraged to choose godparents during this period who will give testimony at the rite of sending / rite of election. (RCIA, no. 80) The godparent may be the same person as their sponsor or may be a different person. (See section V.A.3. of this manual.)
3. The parish RCIA team, godparents, and sponsors are the primary examples and support in teaching the catechumens the Catholic Christian way of life by:
 - a) Providing, at each session, experiences of various forms of prayer used in the Catholic tradition such as scriptural prayers, memorized prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, spontaneous prayers, meditation, charismatic prayer and others.
 - b) Witnessing to the faith by living good Catholic lives, sharing stories of God's work in their lives, and praying in hope with and for the catechumens.
 - c) Helping the catechumens recognize ways that God is at work in their lives and encouraging them to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in their daily actions.
 - d) Modeling Christ's call to love one another by involving the catechumens in the life of the parish and inviting them to participate in charitable acts of service within the community.
4. The parish RCIA team and sponsors, along with the pastor, will work with the catechumens / candidates to discern their depth of conversion and readiness for their election to receive the Sacraments of Initiation. (See section X of this manual, "Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion", for more information.)

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- C. Catechetical Aspect** – The accompanying catechesis of the period of the catechumenate is to support the making of committed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Catechesis achieves this because it “is that particular form of the ministry of the Word which matures initial conversion to make it into a living, explicit and fruitful confession of the faith.” (GDC, no. 82) Since disciples devote “themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers,” (Acts 2:42) all catechesis offered during the catechumenate is to be “gradual and complete in coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the Word. This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.” (RCIA, no. 75.1)
1. “Catechesis . . . includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.” (*Catechesi tradendae* (CT), no. 18) The catechesis during the catechumenate should present Catholic teaching so as to “enlighten faith, direct hearts toward God, foster participation in the liturgy, inspire apostolic activity, and nurture a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.” (RCIA, no. 78) In developing a calendar of catechesis which aims to present the whole of the faith, catechists should strive as best as possible to have sessions arranged systematically and accommodated to the liturgical year. Catechists should present each topic in a systematic way. Catechists are to present the Truth as revealed by God to the Church. Catechists must use official Church teachings that come from the Magisterium of the Church. Solid Catholic sources and publishers are to be used — look for the *imprimatur* or *nihil obstat*.

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2. All catechesis should be:
 - a) Centered on Christ: The heart of all genuine catechesis is the person of Jesus (CT, no. 5)
 - (1) “The primary and essential object of catechesis is. . . "the mystery of Christ.” (CT, no. 5)
 - (2) “. . . the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” (CT, no. 5)
 - (3) “The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.” (CCC, no. 25)
 - (4) All that we teach comes from Christ through the Church. “It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God.” (John 6:45)
 - (a) Catechists are to be like John the Baptist:
 - (i) “The voice of one crying out in the desert, Make straight the way of the Lord.” (John 1:23)
 - (ii) “Behold, the Lamb of God.” (John 1:36)
 - (iii) “He must increase; I must decrease.” (John 3:30)
 - (5) “This catechesis leads . . . not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.” (RCIA, no. 75.1)

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- b) Driven by Scripture: Scripture itself instructs us: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- c) Intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity of the Church (CT, no. 23 & NDC, no. 33)
 - (1) “The history of salvation, from the creation of the world to its redemption and eschatological fulfillment in Jesus Christ, is celebrated in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist.” (NDC, no. 33) This is why the Liturgy is “the privileged place for catechizing the People of God.” (CCC, no. 1074)
 - (a) Those participating in the catechumenate are to be drawn into the mystery that the liturgy and Sacraments celebrate and impart.
 - (b) The goal is for the participants in the catechumenate to appreciate, encounter, and embrace the presence of Christ in the Sacraments thereby developing a strong desire to participate in the Sacraments.
 - (c) The grace received through the reception of the Sacraments will drive and sustain their ongoing journey of discipleship.
 - (2) The Church instructs catechists to accommodate the catechumenate to the liturgical year (RCIA, no. 75.1) therefore, participants must experience many liturgical celebrations, most importantly the Sunday Mass, “for faith gathers the community for worship, and worship renews the faith of the community.” (NDC, no. 32)
 - (3) Catechists should emphasize the need and encourage the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation, Confession) so that lifelong conversion will be assisted by the graces given in this sacrament.
 - (a) The catechumens will have their first experience of this sacrament after their Baptism.

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- (b) Candidates who have been validly baptized must celebrate this sacrament before they are received into full communion with the Church.
 - (4) All sponsors and team members should be living witnesses to the sacramental life of the Church by their commitment to Sunday Mass attendance and frequent reception of the Sacraments.
- d) Clearly directed toward living morally
 - (1) There should be catechetical sessions addressing the topic of Catholic morality, including current cultural issues, and a complete, firm, and direct explanation of Church teaching regarding these issues (e.g., contraception, pre-marital sex and co-habitation, pornography, abortion, end-of-life issues, etc.) Catholic morality should be integrated into the context of other catechetical topics.
 - (2) Sponsors and team members should be carefully screened to ensure that they are living a moral life in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church and thus will be living witnesses to the Christian moral life.
 - (3) Catechesis should direct participants to the importance of the moral life. This may be a major point of conversion for some in their lives as they approach Christ and seek to follow Him fully.
 - (4) Pastoral care should be used to communicate to participants that, in our humanity, we may falter at times in the moral life; however, the mercy of God and the grace of the Sacrament of Penance are our recourse at these times.
- e) Directed to a life of prayer, helping the participants turn more readily to God. (RCIA, no. 75.2)

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- f) Associated with life experiences
 - (1) Catechesis should connect to the life experiences of the participants to anchor the faith in their very lives, thus making it concrete for each individual.
 - (2) Participants should have the opportunity to integrate the faith into their lives through their own questions.
 - (a) Catechists should allow time for questions at all sessions.
 - (b) Catechists should make themselves available for follow-up questions outside of the regular sessions.
 - (3) Catechesis ought to include personal witness from the lives of team members and sponsors in order to demonstrate the connection between faith and life.
 - (a) In sharing their own life stories, catechists must remember that there is a distinct line between teaching the truths and practices of the faith and giving personal witness. Both have a place in the RCIA process, but one needs to be sure to make the distinction.
 - (b) A catechist “will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ's teaching and the lessons of His life.” (CT, no. 6)
- g) Accommodated to the learning styles of the participants (e.g., visual, audio, kinetic (hands-on) learning styles).

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3. There are two *primary* opportunities for catechesis during the catechumenate period:
 - a) Weekly catechetical sessions in which certified catechists appropriately acquaint the participants in the catechumenate with dogmas and precepts.
 - b) Dismissal catechesis – also referred to as Sunday reflection on the Word or breaking open the Word – in which an RCIA team member connects the Scriptures proclaimed at the Sunday liturgy to the faith of the Church, and the participants are afforded time to share the call of the Lord which they hear in the readings of the particular Sunday.
4. Participants in the catechumenate should, over time, begin to make the connection between the content of the dogmas and precepts of the Church, the Sacred Scriptures as presented in the lectionary cycles, and the liturgical prayer, celebrations, and seasons of the Church. This connection will, at times, be made directly by a catechist or team member as planned in advance. At other times, the connection may simply happen more spontaneously as the participants recognize the connection or as the discussion leads in a particular direction.
 - a) Other opportunities for catechesis can and should be used (e.g., an “Adult Insight Day” retreat provided by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington, adult faith formation opportunities provided by the Diocese or other neighboring parishes).
 - b) Suggested resources for catechesis can be found in Section XIV of this manual (Suggested Resources). Some samples of catechetical curriculum can be found in the appendix of this section.

D. Liturgical Aspect – From the very beginning of the catechumenate the participants are expected to participate in weekly Sunday Mass. (See “The Importance of the Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word” in the Appendix of this section.) Liturgical rites specific to this period sanctify the participants, leading them “into the life of faith, worship, and charity belonging to the People of God.” (RCIA, no. 76) In these liturgical rites, the participants encounter Christ and are transformed by His grace. The rites, sacramentals, Catholic prayers and devotions, and retreat experiences are necessary for their conversion.

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1. *Rites Belonging to the Period of the Catechumenate* – Within the period of the catechumenate, there are rites that should be celebrated, culminating in the rite of sending which closes this period.
 - a) The most frequently celebrated rite during the catechumenate is the celebrations of the Word of God: “first: celebrations held specifically for the participants; second, participation in the liturgy of the Word at the Sunday Mass; third, celebrations held in connection with catechetical instruction.” (RCIA, no. 81) A model for such celebrations can be found in the RCIA ritual book paragraph nos. 85-89. These celebrations as stated in RCIA, no. 82 have as their purpose:
 - (1) To implant in their hearts the teachings they are receiving;
 - (2) To give them instruction and experience in the different aspects and ways of prayer;
 - (3) To explain to them the signs, celebrations, and seasons of the liturgy;
 - (4) To prepare them gradually to enter the worship of the assembly of the entire community.
 - b) Other rites during the catechumenate include minor exorcisms (RCIA, nos. 90-94), blessings (RCIA, nos. 95-97), anointing of the catechumens (RCIA, nos. 98-103), and the Rite of Sending of the Catechumens for Election (RCIA, nos. 106-117) / Rite of Sending of the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion (RCIA, nos. 438-445). **Minor exorcisms, blessings (except “C” and “I”), and anointings are intended for catechumens only. They are not to be celebrated with candidates for it is demeaning to their status as members of the Christian faithful, which they have by virtue of their valid Christian Baptism.**
 - (1) Minor exorcisms may be celebrated any time during the catechumenate period to “draw the attention of the catechumens to the real nature of Christian life, the struggle between flesh and spirit, the importance of self-denial for reaching the blessedness of God’s kingdom, and the unending need for God’s help.” (RCIA, no. 90)

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- (2) Blessings of the catechumens are given any time during the catechumenate as a “sign of God’s love and the Church’s tender care.” (RCIA, no. 95) The blessings offer the catechumens the gifts of courage, joy, and peace as they continue their journey into the Church, even though they are not yet able to receive the graces of the Sacraments. Blessings “C” or “I” could be given to candidates.
- (3) “During the Period of the Catechumenate, a rite of anointing of the catechumens, through the use of the oil of catechumens, may be celebrated wherever this seems beneficial or desirable.” (RCIA, no. 99) The minister of this anointing is a priest or deacon. It is necessary that the catechumens understand the significance of this anointing which “symbolizes their need for God’s help and strength” (RCIA, no. 99) to continue undeterred in taking the next step of professing their faith and holding fast to it throughout their lives.
- (4) There are two different rites of sending: the rite of sending of catechumens for election (RCIA, nos. 106-117) and the rite of sending the candidates for recognition by the bishop and for the call to continuing conversion (RCIA, nos. 438-445). The different rites highlight the distinction between the unbaptized and the baptized. In a parish where there are both catechumens and candidates, these rites may be celebrated as a combined rite (RCIA, nos. 530-546). “In the catechesis of the community and in the celebration of these rites, care must be taken to maintain the distinction between the catechumens and the baptized candidates.” (RCIA, no. 506) In the Diocese of Covington the rite(s) of sending are traditionally celebrated in the parish on the first Sunday of Lent, followed later in the day by the celebration of the rite of election and call to continuing conversion at the Cathedral with the Bishop (covered in section X of this manual). If the rite of election takes place in the parish, the rite of sending is not used.

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- (a) Rite of Sending of Catechumens for Election:
 - (i) The rite is celebrated at a liturgy of the Word or at a Sunday Mass. It may be celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent or at a suitable time prior to the rite of election.
 - (ii) The readings for the first Sunday of Lent are most appropriate. The homily should help catechumens and the faithful to make the connection between the proclamation of the Word, the spiritual journey on which the catechumens and candidates have been traveling, and the rite of sending them for election. After the homily the catechumens are presented by a catechist or a pastoral minister closely related to their formation. The priest then invites the godparents, sponsors, assembly to give affirmation of the catechumens.
 - (iii) The presider, the deacon or a catechist, following the ritual book (RCIA, nos. 106-117), presents the catechumens to the assembly. The presider then recommends them to the bishop who will call them to the Easter Sacraments.
 - (iv) The catechumens are asked to sign the Book of the Elect using the enrollment of names (RCIA, no. 132), before the intercessions for them. This signing signifies their pledge to complete the RCIA process.
 - (v) Intercessory prayers over the catechumens follow and they **must be dismissed**.
- (b) Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion:

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- (i) The candidates are presented to the presider who addresses the assembly asking for their affirmation as well as that of the sponsors. He then addresses the candidates, reminding them that the community and their sponsors have spoken in their favor.
 - (ii) Intercessions for the candidates invite the community to keep them in prayer, followed by a blessing over the candidates.
 - (iii) If the Eucharist is to be celebrated, the candidates **may be dismissed**.
- 2. Sacramentals, Catholic prayers, and devotions should be introduced to the catechumens during this period to prepare them for living a life of prayer within the Catholic Church.
 - a) Sacramentals such as the Sign of the Cross before praying, blessing with holy water, Advent wreath prayers, ashes on Ash Wednesday, statues, relics, etc., should be accompanied by proper catechesis and connection to the Sacraments and the Church's liturgical calendar/year.
 - b) Teaching Catholic prayers and devotions such as the Liturgy of the Hours, Stations of the Cross, Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Eucharistic Adoration, the rosary, prayers before and after meals, and other basic Catholic prayers will deepen the catechumens' identification with living a life of Catholic prayer in union with the universal Church, the Body of Christ.
- 3. Retreats for the catechumens can provide a more relaxed atmosphere for a mix of catechetical instruction, instruction on prayer, and experiences of different forms of prayer. Retreats offer a time for more private reflection and discernment of God's call in their journey of faith.

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Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

X. Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

A. Pastoral Aspect

1. The unbaptized catechumens are sent to the bishop for election to the Sacraments of Initiation. The Church “makes its ‘election,’ that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who have the dispositions that make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation. This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts.” (RCIA, no. 119)
2. Those baptized candidates who will complete their initiation or be received into full communion at the Easter Vigil, are sent for recognition and the call to continuing conversion by the bishop. Since they have already been joined to Christ and the church through Baptism, they are called to deepen their conversion to Christ as they learn to live out their baptismal call to the community of the Catholic Church.

B. Catechetical Aspect – The RCIA places a strong emphasis on discernment before the rite of election or the call to continuing conversion. At this time the church determines the readiness of catechumens and candidates to be called to the Easter Sacraments, who will normally have had about a year of formation in the catechumenate period (RCIA, nos. 121,122).

C. Liturgical Aspect

1. “The rite should take place in the cathedral church, in a parish church or if necessary, some other suitable or fitting place.” (RCIA, no. 127) It is celebrated within Mass after the homily, and should be celebrated within the Mass of the first Sunday of Lent. “When celebrated outside Mass, the rite takes place after the readings and is concluded with the dismissal of both the elect and the faithful.” (RCIA, no. 128)
2. The role of the bishop is especially prominent in the rite of election. Because he is the center of unity for the local church and is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the entire initiation process, the announcement of the church’s decision to call catechumens and candidates to the Sacraments falls to him. (RCIA, nos. 12,121) In the case where it may be impossible for him to do so, he must delegate this responsibility to a priest or deacon.

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3. In the Diocese of Covington the liturgy for the rite of election is planned by the Diocesan Office of Worship and Liturgy and is celebrated at the Cathedral on the first Sunday of Lent, with the Bishop presiding. Pastors of each parish in the diocese receive a letter from the Office of Worship inviting them to submit the names of those catechumens and candidates who will be presented to the Bishop for election or call to continuing conversion.
4. If catechumens are presented for election, the pastor should bring the Book of Elect from their parish, signed by those catechumens during the rite of sending. The book is brought to the Bishop for his signature when the catechumens are presented during the rite of election.

Notes

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Purification and Enlightenment

XI. Purification and Enlightenment

- A.** After the rite of election, the elect now move into this period of more “intense spiritual preparation for the sacraments of initiation” (RCIA, no. 138) to be celebrated at the upcoming Easter Vigil. This time, usually coinciding with Lent, is focused more on “interior reflection than catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance.” (RCIA, no. 139) The candidates, who have been called to continuous conversion, may join with the elect in this period as a way to enter into Lenten purification and prepare for coming into full communion with the Catholic Church. Through this period and especially in the celebration of certain rites, including the scrutinies and penitential rite, the presentations of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer, and the preparation rites on Holy Saturday, the elect are enlightened with a “deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior” (RCIA, no. 139) and a burning desire to commit their lives to Him. This period ends with the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.
- B. Pastoral Aspect** – The main focus of this period rests on the elect and candidates deciding to leave behind their old way of living to embrace life in Christ within the Catholic Church. During this period, the elect and candidates may experience doubt and discouragement, requiring close support and care from the community.
1. The godparents and sponsors of the elect and candidates should be present at all the rites and sessions of this period to support them in their final preparation.
 2. The pastor, RCIA leader, godparents, and sponsors, along with the whole Catholic community should be attentive to the needs of the elect and candidates and be prepared to talk with them and spend time with them as needed.
 3. Opportunities for entering into the season of Lent with the whole community should be offered and encouraged. Some examples are:
 - a) Lenten fasting
 - b) Opportunities for almsgiving or other acts of charity or service (e.g., soup kitchens, outreach centers, inner city schools, etc.)
 - c) Prayer opportunities (e.g., Stations of the Cross, Lenten penance service)

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- C. Catechetical Aspect** – The focus of catechesis shifts in this period to one of spiritual preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation and reception into the Church. Themes of repentance and holiness encourage the elect to reflect on God’s love for us, his faithful care for us, and our need to turn to him. Catechesis in this period should deepen within the elect and candidates the resolve to “hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.” (RCIA, no. 141)
1. Catechetical session themes in this period should include:
 - a) The mystery of sin and the power of darkness
 - b) Purification of heart and mind (conscience, self-denial and penance, conversion)
 - c) The healing effects of God’s mercy
 - d) Recognition of Christ’s presence in daily life
 - e) Obedience to God, being conformed to Christ’s suffering
 - f) Prayer
 2. Catechesis should focus on Christ the Savior and the events of the Paschal Mystery – Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. (RCIA, nos. 138, 139)
 3. Care should be taken to catechize the elect and candidates regarding the meaning of the various rites that will be celebrated during this period.
 - a) All RCIA participants should be instructed regarding the meaning of the scrutiny rites and why a separate penitential rite is celebrated for the baptized candidates. “Because the prayer of exorcism in the three Scrutinies. . . properly belongs to the elect and uses numerous images referring to their approaching baptism, those scrutinies of the elect and [the] penitential rite for those preparing for confirmation and eucharist have been kept separate and distinct.” (RCIA, no. 463)
 - b) The elect should be prepared in advance for the scrutinies. In these rites the Church prays that the elect will receive divine assistance that will inspire in them a desire for purification by allowing the light of the Holy Spirit to lead them to scrutinize themselves and come to repentance.

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- (1) Through the scrutiny rites, the elect should “progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.” (RCIA, no. 142) They should be aware that the scrutiny rites are an opportunity to “progress in their perception of sin and their desire for salvation.” (RCIA, no. 143)
- (2) The scrutinies are “reinforced by an exorcism” (RCIA, no. 141), by which the elect are “freed from the effects of sin and from the influence of the devil.” (RCIA, no. 144)

D. Liturgical Aspect – The rites belonging to this period include the penitential rite (for baptized candidates), the scrutiny rites, the presentation of the Lord’s Prayer, the presentation of the Creed, and the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

1. The penitential rite “can serve to mark the Lenten purification of baptized but previously uncatechized adults who are preparing to receive the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.” (RCIA, no. 459)
 - a) *The penitential rite is celebrated only for the baptized candidates. It is not to be celebrated for those who are not yet one with the Church in Baptism.*
 - b) The penitential rite “may be celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent or on a Lenten weekday”. (RCIA, no. 462) If the candidates are to be received into full communion and receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at a time other than the Easter Vigil, then the rite may be celebrated “at the most suitable time.” (RCIA, no. 462)
 - c) The penitential rite “may also help to prepare the candidates to celebrate the sacrament of penance.” (RCIA, no. 461)
2. “The Scrutinies 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.” (RCIA, no. 141) Instructions regarding the celebration of the scrutinies can be found in the RCIA ritual numbers 141 – 146 (general), 150 – 156 (First Scrutiny), 164 – 170 (Second Scrutiny) and 171 – 177 (Third Scrutiny). A few important points follow:

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- a) The scrutinies are celebrated *only for the unbaptized elect*. They are not to be celebrated for those who are already one with the Church in Baptism.
- b) There are three scrutiny rites. All three should be celebrated for all of the elect. These are not optional rites and are proper to the period of purification and enlightenment.
- c) The scrutiny rites are “solemnly celebrated on Sundays” (RCIA, no. 141) and “should take place within the ritual Masses ‘Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies’, which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent” (RCIA, no. 146). The Ritual Mass for the Scrutinies can be found in the Roman Missal Ritual Mass #2 a, b, & c on page 1121. (RCIA, no. 146 for circumstances where the period of purification and enlightenment takes place outside of Lent.)
- d) At the Masses when the scrutiny rites are celebrated, “the readings with their chants are those given for these Sundays in the Lectionary for Mass, Year A.” (RCIA, no. 146). This means that regardless of the current lectionary cycle, the Year A readings are always used at the scrutiny Masses.
- e) Special “intercessions for the elect” (RCIA, no. 145) are prayed at the scrutiny Mass. Two options are given in the ritual (RCIA, no. 153). The ritual also allows for them to be “adapted to fit various circumstances” (RCIA, no. 153) which allows for intercessions which are adapted to the specific needs of the elect.

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3. In the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer the Church entrusts to the elect "the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church's faith and prayer." (RCIA, no. 147)
 - a) Instructions regarding the presentation of the Creed can be found in the RCIA ritual book, nos. 157 – 163.
 - b) Instructions regarding the presentation of the Lord's Prayer can be found in the RCIA ritual book, nos. 178 – 184.
 - c) The presentations normally take place during this period of purification and enlightenment, but "for pastoral advantage and because the period of purification and enlightenment is rather short, the presentations may be held during the period of the catechumenate." (RCIA, no. 104) If this is the case, take care to substitute the word *catechumens* for *elect* in all formularies. (RCIA, nos. 104 & 105)
4. The preparation rites on Holy Saturday are intended as proximate preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. A suggested time for these rites would be the morning of Holy Saturday, which will set the tone for the day. There is some pastoral flexibility regarding which of these rites are celebrated based on the particular circumstances (RCIA, no. 186). Instructions regarding these rites can be found in the RCIA ritual book, nos. 185 – 205.
 - a) *The recitation of the Creed, ephphatha rite, and choosing of a baptismal name are all to be celebrated only by the unbaptized elect.*
 - b) Baptized candidates may be present at the celebration of the preparation rites to pray with and for the elect.
 - c) At the conclusion of the preparation rites the entire group (elect, candidates, sponsors and godparents) may remain together as a group to prepare for the Easter Vigil. Some possible activities during this time may include:
 - (1) a brief catechesis on the Liturgy of Light and the Paschal candle;
 - (2) a reflection on Christ as the light of world (how spreading the light from the Paschal candle to the individual candles symbolizes spreading the light of Christ in the world);

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- (3) a walk-through of the Easter Vigil and celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation;
- (4) a reminder that “they should refrain from their usual activities, spend their time in prayer and reflection, and as far as they can, observe a fast.” (RCIA, no. 185.1)

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XII. Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and Reception into Full Communion with the Catholic Church

The elect and the candidates for reception into full communion, having been assessed by those concerned with their religious formation as being ready and themselves desiring to enter and live the life of a Catholic Christian, stand well-disposed for the grace given in the Sacraments. The elect will receive all three of the Sacraments of Initiation. The candidates for full communion, having already made a good confession in the Sacrament of Penance, will make a profession of faith and be received into the Catholic Church and then receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and first Eucharist. In this manner the elect and candidates for full communion “are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.” (RCIA, no. 206)

A. Pastoral Aspect – There are a few pastoral details that must be completed before this celebration.

1. The candidates for full communion must celebrate the Sacrament of Penance before this celebration.
2. The authority to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation must be obtained. (See details of this below in the Confirmation section C.3.)
3. If the valid baptismal status of any of those who are to be received into full communion is uncertain, they should be baptized conditionally during the celebration of initiation. It should be clearly explained to the one to be conditionally baptized, and even to the assembly during the celebration, that this is being done to ensure the person has been baptized validly, which is necessary for the valid reception of the other Sacraments. The formula to be used during the celebration for a conditional Baptism is: “If you have not been validly baptized before, I baptize you ...” (RCIA, no. 480)
4. The sponsors above all should understand what is going to happen during this celebration. They are to help guide and lead the one whom they sponsor through the ceremony. Only secondarily should the elect and candidates for full communion be required to know what is going to happen.

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5. The celebration might be made more personal in a number of ways.
 - a) The names of the patron Saints of the elect and candidates for full communion can be incorporated into the Litany of the Saints.
 - b) The prayers of the faithful could include them by name if practical.
 - c) Some of the neophytes should take part in the presentation of the gifts.
6. A reception after the Easter Vigil celebration provides a time for members of the community to welcome and congratulate their new brothers and sisters in the faith. It also provides a time for words of appreciation, joy and gratitude to be exchanged.

B. Catechetical Aspect – As the elect and candidates are led through a rehearsal for the celebration, special references to their previous catechesis or reminders ought to be given.

1. Those conducting the rehearsal might include these catechetical reminders:
 - a) Jesus is the Light of the World
 - b) Jesus is the Light that conquers the darkness, most especially the darkness of sin and death
 - c) God calls us into a communion, into a people
 - d) Salvation has a long and wondrous history
 - e) Baptism is immersion into the saving death of the Lord Jesus
 - f) Baptism washes away original sin and all others committed before Baptism
 - g) Baptism makes us children of God and members of the mystical body of Christ
 - h) Confirmation seals and strengthens us with the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - i) The Chrism is consecrated and in name shares the same root word as Christ – the anointed one
 - j) In the Sacraments we not only meet Christ and are given grace but also vow ourselves to live as his disciples, as Catholic Christians
 - k) The Eucharist is truly, really and substantially the very presence of Christ
 - l) The Eucharist is the sacrifice of Calvary present to us in an unbloody way

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- m) Christ is present in the assembly, the minister, the Word and the Eucharistic species
 - n) Eucharist brings about communion with God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit as well as with the members of the Church
 - o) We are sent forth from the celebration of the Mass to live and share our faith.
2. Practically speaking, the manner in which Holy Communion is received needs to be reviewed and rehearsed by those who will receive Communion for the first time.
3. During the Mass, before saying: “Behold the Lamb of God,” the celebrant may briefly remind the neophytes and newly received of the preeminence of the Eucharist, which is the climax of their initiation and reception and the center of the whole of Christian life (RCIA, no. 243).
- C. Liturgical Aspect** – The usual time for this celebration is the Easter Vigil. (RCIA, no. 208 if the pastoral situation demands another time.) The RCIA ritual book provides rubrics and texts for the initiation of the elect alone at nos. 206-243. The RCIA ritual book provides rubrics and texts for the reception into full communion alone at nos. 473-499. The RCIA ritual book also provides rubrics and texts for a combined rite for the celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church at 562-594. **Please note that some texts have been revised in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal. These will be noted below.**
1. *Baptism* – The celebration of Baptism begins after the homily. The rubrics and texts as found in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal at nos. 37-53 are to be followed. **Please note that the texts before the Litany of the Saints, before the Blessing of the font and water, as well as the blessing of the font and water have been revised, making the ones found in the RCIA ritual book obsolete.** After the blessing of the font and water, the celebrant continues with the administration of the elect’s renunciation of sin, the profession of faith and the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism. These texts can be found at nos. 226-230 or in the combined rite text at nos. 572-574 of the RCIA ritual book. After the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith, the elect are baptized either by immersion, “which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and

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resurrection of Christ, (Christian Initiation General Introduction, no. 22),” referenced as option A; or by pouring of water, referenced as option B. If any of those baptized are not to be confirmed at this time (this applies only to children who have not completed their 8th grade year), they are anointed as described at nos. 228 or 577 of the RCIA ritual book. If the newly baptized are to receive a baptismal garment, this is to be accomplished as described at no. 229 or no. 578 of the RCIA ritual book. The giving of the baptismal garment is optional but highly recommended. The newly baptized then receive their baptismal candles as given in no. 230 or no. 579 of the RCIA ritual book.

2. *Celebration of Reception* – If there are Candidates for reception into full communion, their profession of faith and reception follows the baptisms and precedes the celebration of Confirmation. This celebration is for only those who have received a valid non-Catholic Baptism. The rubrics and texts of the RCIA ritual book for this celebration are to be followed. They can be found at nos. 490-492 and in the combined ritual at nos. 584-586. *When receiving a candidate initiated in the Eastern Orthodox Church, contact the Chancery for specific instructions.*
3. *Confirmation* – All those who have reached their 8th grade year who have been baptized and those who have been received into full communion of the Catholic Church are to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The texts given in the RCIA ritual book are to be followed. These can be found beginning at no. 231 when no receptions take place; beginning at no. 493, when only receptions take place; or in the combined rite beginning at no. 587.

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- a) The major issue involved in the celebration of Confirmation is the authority to confirm. Priests who have the authority to confirm have this either by the law itself or by delegation from the bishop.
 - (1) The law itself gives priests the authority to confirm all those of the age of reason whom they have baptized. This means that **only the priest who has baptized has the "authority" or "faculty" to confirm that same person.** Baptisms cannot be celebrated by one priest, and then the Confirmations of these by another priest. These Confirmations would be invalid. Nor can baptisms be celebrated by a deacon and then the confirmations by a priest. These Confirmations would also be invalid.
 - (2) **The pastors of the Diocese of Covington have been delegated the authority to confirm all those they receive into full communion with the Catholic Church. All other priests must receive permission from the pastor of the Parish to Baptize and Confirm those being brought to full communion with the Catholic Church.**
 - (3) **In the Diocese of Covington priests are not delegated to confirm those who were baptized Catholic but uncatechized.** If a person has been baptized Catholic, either the Bishop or the specially delegated priest must confirm that person, otherwise the Confirmation will be invalid. If one is in doubt about these matters please contact the Vicar(s) General. **The priest who wishes to confirm a baptized Catholic must write a letter of petition requesting that faculty from the Bishop far enough in advance that appropriate pastoral accommodations can be made.**
- b) The renewal of Baptismal promises and the sprinkling of the assembly with the Easter water takes place after the celebration of Confirmation as stated at no. 55 of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal. **This is different than that given in the combined ritual found in the RCIA ritual book.**

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4. *Eucharist* – The neophytes take part in the celebration of the Eucharist and will receive for the first time Holy Communion. At the Easter Vigil only Eucharistic Prayers I, II or III may be used. Outside the Easter Vigil Eucharistic Prayer IV may be used. (RCIA, no. 242) The special interpolations given in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal for the ritual “Mass for Christian Initiation: Baptism” are to be used, found on pages 1127-1128. In the case when Baptism is not celebrated, the interpolations found in the ritual Mass for Confirmation are to be used, found on page 1131. It is most desirable that the neophytes and those received into full communion, together with their sponsors and family, as well as those involved in their religious formation, receive communion under both species (RCIA, no. 243)

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Mystagogy

XIII. Mystagogy

This fourth step of the RCIA process, defined in paragraph nos. 244 through 251 of the ritual book, is that period following the Sacraments of Initiation where “The neophytes are, as the term “mystagogy” suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the Sacraments they have received. For they have truly been renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God’s Word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and grown to know the goodness of the Lord. Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.” (RCIA, no. 245)

A. Pastoral Aspect – “The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated. The aim of all Christian education, moreover, is to train the believer in an adult faith that can make him a “new creation”, capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*). The primary mystagogues to the entire Church are her bishops and priests.

1. The RCIA ritual book says: “After mystagogy, the process 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.” (RCIA, no. 24 of Appendix III: National Statutes for the Catechumenate). The monthly follow-up meetings would not have to be the responsibility of the RCIA team. Perhaps the neophytes’ sponsors or others in the parish could take responsibility at this point. If one of the neophytes has been coming to the parish for a while, they may be able to coordinate these monthly meetings with some assistance and guidance from the RCIA leader.
 - a) The RCIA mystagogy period begins at Christian initiation and ends at Pentecost. **It lasts for the entire Easter Season.**
 - b) RCIA postbaptismal catechesis continues for the rest of the neophyte year and ends at the anniversary of their initiation.
 - c) Mystagogy never truly ends because all fully initiated Catholics are called to continue on a lifelong journey into the mystery by which they are being saved.

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Mystagogy

2. Form sponsors to understand the importance of their role to help the neophytes practice their faith by fully and authentically practicing their own.
3. Help neophytes identify their gifts and discern how the Spirit is calling them to live out their conversion to discipleship and gradually take on the life of being a Catholic Christian. Encourage the sponsors and them to pray faithfully together for discernment.
4. Remind sponsors to keep in contact with the neophytes during the Easter Season. Ask sponsors to let the pastor or RCIA leader know if weekly participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is not taking place or if other family matters are preoccupying the neophytes.
5. Provide opportunities for newly baptized to make their first and second Reconciliations.
6. Create an administrative process, assigned to someone who may or may not be on the RCIA team, that will make sure all former RCIA participants are aware of opportunities to become involved in parish life.
7. Plan a group service project. Ask a sponsor or the neophytes themselves to organize it and to complete it with guidance from the RCIA team. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington (covingtoncharities.org) has many volunteer and service opportunities available.
8. Social activities could include:
 - a) Invite previous year neophytes to host a celebration after Easter Vigil.
 - b) Host an appreciation dinner with the families, sponsors, team, etc.
 - c) Host a breakfast on Pentecost. Have the parish provide the main dish and ask the neophytes to bring food to honor the sponsors and RCIA team members.
 - d) Host a closing dinner at the end of mystagogy, including praying the Liturgy of the Hours for Vespers and/or talking about the Eucharist as a banquet.
 - e) Make contact with the neophytes during specific parish/diocesan events, inviting them to attend or to work together as a group at those events. Ask sponsors to coordinate.

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- B. Catechetical Aspect** – The RCIA team should connect mystagogy to the rest of the process. The way the whole process is presented sets up a dynamic that affects whether the neophytes continue to participate in the RCIA process during mystagogy. If the desire to become Catholic has not deepened into an unfolding relationship with God, involving conversion within the community, there is not much reason to participate after Easter. Following are some suggestions for helping the RCIA participants see continuity in and between all periods of RCIA.
1. Communicate the intention and importance of mystagogy from the beginning of the process.
 2. Give a church tour. Explain the traditional meaning and liturgical use of every part of the church (tabernacle, sanctuary, confessional, nave, vestibule, sacristy, baptismal font, Easter candle, statues, paintings, etc.). Although you may have done this at the beginning of RCIA, take the neophytes through again during the mystagogy period. They can understand more now. Relate to them what they just experienced at Easter Vigil, for example, at the baptismal font. And offer to take them through as the anniversary of their initiation draws near, too, because they can understand even better then.
 3. Reacquaint them to the saints and to specific traditional prayers to the saints.
 4. Provide opportunities for leaders of parish ministries to introduce themselves and their ministries. Ask the neophytes to identify any ministries they would like to learn more about or join. Welcome the neophytes to participate in liturgical ministries after they have completed their neophyte year.
 5. Help them to experience God's presence in the Sacraments, so that they hunger to live sacramentally.
 6. Help them to understand that it is through the Sacraments that they establish and grow in their relationship with God.
- C. Liturgical Aspect** – Mystagogy is liturgical. Help the neophytes connect their new status in full communion with the Church to becoming fully engaged participants in liturgy.

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1. During the Easter Season, break open the Word with the neophytes after Sunday Mass. Teach them to break open the Word, giving them specific suggestions of how to respond to the readings by prayer, study, and acts of charity.
2. During the mystagogy period, have the neophytes sit together and, if possible, have their presence acknowledged by the lector or the priest. (RCIA, no. 248)
3. Give opportunities for spiritual reflection within the three earlier periods of RCIA, so when they become neophytes they will be better prepared to continue their own faith journeys after their RCIA process ends.
4. Attend a spiritual retreat together. Include sponsors and, if practical, spouses.
5. Reacquaint them with the parts of the Mass to deepen their understanding and appreciation.
6. Suggestions for public worship:
 - a) Celebrate Pentecost vespers with special blessings for the neophytes.
 - b) Celebrate a renewal of their baptismal promises by having them relight their candles at Pentecost.
 - c) Have the neophytes publicly renew their baptismal commitment during the following Lent.
 - d) Encourage neophytes to celebrate the next Triduum together.
 - e) Celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours together.
7. Suggestions for private devotion, including a time for explanation, review or reflection:
 - a) Celebrate Divine Mercy devotions together.
 - b) Attend Eucharistic Adoration with the neophytes.
 - c) Pray the Rosary with the neophytes, reflecting on the life of Christ and Mary with Biblical references.
 - d) Pray the Stations of the Cross with the neophytes.
 - e) Pray traditional prayers such as novenas and litanies with the neophytes.
 - f) Pray with the saints. Help them get to know their patron saints.
 - g) Pray *lectio divina*.
 - h) Pray Ignatian prayer.

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Suggested Resources

XIV. Suggested Resources for RCIA

- A. RCIA ritual book
- B. Sacred Scripture
 - 1. Be sure all catechumens and candidates are given a good, Catholic Bible at the Rite of Acceptance (Rite of Welcome) to be used at all catechetical sessions, and that all team and sponsors have access to the same translation given to the catechumens and candidates.
 - 2. The New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) is suggested since this is the translation used in the Sunday lectionary in the United States.
- C. The Roman Missal, Third Edition
- D. Catechism of the Catholic Church and The Compendium
- E. United States Catholic Catechism for Adults and its Study Guide (uscbbpublishing.org)
- F. General Directory for Catechesis
- G. National Directory for Catechesis
- H. Code of Canon Law
- I. The Catechumenate and the Law: A Pastoral and Canonical Commentary for the Church in the United States by John M. Huels (Liturgy Training Publications) – a guide to applying Church law to issues or situations in RCIA.
- J. *Catechesi tradendae* –Apostolic Exhortation by Pope John Paul II “On Catechesis in our Time”, October 16, 1979
- K. *Guide for Catechists* – Vatican document from the Congregation the the Evangelization of Peoples, December 3, 1993
- L. Diocese of Covington Department of Catechesis and Formation
- M. Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) RCIA Leader’s Manual (Liturgy Training Publications)
- N. Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) Catechist Guide (Liturgy Training Publications) – provides outlines to assist catechists in preparing catechetical sessions
- O. Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) Participant’s Manual (Liturgy Training Publications) – comprehensive handouts for catechumens and candidates on doctrine as well as prayers, devotions, and other topics
 - 1. These are doctrinally sound handouts that can be used as a primary resource or supplemental handout for catechetical sessions.

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Suggested Resources

2. They are available in an electronic format with the ability to print and copy unlimited copies for a single licensing fee.
- P.** Catholic Update (publication of Liguori Publications) – good supplemental handouts on many topics
- Q.** Journey of Faith (an RCIA resource from Liguori Publications)
- R.** Foundations in Faith (publication of RCL – Resources for Christian Living)
 1. Good lectionary-based resource for planning dismissal catechesis
 2. Resources for all stages of the RCIA process
 3. Visit www.rclbenziger.com (go to “Adult Formation / RCIA” on menu bar and choose “Foundations in Faith” from drop-down menu)
- S.** Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation (Liturgy Training Publications)
- T.** Websites
 1. The Vatican Website: www.vatican.va
 2. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.com
 3. Diocese of Covington: www.covingtondiocese.org
 4. Thomas More College: www.thomasmore.edu
 5. Catholic Online: www.catholiconline.com
 6. Association for Catechumenal Ministry: www.acmrcia.org
 7. Team RCIA: www.teamRCIA.com
 8. Center for Liturgy, St. Louis University: www.liturgy.slu.edu
 9. RCIA blog from Association for Catechumenal Ministry:
www.rciablog.com
 10. Dynamic Catholic: www.dynamiccatholic.com
 11. EWTN: www.ewtn.com
 12. Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, Norwood, OH: www.olhsc.org/
- U.** Membership organizations, associations
 1. Association for Catechumenal Ministry www.acmrcia.org
 2. Team RCIA www.teamRCIA.com

It was not easy being a Christian in the Roman Empire during the first 300 years of the Church. While periods of active persecution were sporadic, Christians were usually under suspicion. Christians were set apart from many of the values of the surrounding society. They did not participate in the drunken festivities celebrating the local gods. Many men would not serve in the military as so as not to take an oath to the Roman Emperor as a god. They were conspicuously absent from gladiatorial games. They prayed in their own communities and outsiders were not welcome to participate.

Yet many people were attracted to Christian life. They could not help to notice that Christian families were different. Christian men lived faithfully with their wives. Christians were honest in business, and readily helped others in time of famine and need. Adult inquirers who knew Christians wondered what the source of peace was in Christian families and communities.

When adult inquirers wanted to explore more of what it meant to be Christian, they would approach a Christian friend for information. If the inquirers were honest, the Christians would take them to a meeting of Christians for further information. If the inquirers were serious, they became catechumens and entered a long process of initiation, one that could be up to three years.

In the three year period, the catechumens would meet regularly for instruction and prayer with the community. Their way of life would be examined. They would attend Mass, but leave after the readings and the homily as they were not yet introduced into the full celebration of the Eucharist. They would not yet learn the Lord's Prayer. In the Roman world the emperor was seen as a god, and it was considered a subversive to pray that God is our Father as Jesus taught us.

Eventually the catechumens were examined to determine if they were ready for Baptism. Their sponsors would be witnesses to their fidelity to Christian teaching and vouch that they were charitable towards the poor. Those who were ready celebrated the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation (the bishop's anointing) and the Eucharist during the Easter Vigil.

DECLINE OF THE CATECHUMENATE

After Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire, the catechumenate as a period of preparation for Christian life went into decline. The practice of baptism of infants became common, especially in the light of St Augustine's teaching on original sin. With the high mortality rate of infants, the practice of early baptism became more of the norm for the sake of the infant's salvation. During the early Middle Ages barbarian tribes would be baptized all together with no period of pre-baptismal instruction or initiation. Christian formation in the faith would follow Baptism. In the West there was also the separation of Baptism and Confirmation, with Confirmation delayed to later years.

Before the Second Vatican Council the process of becoming a convert to the Catholic faith was a very individual affair. The inquirer might receive individual instruction from a priest or

attend an inquiry class that taught the fundamentals of the faith. Baptism took place when the priest thought the inquirer was ready.

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

During the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) the bishops called for the restoration of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) as modeled in the process of initiation in the early Church. This call found in The Constitution on the Liturgy was followed up by the work of the Vatican Congregation of Worship that published a provisional Latin text for the RCIA. In 1974 English translation of the Rite was approved for use in the United States. In 1986 the bishops of the United States formally approved the Rite of Christian of Adults for the entire American Church.

Participation in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults is usually about a year long process for unbaptized adults who want to become Catholics. Inquirers who have been baptized in another Christian community are also invited to join in the process of exploring what it means to be a Catholic and formed in the faith. The baptized Christian completes the reception into the Catholic Church by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, making a Profession of Faith and celebrating Confirmation and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

THE PROCESS

The process for unbaptized adults who are seeking a close relationship with Jesus Christ and attracted to the Catholic Church in a time called a Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate. The length of this period may vary. When their search leads them to discuss the possibility of becoming Catholic, they have a conversation with a parish priest, or RCIA director. Under the guidance of the priest or director they may become an “Inquirer,” and look to be accepted into the Order of Catechumens. This is done through the Rite of Acceptance. This Rite takes place in the midst of the parish community where the “inquirers” states their desire to become a baptized member of the Catholic Church. The parish assembly welcomes them and the inquirers become “catechumens.”

The period of the catechumenate may vary depending on how God is leading the catechumen on the journey. During this period the catechumen learns the meaning of the sacraments, and reflects on what God is asking of them in the Scriptures. They will also learn the fundamentals of the Catholic faith and the responsibilities they will take on as believers. When the priest and the RCIA team working together agree that the catechumen is ready to make a commitment to the Catholic Church, the catechumen will make their request for Baptism at the celebration of the Rite of Election.

The Rite of Election is usually celebrated at the cathedral with the diocesan bishop presiding. The catechumens gather with their sponsors and families and publicly state their desire to enter the Catholic Church. Their names are recorded in The Book of the Elect, and they are now “the elect.”

The two final stages of the RCIA, purification and enlightenment, take place during Lent in preparation for Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation during the Ester Vigil. For the elect this is a period of prayer, further study, and spiritual direction.

Finally, at the Easter Vigil the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist are received and the elect becomes a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church.

MYSTAGOGY

The newly initiated Catholics next enter a period of “mystagogy,” a period of prayer and further reflection which continues at least until Pentecost. During mystagogy new Catholics have time to reflect on their experiences of the Easter Vigil, learn more about the Scriptures, the Sacraments and the teachings of the Catholic Church. This is also a period in which they can learn what it means to be an active member of the parish community. As a member, they will also have the opportunity to participate in the Church’s mission and serving others.

CONCLUSION

It is undoubtedly no accident that the Church introduced Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults modeled after the initiation rites practiced by the early Church. In the early Church’s experience, the process of initiation gave both the inquirer and the community the opportunity to assess the seriousness of the inquirer’s commitment and the responsibilities they would be accepting in a dangerous world.

Today the Church is more and more aware what it means to be a minority religion in a world pluralistic world. Becoming Catholic is not simply an individual decision. Rather the inquirer is entering a community of faith and learning both the joys and responsibilities as members of the Church. As they move forward they realize that they are not alone on this journey.

JAMES P. CAMPBELL

Jim Campbell has over 40 years of experience as a catechist and national speaker in Catholic religious education and publishing. He received a BA and MA degree in European History, and continued in doctoral work in history. His life changed when Jim and his wife Barbara left their teaching positions to study at the Aquinas Institute in Theology, then in Dubuque, IA. Barbara received a Master of Divinity degree from Aquinas, and would later receive a Doctor of Ministry degree from the University of St Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, IL. Jim received an MA in theology and a Doctor of Ministry in Christian Education from Aquinas Institute.

For a free copy of Jim Campbell’s book, *Every Man’s Journey*, visit **DynamicCatholic.com**



Vicki Klocke <vklocke@stjoeschool.net>

RCIA Article Request

Mark Moore <mark.moore@dynamiccatholic.com>
To: vklocke@stjoeparish.net

Wed, Sep 17, 2014 at 10:14 AM

Vicki,

We received your request to include James Campbell's RCIA article in your new manual. You have our permission to reprint the article with appropriate credit as you described.

We're glad we were able to provide information helpful to your project!

Blessings,

Mark Moore

The Dynamic Catholic Institute

Meeting People Where They Are... Leading them where God calls them to be!

2200 Arbor Tech Drive • Hebron • Kentucky • 41048

Phone: (859) 980-7900 Direct: (859) 980-7395





Interview Questions for a Potential Team Member

Interviewer: *This form would be used with a person seeking a specific area of responsibility on the initiation team, such as coordinating sponsors or facilitating a small group. The use of this form also implies that the person being interviewed understands the basic requirements for any team member, regardless of specific duties.*

These basic requirements include: in good standing sacramentally in the parish, evidence of a converted heart and a love for Jesus and his Church, desire to participate in the Church's mission of evangelization, basic knowledge of the Church's teachings, living in accord with the Church's teachings, desire to continue his/her formation, punctual and flexible, open to new relationships, open to questions, open to being a witness of faith to others, prudent and able to keep confidentiality. If these things are not known about the potential team member, then questions about the above requirements should be included in the interview. Notes on the conversation should be taken as needed.

Today's Date: _____

Name of person being interviewed: _____

Possible position on the team: _____

Name of interviewer: _____

Questions:

1. Describe your prayer life.
2. What is your previous experience in parish ministries?
3. What experience (formal or informal) have you had in developing fellowship skills?
4. What experience (formal or informal) have you had specifically in developing communication skills?
5. What is your previous experience in working on a team?
6. What gifts do you believe you can offer the team based on the "job description"?
7. In what areas would you need assistance?
8. What are your employment and family commitments at this time?
9. Are you involved in any other volunteer work at this time?
10. Would you have the time necessary to fulfill this position's demands?

Summary remarks by the interviewer (based on notes):

Recommendation:

Diocese of Covington Adult Inquirer Information Form

Information on this form is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission.

Parish Name: _____

Today's Date: _____ Interviewer Name: _____

Name: **First:** _____ **Middle:** _____ **Last:** _____

Maiden Name (if applicable): _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age _____

Place of Birth: _____
(Include **locality** (town, city, county, etc.), **region** (state, province, territory, etc.), and **country**)

Name of Father: _____
First **Middle** **Last**

Name of Mother: _____
First **Middle** **Last**

Mother's Maiden Name (if applicable): _____

Full Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell/Mobile Phone: _____ Occupation: _____

Email: (Preferred) _____ (Other) _____

1. Have you 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 were you baptized? _____

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

(c) Was water used? _____

(d) Were words of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit used? _____

(e) Name of church, if known: _____

(e) Address, if known: _____
(Include **locality** (town, city, county, etc.), **region** (state, province, territory, etc.), & **country**)

(g) What denomination have you most recently been attending? _____

2. If you were baptized Catholic, check those sacraments you have already received:

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

Diocese of Covington Adult Inquirer Information Form

Information on this form is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission.

Please, check the appropriate statement(s) below and provide any information requested beneath each statement.

☐ 1. 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.

(a) Are you currently living with this person? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ 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: _____

(Include **locality** (town, city, county, etc.), **region** (state, province, territory, etc.), and **country**)

(g) Officiating Authority of Marriage: _____

(Civil government, non-Christian minister, Christian minister, Catholic cleric)

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

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

☐ 6. I am a widow/widower and have not remarried since my spouse's death.

☐ 7. I am presently in a relationship with someone

(a) Are you currently living with this person? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(b) Has he/she been previously married? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

-Is this child baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If no, do you desire baptism for the child? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

-Is this child baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If no, do you desire baptism for the child? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

-Is this child baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If no, do you desire baptism for the child? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

-Is this child baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If no, do you desire baptism for the child? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

Diocese of Covington Adult Inquirer Information Form

Information on this form is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission.

-Is this child baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If no, do you desire baptism for the child? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

1. Please describe the types of religious education you have received, as a child and as an adult.

2. What or who has led you to desire to know more about the Catholic Faith?

3. What experiences of the Catholic Church have you had to date?

4. What are some of the questions or concerns you have about the Catholic Church?

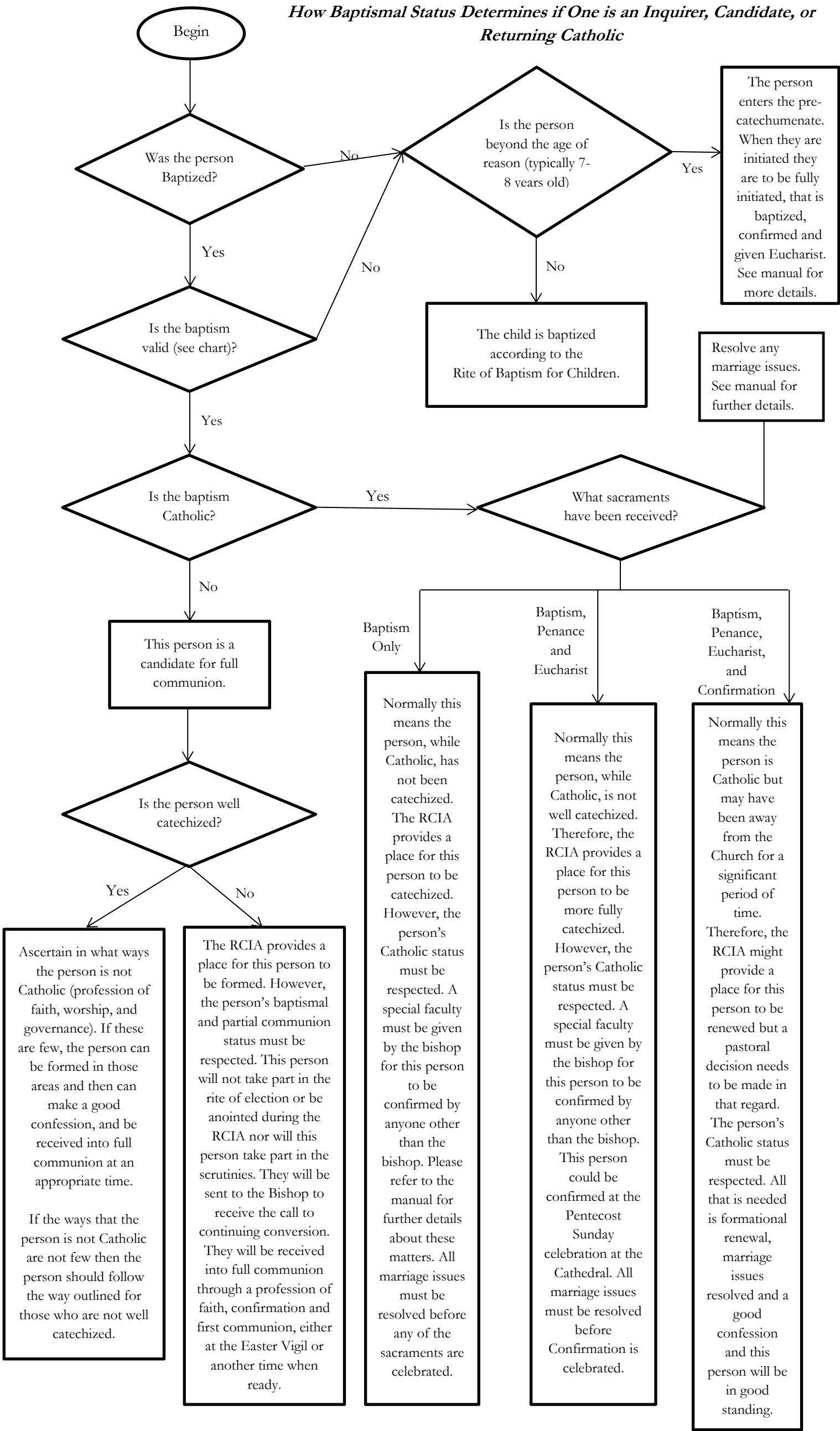
5. At this point in time, which of the following statements best describes your present feelings and thoughts about the possibility of joining the Catholic Church? (Please circle one)

- A. I need much more information about the Catholic Church before I would consider joining.
- B. I am considering joining, but I am still unsure about it.
- C. I am fairly sure that I would like to join, but I still need some time to study and pray about it.
- D. I am fairly sure that I want to join the Catholic Church.

For Office Use Only:

- A. Request Baptismal Records
- B. Form of Baptism (Water, Trinitarian)
- C. Follow-up on Marriage issues
- D. Follow-up on Children (If applicable)

How Baptismal Status Determines if One is an Inquirer, Candidate, or Returning Catholic



DETERMINATION OF BAPTISMAL VALIDITY

Diocese of Covington
August 2013

VALID BAPTISMS

Adventists
African Methodist Episcopal
African Methodist Episcopal Zion
Amish
Anglican Communion
Assembly of God
Baptists
Christian and Missionary Alliance
Christian Church
Christian Church, Disciples of Christ
Church of the Brethren
Church of Christ
Church of God:
 of Prophecy
 of Anderson, Indiana
 of Cleveland, Tennessee
 and various others
Church of the Nazarene
Classical Pentecostals
Cumberland Presbyterians
Evangelical United Brethren
Evangelical Churches
International Council of Community Churches
Liberal Catholic Church
Lutherans:
 Missouri Synod
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
 Wisconsin Lutheran
Mennonites
Methodists
Old Roman Catholics
Old Catholics
Orthodox Churches
Polish National Church
Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
Reformed Churches
Seven Hills
United Church of Christ

INVALID BAPTISMS

Apostolic Church
Bohemian Free Thinkers
Christadelphians
Christian Scientists
Church of Divine Science
Jehovah's Witnesses
Masons (no baptisms)
Mormons
Pentecostal Churches
Peoples Church of Chicago
Quakers
Rudolph Steiner's Christian Community:
 Die Christengemeinschaft
Salvation Army (no baptism)
Unitarians

**Baptism Testimonial
Diocese of Covington**

I, the undersigned _____, hereby testify that I
witnessed the baptism of _____,

Child of _____ (father's name).

And of _____ (mother's maiden name).

The person baptized was born on ____ / ____ / ____

in the State of _____ and the County of _____.

The baptismal ceremony was performed on ____ / ____ / ____

at _____

in the city of _____

in the state of _____

and the county of _____.

by _____

The sponsors (Godparents) were:

Godfather: _____

Godmother: _____

In testimony whereof on this day ____ / ____ / ____ , I affix my signature:

(SIGNATURE)

When the One Who Seeks to Become Catholic and/or Their Spouse Have Been Divorced

Those who are entering the Catholic Church or coming into full communion with the Catholic Church must be in a state of grace after having done so. This means that irregular marriages must be reconciled with the Catholic Church's teachings before the persons in such marriages are baptized into the Catholic Church or brought into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church naturally recognizes Catholic marriages but the Church also recognizes the marriages between the un-baptized and those marriages that are celebrated in the form required by the church of affiliation of the baptized. This means that if 'remarriage' has taken place without the establishment by the Catholic Church of a person's freedom to marry, an irregular marriage exists and needs to be reconciled. The issue in an irregular marriage is not if the marriage is sacramental but if each of the parties was free to marry at the time of the person's present marriage.

In addition, the Catholic Church teaches that when a man and a woman marry they become one. As such, what affects one affects the other. This means that if both of or either of the parties in a marriage have been divorced and 'remarried,' even if that one is not seeking to become Catholic, the situation needs to be reconciled. If one party was not free to marry because of a 'previous' marriage, the one marrying that one is not free to marry him or her because of that. What affects one affects the other because the two become one.

What follows is a very simplified outline to help you to determine what kind of case should be submitted to the Tribunal to begin reconciling the irregular marriage with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Remember that in formal and prior bond cases the Covington Tribunal must have or be able to gain competency to hear the case. The Covington Tribunal has the competency to hear these types of cases when the marriage which needs to be declared invalid took place in the Covington Diocese, or the 'ex-spouse' (aka respondent) lives in the diocese of Covington. The Covington Tribunal can gain the competence to hear a case if the Covington Diocese is the place where the petitioner lives or the place where the majority of the proofs will be collected, but only if the Judicial Vicar where the 'ex-spouse' (aka respondent) lives gives his consent to the Covington Tribunal to hear the case. This is why it is imperative for the Tribunal to be given the address of the 'ex-spouse' (aka respondent). If that cannot be done, it must be explained why it cannot be done and proof of having attempted to determine this information must be given. Also remember that in marriage validity cases, the petitioner has the responsibility to bring forth the evidence to prove the invalidity of the marriage in question. It is not an application process but a judicial process. Since the salvation of souls is the highest law of the Catholic Church, the Covington Tribunal stands ready to assist anyone who desires to pursue such cases.

Diocese of Covington
Tribunal Form Determination for Marriage Cases

1. Has the person, Catholic or not, remarried since getting divorced without the Catholic Church stating that he/she was free to remarry?
 - 1.1. If YES please go to 2.
 - 1.2. If NO there is no needed action at this time, unless the person is planning to remarry then proceed to 2.
2. Did the marriage involve a baptized Catholic?
 - 2.1. If NO please go to 3.
 - 2.2. If Yes:
 - 2.2.1. Was the marriage celebrated by a Catholic bishop, priest, deacon or someone the bishop permitted to assist at the marriage?
 - 2.2.1.1. If NO please go to 2.2.2.
 - 2.2.1.2. If YES please go to 4.
 - 2.2.2. Was the marriage later celebrated in the Catholic Church or radically sanated?
 - 2.2.2.1. If NO complete **Form 1: Invalid Marriage Due to a Total Lack of Form**
 - 2.2.2.2. If YES please go to 4.
3. Was either party validly baptized (see table 1) at the time of the wedding?
 - 3.1. If YES, that is ***at least one*** of the parties was validly baptized, go to 4.
 - 3.2. If neither party was validly baptized complete **Form 2: Pauline Privilege**
4. Was only one party unbaptized at the time of the marriage and remained so throughout the marriage?
 - 4.1. If NO, this means both parties were validly baptized at some point during the marriage, complete **Form 4: Petition for Annulment**.
 - 4.2. If YES, and there are marriages subsequent to this marriage that need to be reviewed complete **Form 3: Petrine Privilege**. If there are not any subsequent marriages to review then complete **Form 4: Petition for Annulment**.

All forms available through the Diocese of Covington Tribunal or on the Diocese of Covington website (www.covingtondiocese.org) select “All Diocesan Offices” then select “Tribunal”.

Interview Questions for a Potential Sponsor

Interviewer: *This form would be used to assist in discernment with a person who is willing to be a godparent or sponsor, but who is not sufficiently well known to the pastor and initiation leadership. Use the following questions as a guide for a conversation with the potential godparent or sponsor. Use of these questions should be preceded by ensuring that the person being interviewed meets the canonical requirements for this responsibility in the Church (see paragraphs 872-874 and 892-893 of the Code of Canon Law), and has had a chance to become aware of and consider the basic requirements and duties that a parish desires of a godparent or sponsor.*

The basic requirements include: in good standing sacramentally in the parish, evidence of a converted heart and a love for Jesus and his Church, desire to participate in the Church's mission of evangelization, basic knowledge of the Church's teachings, living in accord with the Church's teachings, desire to continue his/her formation, punctual and flexible, open to new relationships, open to questions, open to being a witness of faith to others, prudent and able to keep confidentiality. If these things are not known about the potential godparent/sponsor, then questions about the above requirements should be included in the interview.

The basic duties include: participate in weekly catechumenal gatherings, participate in all relevant liturgical rites, maintain some form of regular personal contact with the person during his/her time in the catechumenal process, continue regular contact especially during the person's first year as a Catholic, maintain periodic personal contact (if chosen as a godparent) with the person throughout your life. If these duties have not already been made known to the potential godparent or sponsor, then they should be discussed as part of the interview. Notes on the conversation should be taken as needed.

Today's Date: _____

Name of person being interviewed: _____

Name of interviewer: _____

Questions:

1. Describe your prayer life.
2. What is your previous experience in parish ministries?
3. What experience (formal or informal) have you had specifically in developing communication skills?
4. What is your previous experience with working with individuals in a group setting?
5. What gifts do you believe you have based on the "job description" of a godparent/sponsor?
6. In what areas do you think you would have the most difficulty?
7. It is vital that a godparent or sponsor be willing to share his or her own faith life with the person he or she is serving. Do you have any concerns or questions about the importance of this?
8. What are your employment and family commitments at this time?
9. Are you involved in any other volunteer work at this time?
10. Would you have the time necessary to serve as a godparent or sponsor if asked this year?

Summary remarks by the interviewer (based on notes):

Recommendation:

Sponsor Information

Name (First and Last): _____

_____ *Please initial after reading the following paragraph:*

I understand that as a godparent or sponsor 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 sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation; and I seek to the best of my understanding of my Catholic faith to be faithful to the teachings of the Church. 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 godparent or sponsor 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 further understand that being chosen as a godparent or sponsor is a lifetime commitment to be, as I am able, a faithful witness of the Catholic way of life to the individual I am called to serve. If I am not a member of the same parish as the person who I am serving, then I will obtain a Letter of Good Standing from my own parish, attesting to the fact that I attend Mass regularly on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, follow the precepts of the Church, and possess no impediments for serving as a godparent or sponsor.

Full Mailing Address: _____

Phone: (Daytime) _____ (Evening/Weekend) _____

Cell/Mobile Phone: _____ **Occupation:** _____

Email: (Home) _____ (Other) _____

Place Where You Were Baptized: _____

(include church name (or hospital, etc.), locality (town, city, county, etc.), region (state, province, territory, etc.), and country)

Place Where You Were Confirmed: _____

Parish Where You Are Currently Registered: _____

Full Mailing Address: _____

Pastor's Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

For Office Use

Godparent/Sponsor for: _____ Date: _____

Completed Initial Sponsor Formation by Date: _____

If from Another Parish, Letter of Good Standing Received by Date: _____

Notes: _____

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Sample Outline for Sponsor Training:

1) Give an Overview of the Initiation Process

What is Christian initiation process?

Purpose (conversion of heart to God, turning away from sin, desire for holiness through the Church)

Distinction between catechumens and candidates

Periods and rites of the process

Why are there godparents/sponsors?

Representatives of the community

Establish a relationship with the participant

What do godparents/sponsors do?

Attend weekly meetings, liturgical rites, and other initiation-related events

Sponsors may or may not become godparents

They are friends (companions on the journey)

They are not catechists

2) Discuss Qualities of a Godparent/Sponsor

Welcoming

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

Listening

Can I listen to another's faith journey?

Sharing Life and Sharing Faith

Can I be a friend?

Am I comfortable sharing about my interior life and struggles?

Faithful to Church Teaching

Do I support the Church's teachings?

Can I say "I don't understand..." instead of "I've never understood why..."?

Helpful

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

Active in the Parish/Community

Do I participate in some form of outreach?

A Prayerer

Will I pray for the person I am asked to sponsor?

Will I daily ask God to help me to serve the person to the best of my ability?

Open to Differences in Participants

Will I be open to varied types of Catholic spirituality and different ways of living a Catholic life?

Will I be open to gently challenging and seeking to redirect spiritualities that conflict with a Christian understanding of God?

Able to Trust in God's Plan

Can I be detached when things go differently than I had hoped?

3) Discuss Handing on Catholic Culture

Importance of helping RCIA participants understand and appropriate Catholic culture

Identify "Catholic culture" and "parish culture"

How to share our Catholic/parish culture with others

4) Explain Conversion

How conversion is a change in outlook and action

Be aware of signs of conversion; what to look for

Have trainers tell about their own journeys of conversion to the Lord

5) Discuss How to Model Prayer and Pray with Participants

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

Discuss different prayer styles

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

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

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

6) Encourage Godparents/Sponsors to be Witnesses to Charity

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

How to participate in the corporal works of mercy

How to invite an RCIA participant to do so

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

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

What if the person has an irregular marriage?

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

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

What if the person is not ready to become Catholic?

Why do I have to attend so many events?

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

Diocese of Covington Sponsor Job Description

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

Specific Gifts Needed:

- ✠ Fully initiated and active practicing Catholic
- ✠ Active registered parishioner of our parish, in good standing (parish sponsors)
- ✠ Love for Christ and his Church
- ✠ Basic understanding of the Church's teachings
- ✠ Steadfast commitment to the teachings of the magisterium of the Catholic Church
- ✠ Evidence of a lived faith in one's personal life
- ✠ Mature Christian understanding of the meaning of "servant" and "service"
- ✠ Punctual, flexible, and prepared to make the required commitments
- ✠ Good communication and listening skills
- ✠ Openness to new relationships
- ✠ Prudent and able to keep confidentiality

Specific Duties/Responsibilities:

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

Diocese of Covington Practical Suggestions for RCIA Sponsors

From the Church's Guidelines for the RCIA Process:

“Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidate's moral character, faith, and intention.” (RCIA 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 11)

Keep in mind that these are suggestions but not necessarily requirements and not all may be appropriate for every situation:

- ✠ Above all, pray for the person you are serving as a sponsor.
- ✠ Exchange telephone numbers and email addresses with the person.
- ✠ To help the person feel at home in the RCIA setting, try to arrive for the RCIA sessions and Rites before the person.
- ✠ Ask your inquirer/catechumen/candidate to notify you or a team member in the event that he or she will miss a session.
- ✠ If the person misses an RCIA session, call afterwards to show concern.
- ✠ Extend an invitation to attend Mass or other parish activities/ministries with you.
- ✠ Introduce the person to other parishioners.
- ✠ Extend an invitation to attend a Catholic Baptism, wedding, funeral, parish reconciliation service, or other liturgical event with you. Allow time to discuss the experience before or after.
- ✠ Offer to baby-sit sometime so that the person you are serving can have a special night out with his or her spouse.
- ✠ Share good Catholic resources (books, magazines, tapes) or go to a Catholic bookstore together to browse.
- ✠ Suggest having a casual lunch or coffee or dessert together sometime.
- ✠ Send a Christmas card, or give a small gift.
- ✠ Prior to receiving Baptism, the person you are serving will be asked to participate in the long-standing tradition of choosing a patron saint's name from among the many saints of the Bible and the Church's history. You can assist in this process in many ways, especially by praying for guidance, discussing your favorite saints, and helping the person you are serving think about how to decide and to look for resources on saints.
- ✠ Give an appropriate gift at the time of the person's initiation (patron saint medal, book on the chosen patron saint, rosary, subscription to a good Catholic periodical)
- ✠ Remember the anniversary of the person's Baptism or reception into the Church (card, note, phone call, etc.)
- ✠ Be creative!

Lead by the example of your lives. Be a good Catholic. Live the faith.

“How I wish that when people discovered you are Catholic, they could immediately conclude that you are honest, hardworking, generous, loving, humble, disciplined, prayerful, and generally in love with life.” (Matthew Kelly, Rediscovering Catholicism p. 42)

The Heart of this Ministry of Service

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

SAMPLE

Pre-catechumenate Curriculum Outline

Page 1 of 3

Note: Sessions P01 - P06 are intended for those who are "unchurched" or have little or no background in Christianity or religion. These may be conducted with individuals or in small groups before the full group begins meeting. Sessions P07 - P11 are intended for the entire group of participants and should take place prior to celebrating the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome.				
	TOPIC <i>Objective</i>	Subtopics	US Catechism for Adults Suggested Reading / Reference	Other Resources for this Topic (See bottom of page for general resources)
P01	FINDING GOD IN OUR LIVES <i>Discussion of the perceived presence (or absence) of God in the our lives and the lives of the inquirers.</i>	Explore the questions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is God? • How can we know God exists? • How do we know he is present in our lives? 	None	Psalm 139
P02	WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US <i>Brief introduction to the story of Salvation History and our human response to what God has done for us.</i>	Explore the questions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has God done for humanity? • What is humanity's response? • How does God maintain a relationship with humanity? • How do we / can we respond to God's call for relationship with Him? 	None	Salvation History Materials from Ann Lankford / Diocese of LaCrosse, WI
P03	WHO IS JESUS CHRIST? <i>Brief introduction to the person of Jesus Christ and the centrality of Jesus to the Christian faith.</i>	Explore the questions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is Jesus Christ? • Why is He the center of the Christian life? • How can we develop a relationship with Him? • Where do we go from here? 	None	
P04	JOURNEY OF FAITH <i>Explore our faith journey up to this point and where it might be taking us from this point forward.</i>	Explore the questions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do our experience(s) of faith shape our lives and our ideas of God? • How do we get to know God and build a relationship with Him? • Is faith a one-time thing or a continuum? (Is it the destination or the journey?) 	None	

SAMPLE

Pre-catechumenate Curriculum Outline

Page 2 of 3

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	TOPIC <i>Objective</i>	Subtopics	US Catechism for Adults Suggested Reading / Reference	Other Resources for this Topic (See bottom of page for general resources)
P05 EXPLORING PRAYER <i>Reflecting on prayer and how it may have been at work in our lives.</i>		Explore the Questions: • What is prayer? • How do we pray? • How has prayer already been a part of our lives?	None	
P06 A PROCESS OF CONVERSION <i>Discuss the meaning of conversion and how it applies to the participants and the RCIA process.</i>		Explore the Questions: • What does it mean to experience conversion? • How does sin / brokenness separate us from God? From others? • If we want to grow closer to God / Jesus, what do we need to "turn away" from? • Where do we begin to change?	None	
P07 GATHERING / INTRODUCTIONS / EXPECTATIONS OF PROCESS <i>Introduce Catechumens and Candidates to the people and process of the RCIA in order to become comfortable with them.</i>		Introduction of all present (participants, sponsors, team, clergy) • Overview of the RCIA process (stages, rites) • Discuss meeting times and places (hand out schedule) • Discuss expectations / attendance of Catechumens, • Candidates and Sponsors	None	
P08 INTRODUCTION TO MASS / TOUR OF CHURCH <i>Assist in beginning / nurturing the relationship with God through an understanding of our liturgical worship and place of worship.</i>		Introduction to Missal and Liturgy of the Word Brief tour of church w/ time for questions	Parts of Ch 35 & 36	Missal, "Mass Appeal" by Jimmy Akin, available from Catholic Answers

SAMPLE
Pre-catechumenate Curriculum Outline
 Page 3 of 3

Note: Sessions P01 - P06 are intended for those who are "unchurched" or have little or no background in Christianity or religion. These may be conducted with individuals or in small groups before the full group begins meeting. Sessions P07 - P11 are intended for the entire group of participants and should take place prior to celebrating the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome.				
	TOPIC <i>Objective</i>	Subtopics	US Catechism for Adults Suggested Reading / Reference	Other Resources for this Topic (See bottom of page for general resources)
P09 REVELATION <i>Understanding of how God is known by us and makes Himself known to us.</i>		Sacred Scripture Tradition	Ch 2 & 3	Bibles
P10 FAITH / GRACE <i>Understanding of what grace is and how we receive it. Understanding of faith and how it impacts every part of life.</i>		What is faith? How do we grow in faith? What is grace? (actual / sanctifying) How do we receive grace?	Ch 4	
P11 TAKING UP THE CROSS <i>Introduce the Cross of Christ and the idea of "crosses" we bear in our lives as Christians.</i> <i>Note: This is a direct preparation for being marked with the cross in the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome. Could be done in conjunction with a preparation & practice for the rite.</i>		Explore the Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to "take up the cross"? • What are some "crosses" people carry in their lives? • How can "carrying our crosses" bring something good to our lives? • How do our "crosses" help us grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ? 	None	



Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming

Interviewer: Before beginning, read RCIA 42 and 43. This meeting should be preceded by a discussion with any members of the RCIA community (clergy, team members, godparents, sponsors, etc.) who have assisted in the formation of the individual regarding the person's readiness to take this step.

Use the following questions as a guide for a conversation with the inquirer. As you talk, let the inquirer know how you have seen God at work in his or her life during the inquiry period. Be sure to explain that, while some individuals may be ready to go through this Rite at this point, others may not, and that if someone needs more time to discern, learn about, and decide to follow the Catholic way of life, that is fine. If the individual is interested in celebrating these Rites, and you or others with whom you have spoken have concerns about his or her readiness, explain your concerns and that it might be in the inquirer's best interest to continue to discern for a period of time. At the conclusion of your conversation, unless you or the inquirer needs more time to come to a decision, let him or her know whether or not he or she will participate in the Rite of Acceptance or Welcoming. Notes on the conversation should be taken as needed.

Name: _____

Seeking admission as a ☐ catechumen (unbaptized) ☐ candidate (baptized)

Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s), if determined: _____

-
- 1) What has been your experience of the sessions up to this point? What has affected you the most? What have you enjoyed the most? What has challenged you the most?
 - 2) What changes have occurred in your relationship with God or with your family or friends during this time?
 - 3) What kind of changes do you see in yourself?
 - 4) How has your relationship with your godparent/sponsor (if established) been working out?
 - 5) What experiences have you had in this parish community up to this point? Are you beginning to have a sense of belonging to this parish community?
 - 6) What experiences have you had in reading the Scriptures?
 - 7) Tell me about how you pray.
 - 8) How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?
 - 9) To what degree do you see yourself turning away from sin and developing a desire for virtue?
 - 10) Do you feel that you have a good grasp of the gospel (the good news) that Jesus Christ came to reveal? What do you most desire to learn more about?
 - 11) How would you describe what being a Catholic/living a Catholic life means? What does it mean to you that a Catholic is called to live a life of charity?
 - 12) What does it mean to be a member of the Body of Christ? A member of the Roman Catholic Church?

After explaining the importance of the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming, and the questions that will be asked of the inquirer during the Rite, then ask:

- 13) Do you understand what is being asked of you in the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming?
- 14) Do you feel that you are prepared to take this step in the initiation process?

The Importance of the Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word

The importance of the Sunday Mass for all Catholics:

The importance of celebrating the word of God in a communal way is emphasized strongly by the Catholic Church. This is seen both in the instructions for the R.C.I.A. directed toward those preparing to join the Church as well as in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Code of Canon Law directed toward those who are already full members of the Church. While personal prayer and scripture study and reflection certainly are important and encouraged, we cannot forget that we are a people of community. This is why we gather every week on Sunday to celebrate Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection, and partake of the gifts of His body and blood in the Eucharist.

The Sunday Mass is very important to the life of the Catholic Christian. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church." [CCC 2177]

The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day." [CCC 2180]

The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin. [CCC 2181]

Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"If because of lack of a sacred minister or for other grave cause participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible, it is specially recommended that the faithful take part in the Liturgy of the Word if it is celebrated in the parish church or in another sacred place according to the prescriptions of the diocesan bishop, or engage in prayer for an appropriate amount of time personally or in a family or, as occasion offers, in groups of families." [CCC 2182]

The Importance of the Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word

The importance of the Sunday Mass on the RCIA Journey:

In the same way, community is an important part of the formation of those preparing for Christian Initiation. While it is important for each catechumen and candidate to develop and foster his or her personal relationship with Christ through individual prayer, study, and reflection, it is equally important for each of you to pray with and become part of the community.

Part of the role of the RCIA Team is to assist you in understanding and learning to follow the guidelines that the Church has set out for her members. These guidelines are intended to help you to develop the best possible relationship with Christ and the Church and to most fully live out your Catholic Christian faith. Paragraph number 83 in the “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults” (the official Church document outlining the process and Rites by which the Church initiates new members), states, “From the very beginning of the period of the catechumenate the catechumens should be taught to keep holy the Lord’s Day.”

The importance of the Sunday Reflection on the Word for Catechumens and Candidates:

While it is of the utmost importance for each catechumen and candidate to attend Mass and participate in the Liturgy of the Word each Sunday, we cannot diminish the importance of reflecting upon the Word of God with the smaller community of catechumens and candidates. This is why the RCIA Team provides an opportunity every Sunday for all in the RCIA process to attend the first part of the Mass and then be led by a team member in a group reflection on the readings for that day. It is very important for every catechumen and candidate to attend these sessions on a regular basis. The learning, sharing and reflection that takes place during the Sunday Reflection on the Word is intended to help the catechumens and candidates not only to learn about and reflect upon the scriptures they hear throughout the period of the catechumenate, but also to form their own habits and methods for reflecting upon the weekly scriptures after their initiation is complete.

For these reasons, we would like to encourage you now, during this time of formation, to begin making the Sunday Mass a priority in your personal lives. We do understand that due to personal circumstances, work schedules, travel, or other reasons, it will not always be possible for you to attend the particular Mass when the reflection on the Word takes place. However, *it is still very important that you attend Mass every Sunday and make some attempt to reflect on the Sunday readings with a sponsor or other appropriate person.* If you are unable to attend the designated Mass and Sunday reflection on the Word for the Catechumens and Candidates, we ask that you attend Mass at another time that you are able.

In this handout, you will find information that will be useful to you in finding other Mass options, both locally and out of the area. We ask that, if possible, you spend some time discussing the Sunday scripture readings with your sponsor or another appropriate person (e.g., Catholic family member or friend). Finally, whenever you are unable to attend the designated Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word with the rest of the RCIA Catechumens and Candidates, we ask that you take the time to fill out the attached reflection page. This will help us to see that you are making the commitment to attend Sunday Mass regularly as part of your formation, and that you took time to reflect on the Scripture readings. If you had any questions about anything in the readings and would like a team member to follow up with you to explain anything, please indicate this on the form so that we can do so. You may turn these in at the evening RCIA session. Additional copies of the forms will be available each week if you need more copies. If you know ahead of time that you will be attending a different Mass and would like some materials to assist you in your personal reflections on the readings, please ask the RCIA Coordinator.

The Importance of the Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word

Why should I make a firm commitment to Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word?

There are a number of reasons why catechumens and candidates need to be committed to attending Mass at the scheduled time and participating in the Sunday Reflection on the Word. The first is the most important reason. The other two, while not of the foremost importance, are worth making mention.

1. *The Church is a Community. We Celebrate as a Community. The RCIA is a Community-based Faith Formation.* This document speaks to the importance of community in prayer, worship, and the celebration of the Word of God in the eyes of the Church. This is the truest and most important reason for participation in the Sunday Reflection on the Word. We hope this reason will be written in your heart as part of your more complete understanding of the Church and its relationship to Christ. It is our hope that in reading this information and reflecting upon it, you will come to understand your participation in the Sunday Reflection on the Word not as an obligation to the RCIA process or to the RCIA team, but an obligation to Christ and to yourself as his follower. You owe it to yourself to be fed and nourished by his Word in this special way during your formation and preparation for the sacraments of initiation, and you owe it to Christ to have the fullest possible understanding of his Word when you say yes to him in those sacraments. And you owe it to Christ and to yourself to continue in that commitment throughout your life as a Catholic Christian after your initiation is complete. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist (and the Sunday reflection on the Word for the catechumens and candidates) should be viewed not as a burden, but as a blessing; not as an obligation, but as a privilege.
2. *Witness to the Community* The catechumens and candidates play a role as witnesses to the rest of the community. The parish community sees you coming of your own desire as adults to seek out the Catholic faith and committing to participation in the process to become members of the faith community. This is an affirmation of their own faith and an inspiration to them. If you do not attend Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word, this is a visible sign which may be interpreted by the community as saying that this is not a matter of high importance.
3. *Common Courtesy* A member of the RCIA team has taken the time to prepare ahead of time and be there to lead the Sunday reflection on the Word session. That person normally will attend mass twice on that day so that he or she can receive the Eucharist at another mass. It is a matter of courtesy to be present to participate, since they have given up their time for you.

The Importance of the Sunday Mass and Reflection on the Word

Finding a Mass Time Locally or when Traveling:

[Insert here the Sunday Mass schedule for your parish](#)

If none of these times fits your schedule on a particular weekend, you may also attend a Mass at any other local Catholic parish. Mass Times for Churches in our Diocese can be found on the Diocesan web site at www.covingtondiocese.org. On the home page, scroll down to the “News and Information” box on the right-hand side and click on “Parish Mass Schedule”. This is updated once a year and published in the Diocesan newspaper, *The Messenger*.

If you are traveling out of the area over a weekend and need assistance finding a Catholic Church / Mass times in the area where you will be staying, you can go to www.masstimes.org and click on “Enter Main Page”. This site allows you to find a Catholic Church based on zip code, city and state, or other criteria, and will provide you with the Mass times for the Churches, along with other information such as address, phone number and directions.

If you are in a remote area where a Catholic Church is not readily available, or if you are ill or for some other serious reason cannot attend Mass at all on a given Sunday, it is still advised that you spend some time reading the scriptures for that particular Sunday and spend some time in prayer and reflection (as a group, if possible, if you are with other Catholics). The Sunday readings for each lectionary cycle can be found listed in the back of the New American Bible which you received at your Rite of Acceptance / Welcoming. There is also a chart to show which liturgical cycle (A, B, or C) to use, based on the calendar year. Please see a team member if you need assistance in using this information. Readings can also be found on the US Conference of Catholic Bishops web site: www.usccb.org by clicking on “Readings” in the bar at the top of the page and then choose the correct Sunday date on the clickable calendar provided.

Personal Reflection on Sunday Liturgy of the Word – Catechumens and Candidates

Name: _____

Date: _____

Church Attended: _____

Mass Time: _____

Celebrant: _____

This is what stood out for me in the readings and why:

One way I might put the message of these scriptures into action in my life is:

Questions I had about the readings this week:

SAMPLE

Catechumenate Curriculum Outline

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Note: Sessions are intended for the entire group of participants after celebrating the Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcome.				
	TOPIC <i>Objective</i>	Subtopics	US Catechism for Adults Suggested Reading / Reference	Other Resources for this Topic (See bottom of page for general resources)
C01	CREATION AND ORIGINAL SIN <i>Understanding that God created humans in His image, yet gave us the gift of free will</i>	Creation Beings (Angels vs. humans) Free Will (Fall of angels / angels & demons) Original Sin (Fall of humans) Sin / Concupiscence	Ch 6	
C02	TRINITY / GOD THE FATHER <i>Understanding of God as imminent and transcendent</i>	Introduction to the doctrine of the Trinity Discussion of God the Father • as the first person of the Trinity • as our Father Images of God the Father from Scripture	Ch 5	
C03	INCARNATION / GOD THE SON <i>Understanding of Jesus as the second person of the Trinity and True God / True Man</i>	The Incarnation as part of God's saving plan after the fall (salvation history) Jesus as: • Second person of the Trinity • Word made flesh • True God / True Man (Divinity and humanity of Christ) • Fulfillment of the Old Testament • Priest, Prophet, King (Christ the King) • Redeemer • The Good Shepherd • Teacher / Messiah	Ch 7	Catholic Update: "The Four Faces of Jesus" (C0513)
C04	SALVATION / REDEMPTION BY THE CROSS <i>Understanding of what Christ did for us on the Cross</i>	Christ's Obedience to the Cross Redemption / Salvation Our participation in the saving work of Christ	Ch 8	

General Resources Available:
 Catechism of the Catholic Church (can be found at www.usccb.org), US Catholic Catechism For Adults
 ACM Catechists Manual, ACM Participant Handouts, Catholic Updates

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C05	HOLY SPIRIT <i>Understanding of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity and as the one who sanctifies us</i>	Holy Spirit as third person of Trinity Holy Spirit as a gift from Christ Scriptural images of the Holy Spirit Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost	Ch 9	Holy Spirit Chaplet available at no cost from Holy Spirit Center in Cincinnati
C06	MORNING OF REFLECTION ON PRAYER <i>Understanding of how and why we pray</i>	Discussion and experiences of various forms and types of prayer	Ch 35 & 36	
C07	ETERNAL DESTINY <i>Understanding of our eternal destiny in light of our relationship with God</i>	Final Judgement (Individual /General Judgement) Heaven / Hell / Purgatory Communion of Saints Second Coming	Ch 13	
C08	CHURCH <i>Understanding of the Church as a community established by Christ</i>	Four Marks of the Church Church as the Body of Christ / People of God Teaching Authority of the Church (Magisterium) Explanation of Church Councils / Examples Apostolic Succession Hierarchy History / Evolution (Splits, schisms, Protestant Reformation)	Ch 10 & 11	
C09	PASCHAL MYSTERY / LITURGICAL YEAR <i>Understanding of how our liturgical celebrations reflect the Paschal Mystery</i>	Paschal Mystery Liturgical Calendar Lectionary / Cycles	Ch 14	Liturgical Calendars from Liturgy Training Publications

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C10	INTRODUCTION TO SACRAMENTS / SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM <i>Understanding Baptism as giving us new life in Christ and as initiation into the Church community</i>	What is a sacrament? Introduce the seven sacraments and how they are grouped (initiation, healing, in service of communion) Sacrament of Baptism (rite, symbols) Baptism gives us new life Baptism makes us members of the Church	Ch 15	
C11	SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION <i>Understanding Confirmation as the completion of baptismal grace and necessary to complete initiation into the full communion of the Church</i>	Confirmation as the completion of baptismal grace Sacrament of Confirmation (rite, symbols) Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit	Ch 16	
C12	EUCCHARIST (1) <i>Understanding the Eucharist as the sacrificial gift of Christ to the Church</i>	Sacrificial nature of the Eucharist / Paschal Mystery Last Supper / Institution of the Eucharist by Christ / Christ's gift of self Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (why we genuflect to tabernacle)	Ch 17	
C13	EUCCHARIST (2) <i>Understanding the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life</i>	Walk-through of Liturgy of the Eucharist (mass prayers) Receiving the Body of Christ and becoming the Body of Christ in the Eucharist Living out the Eucharist in our daily lives <i>Reception of the sacrament at Mass ("mechanics" of receiving the Body & Blood) is covered at Lenten retreat</i>	Ch 17	

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	TOPIC <i>Objective</i>	Subtopics	US Catechism for Adults Suggested Reading / Reference	Other Resources for this Topic (See bottom of page for general resources)
C14 RECONCILIATION <i>Understanding of God's mercy and the grace of the sacrament of Reconciliation</i>		God's Mercy Origin of the sacrament (from scripture) Grace offered through the sacrament Mortal vs. venial sins Forms of Sacrament (individual, communal, gen. absolution) Reception of Sacrament (examination of conscience, rite, penance)	Ch 18	Going to Confession Pamphlet from <i>Our Sunday Visitor</i>
C15 ANOINTING OF THE SICK <i>Understanding the role of suffering in the Christian life and the healing presence of Christ in the sacrament</i>		Role of sickness and suffering in Christian life Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (rite, symbols, meaning) Graces received and spiritual / physical healing offered	Ch 19	
C16 HOLY ORDERS <i>Understanding the ordained priesthood and other religious vocations</i>		Ordained Priesthood vs. priesthood of the people through baptism Sacrament of Holy Orders (rite, symbols, levels of ordination - deacon, priest, bishop) Hierarchy of ordained ministry (Pope, Bishops, Priests, Deacons + cardinals, etc & role of each) Diocesan Priests vs. Religious Order Priests Consecrated life (brothers / sisters)	Ch 20	

General Resources Available:
 Catechism of the Catholic Church (can be found at www.usccb.org), US Catholic Catechism For Adults
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C17	MARRIAGE & HUMAN SEXUALITY <i>Understanding sacramental marriage within God's plan for human sexuality</i>	Brief introduction to Theology of the Body Meaning of sacramental marriage in God's plan Sacrament of Marriage (rite, symbols, ministers of sacrament) Marriage as a covenant	Ch 21	Theology of the Body
C18	MORALITY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY <i>Understanding how to live out our sexuality within God's plan</i>	Chastity Co-Habitation Contraception / NFP Reproductive Technologies Marital fidelity Divorce / Annulment Same Sex Attraction	Ch 21 & 30	Theology of the Body, pamphlets are available on individual topics from <i>Our Sunday Visitor</i> and other publishers
C19	MARY <i>Understanding of Mary's role as Mother of God, model of faith, and intercessor</i>	Immaculate Conception Virgin Mother Mother of God Mary's role in salvation history Assumption / Mary as Queen of Heaven Mary as intercessor	Ch 12	

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C20	SACRAMENTALS AND POPULAR DEVOTIONS <i>Understanding how signs, symbols and devotions direct us to Christ</i>	Eucharistic Adoration Rosary Holy water, incense, candles Medals, icons, statues, pictures Stations of the Cross Novenas Divine Mercy Chaplet	Ch 22	Rosary Pamphlet Holy water bottles Prayer cards Catholic Update on Sacramentals (C0213B)
C21	SOCIAL JUSTICE <i>Understanding our social responsibility as Christians</i>	Life and dignity of the human person Call to family, community and participation Rights and responsibilities Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Dignity of work and rights of the workers Solidarity Care for the environment	Ch 24 & 31	
C22	STEWARDSHIP <i>Understanding our use of God's gifts</i>	Everything is a gift from God Sharing our gifts of time, talent, and treasure Stewardship of the Earth Stewardship within the Church	Ch 24 & 31	
C23	ADULT INSIGHT DAY <i>First-hand exposure to Social Justice and Stewardship in action in our community</i>	Insight Day sponsored by Catholic Charities including visits to various ministries in Newport and Covington. <i>This will take place on a Saturday morning in close proximity to the presentation of lessons 24 and 25 on Social Justice and Stewardship.</i>	n/a	

General Resources Available:
 Catechism of the Catholic Church (can be found at www.usccb.org), US Catholic Catechism For Adults
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	TOPIC <i>Objective</i>	Subtopics	US Catechism for Adults Suggested Reading / Reference	Other Resources for this Topic (See bottom of page for general resources)
C24	LENTEN RETREAT <i>Final spiritual preparation for reception of the Easter Sacraments</i>	Reflection on the Sacraments of Initiation Reflection on the personal journey to the sacraments <i>This will take place on a Saturday morning during Lent and may also include preparation for a Scrutiny Rite</i>	n/a	
C25	LOVE OF GOD <i>Understanding our covenant relationship with God</i>	God's love for us and our response Discussion of the first 3 commandments	Ch 25,26,27	
C26	CHRISTIAN MORALITY I <i>Understanding Christian Morality</i>	What is morality? Human dignity & Community What makes an act moral? What is Virtue? Cardinal & Theological Virtues Beatitudes	Ch 23 Ch 28 - 34	
C27	CHRISTIAN MORALITY II <i>Understanding Christian Morality</i>	What is Sin? Relational vs. Legal Model Mortal and Venial Sin Social sin What is Conscience? Forming one's conscience	Ch 23 Ch 28 - 34	

Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical catechesis follows the liturgical year as it presents the life of Christ in its cycle of seasons and feasts. Very often liturgical catechesis and Lectionary-based catechesis are understood as synonymous terms. This is not the case. Liturgical catechesis bases itself on the liturgy, the sacraments, the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year as well as the biblical readings used in these celebrations as the origins of catechetical topics. The entire mystery of Christ is made present and manifested to us in the liturgy of the Church. Dogma is proclaimed and celebrated within the liturgy before the very eyes of and in the Christian assemble. Hence the methodology of liturgical catechesis makes for a complete exposition of the faith while situating and directing the participant in a seamless tapestry – liturgy of the Word and its inherent themes, preaching drawn from those themes, the essential symbols of the Church and Christian life – presenting a complete doctrinal expose that is logically explored and more easily ingested, owned and committed to one's heart, mind and soul because of the continual connection that is made between the doctrine and the return to it every time that liturgy is celebrated throughout life. For example, every time the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated, former catechumens nurtured in a liturgical catechesis methodology will remember not only Jesus' baptism, but everything they learned about baptism that they explored on that feast day since both were so integrally intertwined. Catechesis that flows from the liturgical year and the celebration of Sunday within that yearly cycle is a very comprehensive presentation of and a more effective formation in the truths of our faith.

Presented below are possible catechetical themes during the liturgical year utilizing the methodology of liturgical catechesis. However, the doctrinal themes suggested here are just that, suggestions, because within every liturgy there is the potential to explore a myriad of doctrinal themes. This is not an exhaustive list.

Liturgical Day / Season	Possible Catechetical Topics
Advent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eschatology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death • Judgment • Heaven • Hell • Purgatory 2. The coming of Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incarnation • The Second Coming (Parousia) 3. Prayer 4. The Liturgical Year / Calendar
Immaculate Conception	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ saves us from our sins 2. Mary's unique experience of salvation 3. Christ saves us from our sins through the Sacraments and the Sacrament of Penance in particular
Fourth Sunday of Advent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Christian message unfolds 2. The Annunciation 3. The coming of the Son of God in time

Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical Day / Season	Possible Catechetical Topics
Christmas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Incarnation 2. Salvation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiveness of sins • Divine life dispensed through the sacraments
Holy Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ's sanctifying the everyday 2. The fourth commandment 3. The family as a place for the manifestation of God
Mary, Mother of God	Mary's unique role in salvation history as the mother of Jesus Christ who is both human and divine
Epiphany	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God's universal offer of salvation 2. Where can we encounter God? 3. Implications of the Incarnation
Baptism of the Lord	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ the new Adam 2. The Sacrament of Baptism
Ordinary Time between the Baptism of the Lord and Ash Wednesday	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faith 2. The Kingdom of God 3. Discipleship 4. Call of the Apostles and hierarchical structure of the Church 5. Sacrament of Holy Orders 6. Prayer
Ash Wednesday	Twofold meaning of Lent: Baptismal and Penitential
Lent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Morality 2. Natural Law 3. The Decalogue 4. Sacrament of Penance 5. Discipleship
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christian view of suffering 2. Jesus as the Messiah
Holy Thursday	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Eucharist as a sacrifice and a memorial meal 2. Holy Orders / Institution of the priesthood
Good Friday	The Paschal Mystery
Holy Saturday	The mystery of Salvation
Easter Sunday	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Paschal Mystery 2. Resurrection 3. Paradigm of the Paschal Mystery in the Christian's life
Divine Mercy Sunday	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forgiveness and Reconciliation 2. Sacramentals and devotions

Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical Day / Season	Possible Catechetical Topics
	3. Indulgences
Easter Season	1. The Eucharist 2. Presence of Christ in the Church and the Sacraments
Ascension of the Lord	1. The mystical Body of Christ 2. Where the head has gone the body must follow
Pentecost	1. The Holy Spirit 2. The birth of the Church 3. Confirmation
Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ	1. Eucharist 2. Eucharistic Adoration 3. Viaticum
Trinity Sunday	1. The mystery of the Triune God 2. Humanity created for communion in the image of the Triune God
Ordinary Time from Trinity Sunday to the First Sunday of Advent	1. Miracles 2. Marriage and Theology of the Body 3. Anointing of the Sick 4. Prayer 5. Catholic Social Teaching 6. Ecumenism 7. Sacraments as encounters with Christ
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	1. All Salvation comes through Christ 2. Resurrection of the body 3. The sanctity of the body 4. Mary's unique Grace given to her by God
All Saints Day	1. Communion of Saints 2. Canonization 3. Universal Call to Holiness 4. Eschatology
All Souls Day	1. Communion of Saints 2. Purgatory 3. Prayer for the dead 4. Eschatology

REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR-ROUND CATECHUMENATE

A Message to the RCIA Teams of the Diocese of Lansing
from the
Christian Initiation Advisory Committee



Introduction

This paper is the fruit of several discussions held among veteran RCIA directors in the Diocese of Lansing from May through November of 2005. They were called together by the Christian Initiation Advisory Committee for the Diocese of Lansing, which wanted to study the effectiveness of establishing a year-round catechumenate in parishes. Three major realities gave impetus to these conversations.

First, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults calls for such a year-round process. “The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful...suited to the spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace” (RCIA, 4-5). It is a journey made up of four distinct periods and marked by the celebration of several rites. The pre-catechumenate period, or period of inquiry, is of great importance and should not be omitted (RCIA 36). Essentially, the initiation process balances two ideals: the Church’s evangelical desire to hand on the tradition it has received and each inquirer’s desire to be formed in that faith tradition.

Second, inquirers approach Catholic faith communities throughout the year, whenever the Spirit prompts them. This is not limited to the academic year nor to a nine-month model of catechesis.

Finally, as initiating communities, we are called to accompany each inquirer on a journey of faith which works in God’s time and with God’s grace.

The conversations of the subcommittee surfaced a number of major concerns regarding a year-round catechumenate:

- 1) What is the current model of Christian initiation in most parishes of the diocese?
- 2) What does a year-round catechumenate look like?
- 3) How long should catechumens be in formation?
- 4) How will the year-round catechumenate model better serve those to be initiated?
- 5) When should catechumens be initiated?
- 6) How will an RCIA director coordinate an on-going process?
- 7) How can a parish begin to transition to this model?

A Common Parish Scenario

Perhaps the following scenario is typical in your parish.

The RCIA “class” began in September, since the staff follows approximately the same schedule as the religious education program. Three unbaptized inquirers were present for the first session along with two baptized persons from the Protestant tradition. The sessions met each week for four weeks.

Then, another unbaptized inquirer presented herself. The RCIA director worked with this new inquirer in one-on-one sessions to help her “catch up” with the other group. The parish celebrated the combined Rite of Acceptance/Rite of Welcome with this initial group in late October in an attempt to make the catechumenate period as long as possible in order to “fit in” all the topics which had been planned.

Two weeks after the combined Rite of Acceptance/Welcome, two more people called the parish. Again the RCIA director did one-on-one sessions in order to catch them up to the catechumens and candidates. They were also placed into the Thursday night catechumenate sessions. A couple of weeks later, yet another inquirer was added to the

catechumenate in the same catch-up manner. A second combined Rite of Acceptance/Rite of Welcome was scheduled for a Sunday in Advent. During the middle of November another person called the parish with interest in becoming Catholic. Others called after Christmas to “register for classes.”

Some Pastoral Issues

Because many parishes attempt to adhere to the school year model generally established for religious education within parishes, the whole RCIA process is often crowded into a September-June schedule. Within nine months, some RCIA directors attempt to accomplish all four phases of the RCIA process (inquiry, catechumenate, purification and enlightenment, and mystagogy). The process then becomes only another program. By doing this, the director will always be faced with a type of “catch-up” formation which forces a late-enrolling inquirer into doubling up on sessions in order to be “in sync” with the rest of the “class.” Worse yet, the inquirer will not be allowed the careful discernment which the Rite allows and demands.

There are competing issues. On the one hand, there is a practical mind set that the Christian initiation process should be planned for the academic calendar year like the religious education program. It generally follows that all candidates must be initiated at the Easter Vigil. On the other hand, each new inquirer needs to be interviewed and welcomed into the RCIA process without having to wait for a new group to form or for the next scheduled process to begin.

The constant flow of new inquirers into a parish RCIA process is a blessing to our Church. How we respond to each individual and the pastoral needs of each person is actually the starting point for developing a year-round catechumenate.

The Initial Interview

The starting point of formation is based upon the very important initial interview. At this time, the spiritual, practical, and formational needs of each inquirer are assessed. 1) What is the baptismal status of the inquirer? 2) What are the reasons he/she is inquiring about the Catholic faith? 3) Are there any marriage or annulment issues which might need to be addressed? 4) What is the inquirer’s present understanding of God? 5) Is there support or objection in the rest of the family?

The Period of Inquiry or the Pre-catechumenate Period

Since inquirers present themselves at many different times during the year, one of the initial goals of beginning a year-round catechumenate might be to establish more than one on-going inquiry groups. What is paramount is that no one is ever asked to “wait” for a more convenient time to begin this period.

The inquirers will undoubtedly have many questions about our Church and its practices. Inquiry sessions are based on those questions, not on a preconceived topical format which is more suitable to an educational model. These sessions are informal – a well-catechized couple might be utilized for one-on-one discussions in a home setting or sessions could be led by a welcoming, trained catechist. The sessions could be held every week to address the needs of the inquirers as they arise.

The goal of the pre-catechumenate is to establish initial faith (cf. RCIA 36, 37). Concerned, pastoral care for individual inquirers is necessary. It is imperative that each inquirer enters the next phase of RCIA, the catechumenate, only when he is ready. Readiness is determined by conducting a second interview with each inquirer. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults explains how to identify this readiness:

The prerequisite for making this first step [into the Order of Catechumens] is that the beginnings of the

spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates. Thus there must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization and the pre-catechumenate and of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ. Consequently, there must also be evidence of the first stirring of repentance, a start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer, a sense of the Church, and some experience of the company and spirit of Christians through contact with a priest or with members of the community. The candidates should also be instructed about the celebration of the liturgical rite of acceptance” (RCIA 42).

The Catechumenate Period

By providing on-going inquiry groups, each inquirer has the opportunity to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance when he is ready to blend into a year-round catechumenal group, and to experience, in an entire liturgical year, the annual exploration of the many facets of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.

This model allows for weekly “catechesis in harmony with the liturgical year”(RCIA 75.1). This is contrary to the idea of conducting topical sessions which fit neatly into an academic model. Paragraph 6 of the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* states the ideal:

The period of catechumenate, beginning at acceptance into the order of catechumens and including both the catechumenate proper and the period of purification and enlightenment after election or enrollment of names, should extend for at least one year of formation, instruction, and probation. Ordinarily this period should go from at least the Easter season of one year until the next; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year (NSC 6).

An inquirer can enter a year-round catechumenate conducted with lectionary-based sessions easily and logically at any time of the year. In contrast, if topical sessions are the norm it is often difficult for an entering inquirer to catch up to the rest of the class, since it is often the case that one class builds upon another.

The RCIA Director

With the exception of two or three parishes in the Diocese of Lansing, RCIA is not a full-time ministry. The director’s time is generally limited — either because the person is part-time, or because the full-time person has other major responsibilities. In addition, some RCIA directors in the diocese are volunteers. RCIA Directors can never run a year-round catechumenate alone, nor should they.

The RCIA Team

Directors need to develop an RCIA team that is formed in the vision of the RCIA. Several members should be credentialed for catechetical ministry. Only with a dedicated team of ministers and volunteers can multiple or simultaneous sessions be established to begin a year-round catechumenate.

Some of these dedicated folks may be trained to address the special needs of inquirers. Others can be trained in mystagogical techniques and in the special, more sophisticated needs of the neophytes.

A common practice is to run all or most of a parish’s Christian initiation activity at the same time. But often, the process of formation does not so easily fit into this mold. While it is true that inquiry sessions and the catechumenate could run on the same evening, it must be noted that the needs of inquirers and catechumens/candidates are entirely different. Therefore sessions need to be separate from one another.

Parallel sessions might be a way for all participants to benefit from the interaction of those who are learning about our faith. All the people might interact at a common snack time to get to know one another. The two parallel sessions may occasionally meet for a presentation of the Sunday scriptures, and then break into their separate groups for

discussion. However, the inquiry sessions should always be fashioned from the initial faith questions of the inquirers. Again, inquirers move into the catechumenate sessions only when they are ready.

The Initiating Community

RCIA does not involve just the director and the team. We make disciples one at a time, and the entire initiating community is involved in the process. Making disciples simply means bearing faithful witness to the Christian way of life and helping inquirers understand the paschal mystery. If, as a community of believers, we are doing that, the RCIA process can't help but be successful.

The goal of the initiation process is simply to follow Jesus' command to "go and make disciples." Often, our parish communities succumb to secular convictions that "bigger is better." We get caught up in the numbers game where "how many new inquirers do you have" seems more important than "How are we as a faith community spreading the Good News of Christ?"

If our inquirers see in each of us a faith-filled Catholic Christian — in our RCIA sessions, in our participation in the sacramental life of the Church, by our invitation to parish functions, by speaking with conviction in the workplace — these inquirers will, no doubt, desire membership in our faith community.

Some may not be ready to make that commitment. Have we failed? Of course not! The time spent telling the Good News to inquirers is God's time, and is never in vain. We have presented our 2,000 year old faith to them and have invited them to know the living God and to discern if the Catholic faith is where they might find him.

Inviting the Inquirer

There is an emerging feeling that parishes do not do the right kind of "marketing" for the RCIA. When the parish truly becomes the initiating community, one does not require an advertising campaign. Inquirers best respond to a personal invitation. Campaigns to attract new parishioners become unnecessary; indeed, the idea that everyone is "finished at Easter" and "new sessions begin only in the Fall" does damage to our efforts to evangelize at all times.

Forming on-going inquiry sessions changes the spirit of evangelizing that must permeate our lives and the type of "advertising" we do. With sessions which are designed for each inquirer, called in God's time, we allow inquirers to understand that when they are ready, we as an initiating community are ready.

Whom should you invite? Check your parish records — which spouses of currently practicing parishioners might be invited to learn what the Catholic faith might offer them? Would a simple ad in the local newspaper or parish bulletin every two or three months inviting people to "come and see" be beneficial?

What inspires people to ask about our faith? Ask any recent neophyte and the answer will probably include a personal invitation from a spouse or friend, an experience of gracious hospitality, a well-prepared Sunday liturgy, a moving funeral Mass, or a joyful wedding celebration. Sometimes without knowing it, we are evangelizing at funerals, weddings, picnics, discussion groups, or to non-Catholic families enrolled in our schools. At all times, our very lives bear witness to the faith we proclaim.

Beginning a Year-Round Catechumenate: Assessment and Planning

Perhaps building a year-round catechumenate needs to evolve over a three-to-five-year period. The first step would be to obtain leadership support from your pastor or pastoral coordinator. If there is currently no RCIA team, one would need to be trained. Some of these team members would be trained in specific areas, for example those issues relevant to the period of inquiry. A willing hand is not enough. Anything can come up in an inquiry session, and some training in canonical issues is essential.

Gather the parish staff and RCIA team to discuss the following questions.

1) Become acquainted with the Rite. What does it say about the initiation of adults?

Is it a “a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful”(RCIA 4)?

Is it “suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace” (5)?

2) Assess what is contrary to the Rite in your current process and celebration of the rites.

Does your schedule tend to restrain the necessary discernment?

When are the rites celebrated?

What rites are celebrated?

How often do you celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens?

How often do you celebrate the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates?

How long is your catechumenal period?

3) Distinguish carefully among those who are inquiring.

Are they unbaptized catechumens?

Are they baptized into another Christian denomination? Are they candidates for reception into full communion with the Catholic Church?

Are they baptized, but uncatechized Catholics?

What rites are celebrated with each?

What rites are never celebrated with those already baptized?

4) Examine how your parish nurtures the inquirer.

How are inquirers invited to “come and see?”

Are initial interviews of each inquirer being conducted?

How are inquirers placed into the first phase of the RCIA? Must they wait?

Are inquirers being interviewed again before the Rite of Acceptance/Rite of Welcome?

5) How would you change your parish process? What would you do differently this year? Next year?

How can the parish begin to transition to a year-round catechumenate?

Train a functional RCIA team?

Add additional inquiry sessions; train more leaders for inquiry sessions?

Can you celebrate more than one Rite of Acceptance/Rite of Welcome during the year?

Can you begin to develop a year-round catechumenate utilizing lectionary-based catechesis as opposed to topical-based catechesis; will it run from Easter to Easter?

6) How do you provide for the initial and ongoing formation of clergy, directors, catechists, and team members?

Do you attend diocesan workshops?

Have you participated in a “Beginnings and Beyond” experience?

7) When do you initiate catechumens?

Will the Church “lose” prospective members if they cannot be initiated at the next Easter Vigil?

At what other times might they be initiated?

8) How often is the parish receiving candidates into full communion?

How do you discern their readiness?

How do you provide “suitable catechesis?”

Are the candidates interviewed again before being initiated?

9) Does our parish respect the period of mystagogy?

How do we continue to form and mentor our neophytes?

Do we have a mystagogy team?

How do we develop a period of mystagogy which celebrates the new sacramental life of the neophytes, provides for continued study, and incorporates them more fully into the community of faith (RCIA 244-251)?

10) Do we interview often and well?

Who conducts these interviews?

When are they done? Before the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome? Before the Rite of Election? At any other times?

11) Is the initiating community itself well formed in celebrating the rites?

How do we provide catechesis to our assemblies?

Do we create worship aids?

Are our rites celebrated fully?

12) If we only have a small group of inquirers in our parish, how do we collaborate with other parishes?

Can we conduct common inquiry sessions?

Can we conduct common catechumenate sessions?

Should we consider common retreats before the rites?

Do we participate in a common Easter retreat with the vicariate or with several other parishes?

13) How do we select and train our sponsors and godparents?

How are each invited?

What resources are available?

Have they attended diocesan workshops?

Have they attended nearby institutes

14) How do we keep in touch?

Does the telephone number and e-mail address of the parish RCIA director appear on the parish web site and in the parish bulletin? (This will provide inquirers with a way to approach the parish when they are ready to do so.)

Do we use weekly or bi-weekly e-mails to maintain better contact with inquirers, catechumens/candidates and neophytes?

Does the team meet regularly with the pastor?

In the Final Analysis. . .

It takes a lifetime to become a disciple of Christ and to appreciate the Catholic Tradition. The catechumenate was not designed to cram a lifetime of catechesis into one year and certainly not in seven months. The process of Christian initiation is intended to be strong experience of faith formation — not a class of information.

If one attempts to treat this faith journey as only a learning experience, the neophyte will be armed with knowledge, but little else. If, however, the inquirer has been invited to experience the love of Christ, if the catechumen has been formed by a community of faith and by its liturgies, and if the neophyte has richly experienced the sacraments of the Church, then, with the grace of God, faith will bloom for a lifetime.

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