

# Liturgical Components of the Christian Initiation Process:

## Gateways and Sources of Grace for Conversion

MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

### MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

*Devoted to post-baptismal catechesis, this period is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.*

RITE OF ELECTION  
*Call to Continuing Conversion*

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

### PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

*Coinciding with **Lent**, this period consists more in interior reflection than in instruction. It is intended to enlighten the minds and hearts of participants with a deep knowledge of Christ the Savior.*

#### Minor Rites in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Penitential Rite (Candidates)
- Scrutinies (Catechumens)
- Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer
- Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday

CATECHUMENATE

### CATECHUMENATE

*This is an extended period for pastoral formation and guidance aimed at training participants in the Christian life; it includes a thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life.*

#### Minor Rites in the Period of the Catechumenate

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Minor Exorcisms
- Anointings (Catechumens)
- Blessings

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE  
*Rite of Welcoming*

### PRECATECHUMENATE

*This is a time for inquiry and evangelization, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.*

PRECATECHUMENATE

**Start**



CATECHUMENS



CANDIDATES



PERIODS



STEPS

## *How to strengthen your OCIA process to be the best your parish has ever offered and how CI can help with that.*

1. **How to reach out effectively in the community to find and call souls towards the Father's saving embrace in the Church?**
  - Simple *personal invitation*, that requires little initial commitment, works better than any other kind of effort.
  - The doorway is asking about another human being's needs, urgencies, and struggles, while witnessing to simple joy, peace, and belonging.
  - **Bottom-line of what to do:** Model this in whatever ways you can in front of your parish community.
  - **CI workshops that would help:** Conversion in Modern Culture / Entrance into Christ and Participation in God's Life / The Challenge of Charity: Life in the Family of God / Principles of Intercultural Communication
2. **How to create an RCIA process that is more than just classes, but an authentic place of conversion and discipleship?**
  - The process must have three authentic aspects in balance: Liturgical / Catechetical / Pastoral.
  - Each aspect must have in mind *each individual's process*, not a fixed program through which groups are inserted and paced by a calendar.
  - **Bottom-line of what to do:** Tell your inquirers that at the beginning and keep saying it as time goes by and rites approach.
  - **CI workshops that would help:** The Catechumenal Process: A Modern Restoration of an Ancient Practice / Three Approaches to the OCIA Process / Essential Link Between Liturgy and Catechesis / Teaching Catechesis for Conversion / Discipling Adults
3. **How to really understand and help participants experience the rich liturgies, blessings, scrutinies, and other rites of the RCIA process?**
  - Liturgies are acts of movement – the *discerned choice* to step nearer to the living God, and depend on the graces therein.
  - Trust that graces given through the liturgies of the process are more important than graces given through doctrine or dialogue.
  - **Bottom-line of what to do:** Schedule individual discernment meetings prior to each major rite, based on the criteria given for each rite.
  - **CI workshops that would help:** Liturgical Components of the Christian Initiation Process: Gateways and Sources of Grace for Conversion / Wielding the OCIA Rite Book Effectively / The Discernment Process for Participants' Readiness for the Rites
4. **How to richly unfold the teachings of Jesus and His Church in a thoroughly engaging and deeply convincing way?**
  - Catechesis teaches for conversion – aims for change / harder choices / personal witness / the call to trustingly embrace the Father.
  - There is no shortcut for learning to do excellent formation in RCIA. You must work at it.
  - **Bottom-line of what to do:** Take these workshops; consider purchasing *Echoing the Mystery* and/or ACM's *Catechist's Manual*.
  - **CI workshops that would help:** Catechesis: Echoing what God has Revealed / Catechetical Components of the Christian Initiation Process: Illuminating and Securing the Path of Faith / The Ecclesial Method / Analyzing Doctrine with Doctrinal Keys
5. **How to involve the larger parish community in creative and effective ways in the lives of those seeking to enter the Catholic Church?**
  - Pastoring seeks to show authentic charity, and call it forth, to heal, to elevate, and to point our actions to Christ.
  - Non-teachers can be utterly decisive in the conversion of others; trust that inquirers need to *find a family* not just find truth.
  - **Bottom-line of what to do:** Have a team; have them do testimonies in the precatechumenate; have intercessors busy for everyone.
  - **CI workshops that would help:** Developing a Team: Creating an Environment for Conversion / Companions on the Journey: Sponsors and Godparents / The Challenge of Charity: Life in the Family of God / A Foundational Vision: The Role of the Laity
6. **How to lead neophytes to really feel they have a need for the Mass and a deep desire for Jesus in the Eucharist?**
  - The key to the end is in the beginning. What is your precatechumenate like?
  - If the formation was about meeting their needs, urgencies, and struggles, while witnessing to simple joy, peace, and belonging – all will be well.
  - **Bottom-line:** Learning how to do the OCIA process well takes real commitment and humility, but the perks cannot be beaten.
  - **CI workshops that would help:** Catechesis in the Precatechumenate: Delivering the Gospel / Being Guided and Guiding Souls / Catechesis in Mystagogy: Deepening in the Graces Received / Pastoring from the Rite of Election to the Point of Initiation through the Neophyte Year



## What is Teaching for Conversion?

- ✦ *Keeping the truth personal* — \_\_\_\_\_ is always the point.  
**TIP:** Teach from Gospel stories frequently.
- ✦ *Finding out how they* \_\_\_\_\_ — Preparing them for a new union, an embrace.  
**TIP:** Teach dialogically, to learn from them and discover them.
- ✦ *Working to become a transparent witness* — Teach \_\_\_\_\_ with the truth adhering.  
**TIP:** Teach from your own life frequently and with joyful humility.
- ✦ *Offering an Act of Faith* — Prayer as desire — how much do we \_\_\_\_\_?  
**TIP:** Pray before you teach, alone.
- ✦ *Offering an Act of Hope* — Believe that \_\_\_\_\_ even the toughest face.  
**TIP:** Pray as you teach, offering everything – every smallest struggle – for their souls.
- ✦ *Offering an Act of Love* — Pray to have for \_\_\_\_\_ for those you teach.  
**TIP:** Pray after you teach, asking Jesus how you did, and listening to His answer.
- ✦ *Fostering experience* — Without their own \_\_\_\_\_ with the Gospels they are reduced to understanding Jesus as just another interesting hero.  
**TIP:** Look for ways to expose them to a dramatic experience of God.
- ✦ *Challenging with pain* — Questions relating to \_\_\_\_\_ are what cause the reawakening and re-evangelization of those who have abandoned religious practice.  
**TIP:** Teach them to suffer redemptively in the smallest details of their daily life.
- ✦ *Explaining reality aggressively* — \_\_\_\_\_ (saintliness) and \_\_\_\_\_ (sin).  
**TIP:** Teach vigorously from the great saints, and rigorously from the great sinners.
- ✦ *Remembering the war* — \_\_\_\_\_ never drops the ball and \_\_\_\_\_ sin is frivolous.  
**TIP:** Teach the fine points of how Satan tempts and how to wage spiritual battle.
- ✦ *Never forgetting that the Gospel is good news* — A call to authentic and radical \_\_\_\_\_.  
**TIP:** Teach attachment more than detachment.

**1- Make a list of 15 common Catholic terms (not technical theological terms such as C.C.D. or transubstantiation that are likely to be unfamiliar to a non-Catholic.**

**2- Consider these two doctrines: Conscience / Resurrection**

- In what way does understanding each of these three doctrines help me get closer to Jesus?
- Considering again these doctrines, how does each connect to the sacred liturgy?
- Considering once more these same three doctrines, how do they each help a believer to understand the way God uses suffering to make a soul more perfect?

**3- Consider the differences among the following ways of beginning a statement of truth:**

- 1) "Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin."
- 2) "The Church teaches that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin."
- 3) "We as Catholics believe that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin."
- 4) "Purgatory is thought to be for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin."
- 5) "Some in the Church feel that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin."

# A Pair of Examples of Good Methodology in Teaching Adults

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

## Using Questions as an Aid to Conversion

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

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

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

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

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

## Using Eye Contact as an Aid to Conversion

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

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

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

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



# Adult Catechist Evaluation Form

CATECHIST \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Scale of Evaluation:** 1 = needs to be addressed as a weak area,  
2 = needs improvement, 3 = acceptable, 4 = good, 5 = outstanding.

## Preparation and Proclamation

Teaching was planned and organized; catechist was clearly ready to go \_\_\_\_\_  
Appropriate arrangement of environment and sacred space \_\_\_\_\_  
Suitable opening prayer/Liturgy of the Word/music for this doctrine/topic \_\_\_\_\_  
Delivered a statement of truth to “ring in their ears” \_\_\_\_\_

## Explanation and Application

### Content:

Focused the teaching on how it helped someone get closer to God/Jesus \_\_\_\_\_  
Use of Scripture was well-paced, and with adequate context \_\_\_\_\_  
Used stories in a functional and succinct manner \_\_\_\_\_  
Included some element of personal witness in the teaching \_\_\_\_\_  
Incorporated a knowledge of participants lives’ into the teaching \_\_\_\_\_  
Connected the teaching with real life (what does this mean for them?) \_\_\_\_\_  
Included some reference to the importance of the liturgy/sacramental life \_\_\_\_\_  
Made reference to previous teachings (if applicable) to create connections \_\_\_\_\_  
Avoided unfamiliar terms/defined essential new terms \_\_\_\_\_  
Clearly was thinking about the participants while teaching \_\_\_\_\_  
Displayed a clear mastery of the subject matter \_\_\_\_\_  
Explanations were clear and helpful for those not used to “churchy” culture \_\_\_\_\_

### Method:

Maintained eye contact with participants on both sides of the room \_\_\_\_\_  
Used hand-motions, expressions, and movement \_\_\_\_\_  
Evidenced independence from written notes where appropriate \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a faith-filled way (these truths are certitudes to me!) \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a hope-filled way (Heaven is real; God is trustworthy!) \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a loving way (good teacher = humble, friendly teacher) \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a respectful way towards other faiths/individuals \_\_\_\_\_

## Celebration

Suitable concluding prayer/music for this topic or for the liturgical calendar \_\_\_\_\_  
Upbeat closing (thanking God; acclaiming his wonderful truth together) \_\_\_\_\_

What most impacted you in a positive way about this teaching?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*My teaching is not mine,  
but his who sent me.  
~ John 7:16 ~*

## Teaching Tools

Scripture \_\_\_\_\_  
Catechism \_\_\_\_\_  
Own Stories \_\_\_\_\_  
Saint Stories \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Stories \_\_\_\_\_  
Analogies \_\_\_\_\_  
Dialogue \_\_\_\_\_  
Apologetics \_\_\_\_\_  
Humor \_\_\_\_\_  
Art \_\_\_\_\_  
Props \_\_\_\_\_  
Handouts \_\_\_\_\_  
Music \_\_\_\_\_  
Video \_\_\_\_\_  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_  
Board \_\_\_\_\_  
Resources \_\_\_\_\_  
Q & A \_\_\_\_\_  
Exercises \_\_\_\_\_

Overall comments:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Total teaching time: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

*The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time  
is form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.  
~ Guide for Catechists, Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, para. 8 ~*



# Catechetical Components of the Christian Initiation Process: Illuminating and Securing the Path of Faith

*We teach that which has been taught everywhere in the Church, held by all in the Church, from the very origin of the Church in the teaching of Jesus' apostles.* ~ ST. VINCENT OF LERINS, 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BISHOP

There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith. (CCC 89)

The catechetical components are the truths of the faith, grouped and taught specifically for the purpose of each period:

- ⊗ *Period of the Precatechumenate* ~ The Gospel and answering their questions
- ⊗ *Period of the Catechumenate* ~ The Deposit of Faith
- ⊗ *Period of Purification and Enlightenment* ~ The truths of the faith as they related to spirituality and prayer; mystical doctrines
- ⊗ *Period of Post-baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy* ~ The deeper Christian life, especially as it relates to the sacraments

## TEACH TO AND FROM THE RITES:

Prior to the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, and continuing through the rest of the process, the teaching is *to* and *from* the Rites. The Church prays what she believes. All of the Rites draw their power from the sacraments of initiation, and from the sacrament of Holy Orders of the bishop, priest, or deacon who administers them. Grace is more and more richly available after each Rite until it is poured out in abundance at the Easter Vigil.

### *Some Practical Suggestions for the Catechumenate*

- ✠ Give each participant a Bible early in the process, and give them tabs for it
- ✠ Ensure that the team witnesses to handling Scripture with respect (no coffee cups on Bibles)
- ✠ Use Scripture to teach prayer – begin with the psalms
- ✠ Never give the impression in teaching sessions that Scripture is an addendum to the catechesis
- ✠ Have team members give a testimony about a favorite verse, or the power of Scripture in their life
- ✠ Use Biblical narratives – a litany of Scriptures that form a story or a theme
- ✠ Use celebrations of the Word as recommended in the guidelines (see RCIA 81-89)







*During this time those inquiring are introduced to the parish through a microcosm of the Church that is the initiation team.*

*Here they meet Christians strong in faith, hope, and charity who widen the "tent pegs" of their hearts and lives to welcome all who would "come and see."*

## The Period of Evangelization & Precatechumenate

*(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 52 and 511)*

**The Gospel message ~ Christ-centered, Trinitarian, ecclesial, personal, and forward-looking (founded in hope):**

- ✦ God is our Creator and in him all things have their existence
- ✦ God gives light to everyone who comes into this world, revealing himself through his works, so that all may learn to give thanks
- ✦ The Father has sent his faithful witness, Jesus Christ, to announce to us what he has seen and heard, the mysteries of Heaven and earth
- ✦ This is eternal life: to know the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent; the Trinity is our destiny and model of perfect love
- ✦ Jesus Christ has made the way for us to take advantage of that plan by his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven
- ✦ The Holy Spirit makes it possible to access the full power and merits won for us by Jesus in the Church, which dispenses them in the sanctifying action of the sacramental life, enabling us to make the mind of Christ our own, to love God and neighbor in holiness
- ✦ The Catholics of this parish family warmly invite you to come and see our life and with us to enter into full communion with Christ

**The primary and most effective means of communicating these truths are:**

- ✦ The witness of the individual living in accordance with the Gospel message
- ✦ The witness of the Christian community as the kingdom of God on earth

**The Catechetical components of this period are:**

- ✦ The Gospel expressed carefully and completely, by means of testimonies and explanation of Scripture
- ✦ Answers given to the most pressing and obvious questions of the inquirers
- ✦ Teachings which adequately prepare them for the first major Rites and content of the process, and the living of a daily Catholic life of believing, hoping, and loving (faith, hope, and charity)
- ✦ The Christian community modeled in the microcosm of the team, and a gradual introduction into works of charity

*In justice, great care must be taken that the most troubling or difficult questions get answered for each inquirer, so that here will be no surprises after the commitment is made in the first Rites.*



# The Rites of Acceptance and Rite of Welcoming

After this first “gateway” is entered, the catechumens and candidates are in a formal relation with the Church. At each catechetical session they may be given anointings, blessings, and/or minor exorcisms (depending on their baptismal status). All catechesis should be done in the context of celebrations of the Word. (see RCIA 81-105)



## The Period of the Catechumenate

*(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 552, 553 and 556 ✠ Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 526, 527 and 528)*

This is the longest period of the Christian initiation process. It is also the most densely catechetical. The principal guidelines for this period are found in RCIA 75 and 78:

A suitable catechesis is provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful (RCIA 75):

- ✠ Planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage
- ✠ Accommodated to the liturgical year
- ✠ Solidly supported by celebrations of the Word

This catechesis leads the catechumens [and candidates] 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.

The instruction that participants receive during this period should (RCIA 78, see also RCIA, National Statutes 7):

- ⊗ Present Catholic teaching in its entirety
- ⊗ Enlighten faith
- ⊗ Direct the heart toward God
- ⊗ Foster participation in the liturgy
- ⊗ Inspire apostolic activity
- ⊗ Nurture a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ

### **The Catechetical Components of this period are the elements of the Deposit of Faith:**

There is only time to present the “keys” to unlock the basic doctrines of the Deposit of Faith as they are found in Scripture and Tradition. A good guide for these “keys” is the *Credo of the People of God* by Pope Paul VI. As well, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is the “sure norm” for teaching the Deposit of Faith. It should be the constant reference for the catechist. (see CCC 89)

Presuming a complete precatechumenal catechesis, the organization of the truths of the faith can be done along the paradigm for the adult Catholic life:

- ✠ Faith
- ✠ Hope
- ✠ Love



# The Rites of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

This next liturgical “gateway” requires that conversion is already complete and the participants have the intent to receive the sacraments of initiation that Easter. (see RCIA 120) These Rites lead them into solemn preparation during the “retreat time” of Lent. It should be spent in reflection, spiritual reading, prayer, fasting, penance, and acts of charity.



## The Period of Purification & Enlightenment

*(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 573, 580 and 591 ✦ Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 558)*

The focus of the catechesis is now on spiritual preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The themes of repentance and holiness are constant throughout this period. Interior reflection (on God’s love for us, his faithful provision for us, and our need to turn to him fully) should lead to repentance and penance, thanksgiving, and more fervent fraternal charity. The elect and candidates for full communion should turn once again to a study of Christ the Savior, especially the events of the Paschal mystery – Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. (see RCIA 118, 121, 138, 139)

**The Catechetical components of this period include the following:**

- ✧ Meditations and exhortations
- ✧ Spiritual reading of Scripture and the lives of the saints
- ✧ Prayer times such as intercession for the needs of the Church, meditation on the life of Christ in the rosary, recitation of Evening Prayer or Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- ✧ A retreat weekend is especially appropriate during this time (This might be the first opportunity offered for the sacrament of Reconciliation for the candidates for full communion)
- ✧ Participation in the Lenten activities of the parish should certainly be part of this time. With all of the above and explanations of such devotions as the Stations of the Cross there would certainly be continuing education, but not in the same manner as in the previous stages

**The Liturgy and the Community as Means of Insertion in Christ:**

Participants are learning all the time during their experience of the catechumenate, not just in the formal teaching. Attendance at the ceremonies for Holy Week with godparents, sponsors, and team members will be an experience of the liturgy as the prime teacher.

“The unique catechetical value of the liturgy essentially derives from the way in which it contains and makes us familiar with the heart of the Christian religion the mystery of Christ... The liturgy gives what it teaches.” ~ *Johannes Hofinger, S.J., et al, The Good News and Its Proclamation, pp. 53, 56*

Without the teaching and converting aspects of the liturgy and the witness of the community, formal instruction runs the risk of becoming just information, instead of light for the path of faith. (see CCC 89)



# The Preparation Rites and the Sacraments of Initiation

This final “gateway” leads directly to insertion into the mystery of Christ and to full communion with him in his Body, the Church. The elect and the candidates are exposed to the overwhelming beauty and climactic graces of this “holiest of nights.”



## The Period of Post-Baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

*(Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 229, 230, 244 and following)*

The time between Easter and Pentecost is spent in deepening the understanding of and appreciation for the sacramental life. The deepest meaning of discipleship must be examined, including the responsibilities to witness and to bring the light of the Gospel to every corner of the world. The Church intends that the Lectionary readings for the Sundays and the Feast of the Ascension form the basis for the catechesis during this period. The readings from Year A are given below (these readings are recommended for use in Masses with neophytes even during Years B and C, and may be substituted at the discretion of the pastor):

- ✠ 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 118; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31
- ✠ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 2:14, 22-33; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35
- ✠ 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; John 10:1-10
- ✠ 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12
- ✠ 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalm 66; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-20
- ✠ Ascension Thursday ~ Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20
- ✠ 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 1:12-14; Psalm 27; 1 Peter 4:13-16; John 17:1-11a

The distinctive spirit and power of the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community. (RCIA 247)

## Remainder of the Neophyte Year

During the first year as a Catholic, care must be taken to be sure that each neophyte is securely established in the life of the parish. The difficulties of this year can be very great. A Bible study with new friends in the parish, a charitable work to join, and opportunities to contribute special skills to the work of the parish should all be regular aspects of this year. Throughout the year, care should be given to make sure that the neophytes are always specifically invited to parish missions, presentations by visiting speakers, and all such adult formation events.

A monthly neophyte newsletter is a way to continue education. Regular retreat days during the first year give opportunities for further instruction in the faith. Monthly gatherings with the pastor just to “chat” can be very beneficial for answering questions, for identifying misconceptions, and for providing on-going spiritual direction for the group, or for individuals in the group.

**1 Timothy 6:20** ~ “O Timothy, **guard what has been entrusted to you.** Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.”

**2 Timothy 1:13, 14** ~ “Follow the **pattern of the sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; **guard the truth that has been entrusted to you** by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.”





## Three Examples of Arrangements of Teachings

This appendix offers three examples of how parish RCIA directors and catechists have used the principles discussed in the introductory sections of this *Manual* to determine an initial ordering of their RCIA teachings. The purpose of the three lists presented here is to offer examples of the *order* of catechetical teachings only, for the purpose of fleshing out the concept of a *systematic* arrangement of doctrine that takes into account the purpose of each of the four periods of the RCIA process (as discussed in Section Three). The *organic* aspect of teaching each session cannot be fully deduced from these basic lists because this relates more to *how* doctrines are taught than to how they are *sequenced*.

The arrangement of the teachings in each list should not be interpreted as a “topical” approach — which usually exists in parishes that use some set of pre-ordered handouts or a bound text that necessitates a certain arrangement of teachings. In these circumstances, the RCIA director and catechists can exercise little or no choice in the ordering of teachings, and must forfeit this decision-making process to a publishing organization or company that obviously cannot account for situations unique to that parish in that year. This restriction is detrimental to the need for flexibility discussed in Sections Five and Six of this *Manual*. In contrast to this, the lists given in this appendix are designed to follow the hierarchy of truths, but are not intended to be substitutes for the careful considerations that can only occur at the parish level.

Lists of this kind can only be considered *initial*. They are necessarily completed by parish personnel prior to knowing who the participants will be. While much of this initial ordering usually remains intact in any given year, the catechist must allow the process to remain open to changes. These changes may result from various pastoral circumstances, for example: the need for a second or even a third teaching on certain aspects of the faith with which a certain group is struggling; the need to add a teaching or two to attend to unanticipated needs; bad weather that forces cancellation of scheduled sessions; changes in parish leadership that temporarily disrupt the process; a news event that claims a session or two to suitably address the issue, etc.

These lists do not indicate which teachings might occur together during a retreat, nor do they incorporate events that are specific to the liturgical or parish calendar that might take the place of a regular session (such as a Tenebrae Service, attendance at a Chrism Mass, a party for new Catholics, attendance at an Eastern Rite Divine Liturgy, participation in a Parish Mission, attendance at a Catholic Baptism, wedding, or funeral, etc.). Nor does this set of lists include suggestions for the Neophyte Year, beyond the seven weeks of the Mystagogy period. Lastly, the following three examples offered in this appendix do not restrict themselves solely to the titles of the 60 doctrines presented in this *Manual*. Instead, these lists present various ways that the Deposit of Faith could be arranged to accomplish systematic catechesis in a nine-month setting, a twelve-month setting, and a year-round setting.



# Example One

## PERIOD OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE

Welcome Session  
 The Existence of God  
 The Trinity  
 God the Father  
 Creation  
 Angels  
 Made in the Image of God  
 Original Sin  
 The Mystery of Evil and Divine Providence  
 The Story of Salvation  
 Revelation  
 Sacred Scripture  
 Sacred Tradition  
 The Sacramental Economy as the Father's Plan  
 The Person of Jesus  
 Salvation, Justification, and the Paschal Mystery  
 The Gift of Grace  
 The Holy Spirit  
 The Four Marks of the Church  
 The First Three Commandments  
 The Second Seven Commandments  
 Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell  
 The Life of Prayer and the Hope of Salvation  
 Devotion in the Church Family  
 The Lord's Prayer as the Family Prayer  
 The Communion of Saints  
 The Blessed Virgin Mary  
 The Kingdom of God  
 The Second Coming of Christ

## PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

The Great Covenants  
 The Incarnation and the Final Covenant  
 Church History as the Story of Salvation Continued  
 Liturgy in the Church  
 Sacraments and Sacramentals in the Church  
 Traditions of Prayer in the Church  
 Holy Orders  
 Baptism  
 Confirmation  
 Eucharist  
 Teaching Mass  
 Reconciliation  
 Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering

Matrimony  
 Natural Law  
 Freedom in Christ  
 Temptation and Sin  
 The Battle of Prayer  
 The Seven Deadly Sins  
 The Dignity of the Human Person  
 The Sin of Contraception in Our Culture  
 The Sin of Abortion in Our Culture  
 The Culture of Life  
 The Cardinal Virtues  
 The Theological Virtue of Faith  
 The Theological Virtue of Hope  
 The Theological Virtue of Love  
 The Two Great Commandments of the New Law  
 Social Teachings of the Church  
 The Corporal Works of Mercy  
 The Spiritual Works of Mercy  
 The Priesthood of the Faithful  
 The Mystical Body of Christ  
 The Universal Call to Holiness  
 The Personal Call of Vocation

## PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Adoration of God the Son (Transfiguration)  
 Mercy and Humility of the Son (Samaritan Woman)  
 Spiritual Blindness and Pride (Blind Man)  
 Liturgical Prayer and the Hope of New Life (Lazarus)  
 The Lord's Prayer and Forgiveness  
 Eucharistic Meditation and Chaplet of Divine Mercy  
 Meditation on the Sacraments in the Church Fathers

## PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS (MYSTAGOGY)

Sacramental Living in the Apostolic Church  
 The Mass as the Way of Life  
 Evangelization and the Call of the Good Shepherd  
 Personal Devotion to Jesus  
 Ecumenism and Other Religions  
 Becoming a Saint  
 The Catholic Worldview



## Example Two

### PERIOD OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE

Get Acquainted Gathering  
 Who is God? (The Trinity)  
 What Does God Begin? (Creation)  
 What Does God Want? (The Story)  
 Who Am I? (Image and Likeness of God)  
 How has God Spoken? (Revelation)  
 How to Communicate with God? (Prayer)  
 What Does It Mean to Believe? (Faith)  
 What Should We Believe? (The Deposit of Faith)  
 Who is Jesus? (The Son of God)  
 What Difference Does Jesus Make? (The Incarnation)  
 What About My Sin Problem? (Sin and Grace)  
 The Father's Plan and the Means to Follow It  
 The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church  
 God's Family and My Part in It (Body of Christ)  
 The Blessed Virgin Mary  
 Saints and the Church  
 What Do I Do Now? (Repent; Give Your Life to God)  
 Faith, Hope and Love (The Adult Catholic Life)

### PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

God's Plan in the Sacramental Economy  
 The Church as Dispenser of the Mysteries  
 The Church as Necessary for Me  
 The Sacrament of Baptism  
 Saints and the Power of Baptism  
 The Ten Commandments of the Moral Life  
 The Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Moral Life  
 The Sacrament of Eucharist  
 Explanation of the Mass  
 The Sacrament of Confirmation  
 The Sacrament of Holy Orders  
 The Sacrament of Marriage  
 NFP and the Darkness of Contraception  
 The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick  
 Suffering and the Call of the Cross

Saints and the Power of Redemptive Suffering  
 History of the Church (Part I) (1<sup>st</sup> 1000 Years)  
 History of the Church (Part II) (1000-Present)  
 My Part in the Church (God's Work for Me)  
 Participating in the Life of Christ  
 Helping Others to Participate in the Life of Christ  
 The Dignity of the Human Person in Matthew 25  
 The Challenge of Charity and Holiness  
 The Catholic Vision of the Moral Life  
 The Corporal Works of Mercy  
 The Spiritual Works of Mercy  
 The Pursuit of Happiness in the Trinity  
 Relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
 The Lord's Prayer as a Summary of the Gospel  
 The Lord's Prayer as the Church's Mission Statement  
 The Lord's Prayer and the Hope of Heaven

### PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The Eucharist as Christ Revealed (Transfiguration)  
 Sin and the Challenge of Purity (Samaritan Woman)  
 Sin and the Challenge of Humility (Blind Man)  
 The Dignity of Life in Christ (Lazarus)  
 Teaching on Holy Week  
 Workshop on the Sacrament of Reconciliation  
 Lord's Prayer as a Prayer of Unity

### PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS (MYSTAGOGY)

Pursuing Holiness in Holy Mother Church  
 The Eucharist as a Call to Virtue  
 Who Is Jesus to You Now?  
 Who is the Father to You Now?  
 Who is the Holy Spirit to You Now?  
 Being Catholic in a Non-Catholic Society  
 God's Plan for the Glory of His Life in You



## Example Three

### PERIOD OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE

Welcome and Introduction  
 Who Am I? and What Am I?  
 The Story of God's Work Among Us  
 What is Faith?  
 What is the Gospel?  
 God Calls Us By Name: God's Plan for Us  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 God as a Trinity of Persons  
 The Incarnation of Jesus Christ  
 The Holy Spirit and the Supernatural Life of Grace  
 Relationship: The Life of Prayer to God  
 Broken Relationship: The Life of Sin  
 Restored Relationship: The Covenants of God  
 Guides for Our Relationship: The Commandments  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 The Church in God's Plan  
 Revelation and the Church  
 Tradition and the Church  
 Scripture and the Church  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 The Old Testament  
 The New Testament  
 The People of the New Testament  
 The Mother of Us All: Mary  
 The Elder Members of the Family: Saints  
 The Connection Among Us All: Liturgy  
 The Sacramental Principle and Sacramentals  
 The Mass as the Life of the Family in Jesus  
 Special Question and Answer Night

### PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

The Salvation Story and the Pattern of the Creed  
 The Father as the Origin of All Truth  
 The Father as the Origin of All Goodness  
 The Father as the Origin of All Beauty  
 Jesus as the Answer to Sin  
 Jesus as the Incarnation of Perfect Love  
 Jesus as the Model of Holiness  
 Jesus as the Invitation to Divinization  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 The Holy Spirit as the Guarantor of the Church  
 The Holy Spirit as the Animator of Our Faith  
 The Holy Spirit as the Giver of Gifts and Sanctifier  
 The Church Militant: Dispenser of the Mysteries  
 The Church Suffering: The Last Mercy of Purgatory  
 The Church Triumphant: The Joys of Heaven  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 Tour of the Church  
 The Sacraments of the Church

Holy Orders and the Gift of Apostolicity  
 Baptism and Faith  
 The Eucharist and Love  
 Teaching Mass  
 Confirmation and the Fruits of the Holy Spirit  
 Reconciliation and Hope  
 Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 Matrimony as a Holy Union  
 The Call to Serve Life: The Culture of Life  
 Family Life and the Culture of Death  
 Vocation and the Culture of Life  
 Suffering and the Culture of Death  
 The One Destiny: Death and Judgment  
 The Two Ways: Heaven and Hell  
 The Christian Call: Happiness in Holiness  
 Special Question and Answer Night  
 Morality for All Humans: The Human Virtues  
 Morality for All Christians: The Theological Virtues  
 Social Issues  
 Social Sins  
 Discipleship and Charity: Loving as Jesus Loves  
 Discipleship and Evangelization: The Royal Priesthood  
 Discipleship and Prayer: Staying in the Relationship  
 Adoration in the Life of the Church  
 Catholic Traditions of Prayer  
 Struggles in the Life of Prayer  
 Special Question and Answer Night

### PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The Transfiguration and the Light of Faith  
 The Woman at the Well and Baptism's Living Water  
 The Man Born Blind and Seeing All That Jesus Offers  
 Lazarus and Our Resurrection in the Second Coming  
 Reconciliation as a Sacrament of Healing  
 Praying with Scripture and the Our Father  
 Eucharist: Source and Summit of Catholic Worship

### PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS (MYSTAGOGY)

How Baptism Enables the Call to Holiness  
 How Confirmation Enables the Call to Holiness  
 How the Eucharist Enables the Call to Holiness  
 How Reconciliation Enables the Call to Holiness  
 How Anointing of the Sick Enables the Call to Holiness  
 How Marriage Enables the Call to Holiness  
 How Holy Orders Enables the Call to Holiness

# St. Mary's Parish Inquiry Sessions

✂ Sessions are held in the Library ✂

## ✧ The Gospel Message, Part I ✧

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

## ✧ The Gospel Message, Part II ✧

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





# St. Mary's Parish RCIA Sessions

☞ Sessions are held in the Library ☞

DATE	EVENT	TEACHING
September 6 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Welcome/Does God Exist?
September 13 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Who is God? – The Blessed Trinity
September 20 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Who Am I? – God's Image
September 27 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Broken Relationship: Evil and Original Sin
October 4 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Restored Relationship: The Covenants of God
October 11 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	How Does God Speak to Us? – Revelation
October 18 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Salvation, Justification, and the Paschal Mystery
October 25 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Four Last Things
November 1 (Thu)	<b>Solemnity of All Saints (Holy Day of Obligation)</b>	-----
November 1 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Ten Commandments
November 8 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church
November 15 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Four Marks of the Church
November 22 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (Thanksgiving)	-----
November 29 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Sacraments and the Sacrament of Baptism
December 6 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Person of Jesus
December 8 (Sat)	<b>Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Holy Day of Obligation)</b>	-----
December 13 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	The Eucharist: Sacramental Body of Christ
December 15 (Sat)	RCIA Retreat (8:30am-4:30pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Introduction to Sacred Scripture / Lectio Divina
		The Family of the Church: The Communion of Saints
		The Mother of Us All: The Blessed Virgin Mary
December 16 (Sun)	<b>Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming (12:00pm Mass)</b>	-----
December 20 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (Christmas)	-----
December 25 (Tue)	<b>Solemnity of Christ's Birth (Holy Day of Obligation)</b>	-----
December 27 (Thu)	No RCIA Session (New Year)	-----
January 1 (Tue)	<b>Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)</b>	-----
January 3 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Reconciliation
January 10 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Holy Orders
January 17 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering
January 24 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Dignity of the Human Person and Conscience
January 31 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Cardinal Virtues and Cardinal Sins
February 7 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Theological Virtues
February 13 (Wed)	<b>Ash Wednesday (Beginning of Lent)</b>	-----
February 14 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Social Teachings of the Church and Life Issues
February 16 (Sat)	RCIA Retreat (8:30am-4:30pm) (Team Member Testimony)	Matrimony / Contraception / Lectio Divina
		Teaching Mass / Stations of the Cross
February 16 (Sat)	<b>Rite of Sending (5:00pm Mass)</b>	-----
February 17 (Sun)	<b>Rite of Election at the Diocesan Cathedral (3:00-5:30pm)</b>	-----
February 21 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Prayer: Crafting a Spiritual Life
February 24 (Sun)	<b>Penitential Rite for the Baptized (9:30am Mass)</b>	-----
February 28 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Spiritual Combat
March 3 (Sun)	<b>First Scrutiny for the Unbaptized (9:30am Mass)</b>	-----
March 7 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	The Challenge of Humility
March 10 (Sun)	<b>Second Scrutiny for the Unbaptized (9:30am Mass)</b>	-----
March 14 (Thu)	RCIA Session & Presentation of the Creed (7:15-9:15pm)	The Call to Purity
March 17 (Sun)	<b>Third Scrutiny for the Unbaptized (12:00pm Mass)</b>	-----
March 21 (Thu)	RCIA Session & Presentation of the Lord's Prayer (7:15-9:15pm)	The Lord's Prayer
March 24 (Sun)	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	-----
March 25 (Mon)	Chrism Mass, Diocesan Cathedral (7:00-9:00pm)	-----
March 27 (Wed)	<b>Tenebrae Service in the Church (7:30pm)</b>	-----
March 28 (Thu)	<b>Holy Thursday Mass (8:00pm)</b>	-----
March 29 (Fri)	<b>Good Friday Liturgy (8:00pm)</b>	-----
March 30 (Sat)	<b>Rehearsal for the Easter Vigil for Sponsors only (10:00-10:45am)</b>	-----
March 30 (Sat)	<b>Holy Saturday Preparation Rites (11:00-11:45am)</b>	-----
March 30 (Sat)	RCIA Holy Hour (6:30-7:30pm)	Meditation on Scripture and the Church Fathers
March 30 (Sat)	<b>Easter Vigil (8:00-11:00pm)</b>	-----
March 31 (Sun)	<b>Solemnity of Christ's Resurrection</b>	-----
April 4 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Party for New Catholics
April 11 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Who is God to You Now
April 18 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	What to Know and Where to Go
April 25 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Vocations and the Universal Call to Holiness
May 2 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Adoration and Traditions of Prayer
May 9 (Thu)	<b>Solemnity of Christ's Ascension</b>	-----
May 9 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Evangelization and Ecumenism
May 16 (Thu)	RCIA Session (7:15-9:15pm)	Becoming a Saint
May 19 (Sun)	<b>Solemnity of Pentecost</b>	-----
June 13 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Sacrifice
June 20 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for the Poor
July 11 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Authority
July 25 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Love of Scripture
August 8 (Thu)	Summer Session at the DRE's Home (7:15-9:15pm)	The Eucharist for Beauty
August 15 (Thu)	<b>Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary (Holy Day of Obligation)</b>	-----



# Using Small Groups in the Catechumenal Process

**R**CIA CATECHETICAL SESSIONS are not meant solely to transmit *information*. The purpose of catechesis is to initiate and foster the process of conversion of heart and entry into the mystery of Christ. Therefore, in addition to teaching the truths of the faith in catechetical sessions, it is important to provide time in small groups to give participants a forum where they can feel comfortable—

- ✦ Expressing how they have understood the truths they have heard.
- ✦ Articulating their initial responses: perceptions, insights, agreements, connections with other teachings, assent, thanksgiving; as well as concerns, reservations, difficulties, disagreements.
- ✦ Deepening their own conversions.
- ✦ Considering how they might apply the teaching in their lives.

This forum is the small-group discussion. Although small groups are not mentioned in the RCIA ritual book, small groups are exceedingly helpful to participants' spiritual journeys because they call for dialogue and response (see GDC 145). This personal dialogue with the truths of the faith is at the heart of the small-group component of the Christian initiation process. Speaking honestly about their thoughts and feelings on these matters causes participants to wrestle with them and, in time and with God's grace, experience a deepening conversion.

From the standpoint of participants, the small-group sessions have a specifically catechetical character. However, from the standpoint of the RCIA leader, god-

parents and sponsors, and the team, the sessions have a strong pastoral component. This is so for several reasons:

- ➔ Dialogue with participants in a small-group context allows sponsors, godparents, and team members to gain invaluable insights concerning the pastoral care that an individual may need.
- ➔ If a participant needs to talk something out, the small

groups provide people who are there to listen.

- ➔ If there is a recurring issue that needs further attention, a pastorally-astute godparent, sponsor, or team member can pick up on it.

A word should be said about the difference between small-group discussions following a



catechetical session and a small-group Reflection on the Word session (see Chapter 8 of this *Manual*, "Using the Sunday Lectionary for Mass in the Catechumenal Process"). Reflection on the Word sessions follow the dismissal of catechumens from the Mass after the Liturgy of the Word. These sessions are therefore a continuation of the liturgy and are not intended to be catechetical. The small-group sessions during the catechetical sessions, on the other hand, offer more time to respond to and discover the truths of God and his plan that participants have just heard, and consider how the teachings apply to everyday life.

## PREPARING FOR SMALL-GROUP SESSIONS

### *Selecting and Training Facilitators*

When considering specific members of the RCIA team to be small-group leaders, the leader should look for individuals who:



- ❖ Are good listeners.
- ❖ Are genuine in their concern for others.
- ❖ Can respect people with different opinions.
- ❖ Are comfortable sharing their own faith.
- ❖ Are able to help others express their thoughts.
- ❖ Are reasonably knowledgeable about Scripture, the Catechism, and Catholic doctrines and practices in general.
- ❖ Are extraordinarily kind yet astute enough to prevent faults in others from making the small group fail in its purposes.

The leader, however, may not have the luxury of choosing the best candidates for facilitators if most members of the RCIA team must double as facilitators. In these cases, training becomes more essential, since facilitating small-group discussion is a skill that can be learned. (Chapter 18 of this *Manual*, “The RCIA Team,” should be consulted for a general discussion on training and forming all members of the RCIA team.)

A team member with impaired sight or hearing should not automatically be excluded from serving as a small-group facilitator; the leader should consider on a case-by-case basis the person’s ability to respond to all the visual and auditory cues participants provide, and the person’s capacity to compensate for his or her physical disability.

A person who has never facilitated a small-group session before should not be asked to do so without sitting in on groups whose facilitators are experienced and capable. In advance, the leader should ask the “trainee” to watch the ways in which the facilitator ensures that the members of the group respond to the teaching they have just heard, while at the same time avoiding dominating the group. The facilitator can then meet with the trainee afterwards to discuss the methods the facilitator used to ensure that the group discussion was fruitful.

The leader can also ask experienced facilitators on the team to take some time to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and ask one another how they might work on eliminating their weaknesses. Such self-criticism ensures that facilitators remain focused on the purposes of the small groups. This is especially useful when, as is likely to be the case, some facilitators have relatively little experience. Trainees

who have not yet facilitated a small group might also find such a session useful in honing their own skills.

### *The Number of Groups Needed*

Small groups are, by definition, small, and therefore the number of groups is determined by the number of participants, spouses or fiancé(e)s who regularly accompany participants, the number of godparents and sponsors, and additional team members who are not facilitators. The time available is a little longer than Reflection on the Word small groups (see Chapter 8, “Using the Sunday Lectionary for Mass in the Catechumenal Process”), and the number of people is possibly larger. Although small groups larger than the ideal of four to six individuals may be a practical necessity, groups larger than eight or nine persons may defeat the purposes for which they are intended.

Even if suitable tables are unavailable, the chairs should be placed in a circle so that everyone can face everyone else. Even the use of generally unsuitable areas such as hallways is preferable to seating arrangements that make small-group interaction impossible.


### *Composition of Groups*

The leader will probably, by trial and error over a few cycles of the catechumenal process, discover whether small groups should always consist of the same individuals and the same facilitator, or whether their composition should be more fluid. The most significant determinant of the composition of small groups is the number of inquirers, catechumens, and candidates. If the total number is small, many of the questions that a leader might ask, as presented in the remainder of this subsection, do not even arise.

The leader should decide whether he or she desires a specific composition within each small group. For example, should individuals with something specific in common be grouped together? Should unbaptized and baptized participants be in separate groups? Should some groups be only men, and others only women? Should people who attend as couples (whether or not one of the two is already a Catholic) be put in the same or different small groups? Or should groups specifically reflect the diversity among the participants, so that there are young, old, single,







married, unbaptized, baptized, men, and women in each group? And, even if most of the time the groups are organized in a specific manner, are there special times when it is helpful to form groups in which all of the participants, for example, are either married or single to discuss the sacrament of Matrimony?

Other considerations in forming small groups have to do with the likelihood that team members will form relationships with specific participants early in the catechumenal process. The assignment of a person to a specific small group, or reassignment to another small group, may be influenced by these pastoral ties.

If the catechumenal process is one that experiences a fairly large number of “latecomers” (see Chapter 10 of this *Manual*, “The Foundation of the Catechetical Aspect: Understanding and Being Changed in Christ,” for more on how participants are “caught up”), the leader will have to decide whether to form new groups made up of these individuals, or whether to integrate them into existing groups. If this situation regularly occurs in the parish’s catechumenal process, and the leader does not desire to form new groups, then the groups when initially formed must be small enough that additional individuals later will not make them unwieldy.

Finally, the leader may choose not to establish fixed small groups, with the pastoral intention of encouraging the entire group—participants, any spouses who regularly attend, godparents and sponsors, and the RCIA team—to develop a more inclusive sense of community through weekly mixing. If this is the leader’s intention, the members of the RCIA team should specifically be instructed to sit in different places, at different tables, for each catechetical session.

#### ***Placement in the Catechetical Session and Duration***

Because the purposes of small-group sessions have to do with “processing” catechesis, by necessity they must follow the teaching. It is generally helpful to allow a break between the catechesis and the small-group session, of approximately ten minutes (which should be reasonably strictly enforced by the leader or catechist, since the approximate duration of the entire session, from opening hymn to closing prayer or hymn, should be known and respected). The break

also makes easier any changes of seating necessitated by small-group composition. Unlike the Reflection on the Word sessions, the small-group sessions can last about twenty to thirty minutes. Facilitators are responsible for ensuring that this time is used well, since it is relatively brief.


#### **WHAT TAKES PLACE IN SMALL-GROUP SESSIONS**

The crucial event of a small group is dialogue: “Of fundamental importance is the *dialogical approach* which . . . respects the basic freedom and autonomy of adults and encourages them to engage in an open and cordial dialogue. In this way, they can make known their needs and can participate, as they should, as subjects or agents in their own catechesis and in that of others” (ACCC 57; emphasis in original).

The subject of the dialogue is, of course, what has just been taught. The RCIA leader may provide a list of appropriate questions (see the Application heading near the bottom of the page of the sixty lesson plans in ACM’s companion *Catechist’s Manual*; see also the CD-ROM of ACM’s *Participant’s Book*, which has the same questions in electronic form, and can be downloaded to allow them to be made more easily available to group facilitators). These can be used either to help guide the discussion or to provide help if it bogs down. The leader may prefer small-group facilitators instead to initiate the discussion by asking people to share one thought they had about the topic.

The facilitator’s principal tasks are:

- To create trust within the group, both in the facilitator and among the participants, as part of the process of community-building.
- Without forcing anyone to speak, to encourage everyone to participate in an open discussion (the leader, in training members of the RCIA team, and godparents and sponsors, will have instructed these individuals that, for the most part, they should not speak first, for otherwise they will dominate the discussion).
- To clear up simple misunderstandings of what has just been taught.
- To paraphrase what someone in the group has said in order to clarify it for others in the group, and to



demonstrate attentive listening to, and interest in, the person who spoke.

- As much as possible (and as even-handedly as possible), to show delight and excitement about each person's insights.
- To help members of the group understand the connection between what has just been taught and other doctrines of the faith, to discover how what has been taught deepens their own conversion, and to realize how it applies in their daily lives.
- To prevent problems from derailing the group (see the next subsection for a discussion of problems and how they should be handled).

Members of a given small group will be in a different place in the journey of faith, making it critical that the facilitator listen to each individual and affirm their insights and questions. To understand what is being expressed, the facilitator must pay attention not only to what is said, but also to the speaker's emotions and any non-verbal cues he or she unconsciously gives.

There are, as well, some fairly obvious "don'ts" when facilitating small groups:

- ➔ Do not dominate the group.
- ➔ Do not create a sense that people feel the need to say "the right things."
- ➔ Do not allow small-group discussions to consist largely of people "catching up" on each other's lives, griping about bad weather or high prices, rehashing sporting events, or—especially!—gossiping.

### *Specific Problems*

Because people are people, small groups can go awry in numerous ways. It is the facilitator's task to foresee problems and prevent them from making small-group sessions a waste of time. Among the problems every facilitator is likely to encounter are:

- Some people will try to dominate the group.
- Some people will be less able to stay focused than others.
- Some people will continually ask questions as a way to extend the catechesis.
- Some people will hold back from joining the discussion.
- Someone is going through a crisis—a family or work problem, loss of a job, difficulty with de-

pression or addiction, or one brought on by the conversion process itself.

*People Who Try to Dominate the Group.* A person who tries to dominate a group may have a naturally dominating personality, believe (with or without reason) that he or she is always right, or be habitually rude. The facilitator should always courteously and firmly thank the dominating, know-it-all, and rude person for his or her comments before everyone else becomes so irritated that the group can no longer function, and invite others to speak up. After any small-group session in which these problems have arisen, the facilitator should discuss the situation with the person's godparent or sponsor, and with the RCIA leader. The purpose of this discussion should be how best to counsel the person about the need to change this behavior and to develop the virtues of humility, meekness, and self-control.

Some people dominate a group because they "get" what has been taught much more quickly than everyone else, or have had greater previous catechesis than originally thought. In either case, this may become a problem for the leader to resolve. If such a person is baptized, it might be appropriate to consider providing an abbreviated catechumenal and pastoral formation, as urged by the United States bishops (see NS 31). However, if this person desires not to leave a community with which he or she has already formed strong ties, he or she should be counseled about developing the virtues of charity, patience, and self-control. If the person is not baptized, he or she should remain with the group and be given similar counseling.

*People Who Do Not Stay Focused.* People naturally differ in their ability to stay focused in a group discussion. Those who are easily distracted tend to take the conversation on tangents by bringing up issues that are unrelated to the discussion. Sometimes a person will have difficulty understanding or accepting something that they have heard. In these cases, the facilitator needs to have a keen sense of what is best for the group as a whole. It may be that the "unrelated issue" is more relevant than it first appears, and it may be that one person's problem with understanding or assenting to a specific doctrine is also being experienced by others in the group. In these cases, the facilitator may





do a quick check with the others to determine if most of them want to deal with the “unrelated issue” or the difficult doctrine.

However, if the problem seems to be confined to one person, or the same person has the same types of problems every week, the facilitator may need to gently steer the group back to the main points while assuring the one person that he or she will be given additional attention by the facilitator, godparent or sponsor, another member of the team, or a catechist, as appropriate.

*People Who Continually Ask Questions.* The person who is always asking questions is hard to resist, for the facilitator, like everyone else on the team, desires and is in fact eager to pass on the faith. However, apart from clearing up simple misunderstandings, the facilitator should not allow a small group discussion to degenerate into a question-and answer session. When the facilitator becomes “Mr. (or Ms.) Answer Person”—a serious temptation to anyone who knows much more than participants—the participants cannot process the truths that they have just been taught. The small group is *their* time; extension of catechesis is done by means of handouts (a complete set of handouts for participants is available in ACM’s *Participant’s Book*), one-on-one exchanges after the conclusion of the catechetical session, including a response to the question at the next catechetical session, or follow-up meetings or telephone discussions with team members, a catechist, or the leader outside the small-group setting. Facilitators should always ensure that questions are answered and, if it seems appropriate, to report back to the individual or the group at another time. Finally, the facilitator should also be alert to pick up a “question behind the question.” Participants may not be able to phrase a question well enough to receive an appropriate answer. It is also possible that the question reveals a deeper problem that should not go unaddressed.

*People Who Hold Back from the Discussion.* The opposite of the person who dominates a discussion is one who seems unwilling to participate at all. As with the other problems, this can have several causes. Some people need time to ponder a particular teaching, or have real trouble assimilating the teaching or connecting it to other doctrines. When the facilitator

realizes that this is the situation, he or she can simply avoid calling on the person until everyone else has had something to say. For this person, hearing the thoughts and reactions of others may help crystallize his or her own thinking. If the facilitator thinks this person is probably ready, he or she can then invite this person to comment. The source of this person’s problem is often the belief that their own contributions will be little valued, a form of false humility that needs a godparent’s or sponsor’s help to correct.

Sometimes someone’s contributions are criticized by another member of the group. Since one of the pastoral purposes of small-group discussions is fostering mutual charity and building up a sense of community, the facilitator must deal with all criticism (including nonverbal “comments” such as scowls or eye-rolling) immediately, with kindness and, if the facilitator is especially adept, with a comment that shows how useful or helpful the criticized comment is. The facilitator must involve other members of the team, and godparents and sponsors, to help inculcate behavior patterns of kindness and gentleness when critical comments regularly occur.

Unwillingness to participate may also stem from simple shyness, a speech impediment such as a stutter, or a hearing impairment. The facilitator should watch for physical problems that may, on the surface, seem to be shyness or even aloofness. An awareness of physical problems, and an open intention to make allowances for them—waiting patiently for someone to complete a sentence, restating points so that the facilitator is sure that the person has actually heard them—is an act of courtesy and kindness to every person in the group. The facilitator should encourage this behavior and gently reprove anyone who becomes impatient. If the problem is shyness, the facilitator should enlist the help of the person’s sponsor or godparent; the virtue required is courage.

*People Going Through Crises.* A participant might be going through a personal crisis of some kind, and either be completely inattentive or try to use the group to help with the problem. Inattentiveness, especially in a person who previously had been eager to participate or always had something to say, should be a red flag to the facilitator to investigate, privately with the





person, what the problem is. It might be no worse than the exhaustion of holding down a job and spending wakeful nights with a cranky infant, or it might be as weighty as a marital problem, loss of a job, or a newly-diagnosed serious illness. Once the facilitator knows what is happening, he or she should consult with the RCIA leader about appropriate responses by the team and by the parish. A person who seeks to use the small group to help with the problem can be asked to “hold off” with the promise of attention after the small-group discussion has concluded. If the person is unable to do this, the facilitator should excuse himself or herself and the person, put the problem in the hands of the leader, and return to the group.

The final problem to be discussed is not in fact properly described as a “problem.” This is the situation of a person who is experiencing a spiritual or moral crisis brought on by the catechumenal process itself. A crisis of this sort is to be greeted with joy by the facilitator and, if the person shares it with the group, by its members as well. The catechesis being received is truly fulfilling its purpose of changing a heart. Facing a change in one’s life—the possibility that a marriage may be invalid, that one must stop living as though married without actually being married, that a serious vice such as pornography must be given up, that a lifestyle of opulence and materialism is contrary to the Gospel and must be abandoned, that the frivolous and sinful use of time must be corrected, that the way

a father has raised his children has done damage that must be undone to the extent possible, that a woman must abandon her hopes for a child by means of in-vitro fertilization, that one’s pursuit of wealth or power or fame may have immoral aspects—is painful and frightening: *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb 10:31). A small-group session is not the right setting for helping a participant with a spiritual crisis—this is the task of the RCIA leader, perhaps the pastor, and the godparent or sponsor—but the facilitator and those in the group can and should feel edified by what they are witnessing and privileged that they have been allowed to see it unfold.

## CONCLUSION

Small groups are not an optional “if there is time” component of catechesis. The small group is an essential element in assimilating what has been taught, and necessary as part of the process by which a group of strangers begin to be incorporated into the community of the parish and of the universal Church (see GDC 159). If adequate time is provided for these discussions, if small-group facilitators are effective, and if room is left for the Holy Spirit to bring the right person into a small group at the right time, or to have someone say just what someone else needs to hear, then the experience that small groups offer can greatly aid RCIA participants in understanding the faith and allowing it to change their lives.





# Catechetics & the Sharing of Life

*In parish and school life, the apostolate of influence eventually calls ministers to become good listeners.*

## Who are you?

**If you want to be a catechist, decide to be a saint.**

*All we need to be holy comes from Mother Church.*

*God's enablement will match our desire...*

✧ *For Him – zeal for love, joy, and peace – in Him  
Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.*

~ Revelation 3:19

✧ *For Souls – zeal for teaching, healing, comforting – for Him  
Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.*

~ Romans 12:11

**When you seek this, people will seek your counsel.**

*Mother Church shapes our desire by key virtues . . .*

☐ Are you humble? [non-judgmental]

☐ Are you obedient? [willing to be led beyond your view]

☐ Are you spiritually detached? [dis - orders healed]

☐ Are you an encourager? [building, not nagging]

☐ Are you generous? [patient, open to life]

Ask those closest to you: What is most lacking in me?

## What is your sure ground?

**The counsel that the Catholic Church offers is distinctive. What you offer is what people really need.**

✧ *Baptismal virtues of faith, hope, and love are seen as authentic enablers that elevate human nature.*

✧ *Sacraments are taken seriously as critical to what is possible in the human condition.*

✧ *Suffering is recognized as key to God's providential care.*

✧ *Our Catholic history mentors us through example.*

✧ *Prayer is deeply protective and unifying.*

✧ *Sainthood is real and possible.*

✧ *It all makes sense.*



## How can we help you move forward?

**Jesus always places us in ministries that call for painful growth. Seek to offer Him true devotion. True devotion means to do His will: Carefully (diligently) Often (frequently) Reliably (quickly)**

➤ Study the nature of conversion. [by grace, to live daily to put away sin and live deeply your vocation]

➤ Seek to foster deliberate relationships of service. [pray for a chance to serve those you need good relationships with]

➤ Recognize in yourself any problematic reactions to the needs of others:

✧ I avoid the needs of others.

✧ I fear the needs of others.

✧ I desire to have people need me and seek me.

✧ I feel incompetent to help others.

✧ I feel unconfident in helping others.

✧ I am fixated on providing solutions as my main task.

➤ The value of formal training.

➤ The value to you of learning through other accessible forms of counseling.

*“The truth is that our need to be heard and understood is a powerful, relentless hunger.*

*It never diminishes.*

*It never goes away.*

*And how spontaneously we love and bless, with our whole heart,  
the one who meets this need with tenderness and care.”*

*~ Fr. James E. Sullivan, The Good Listener*