

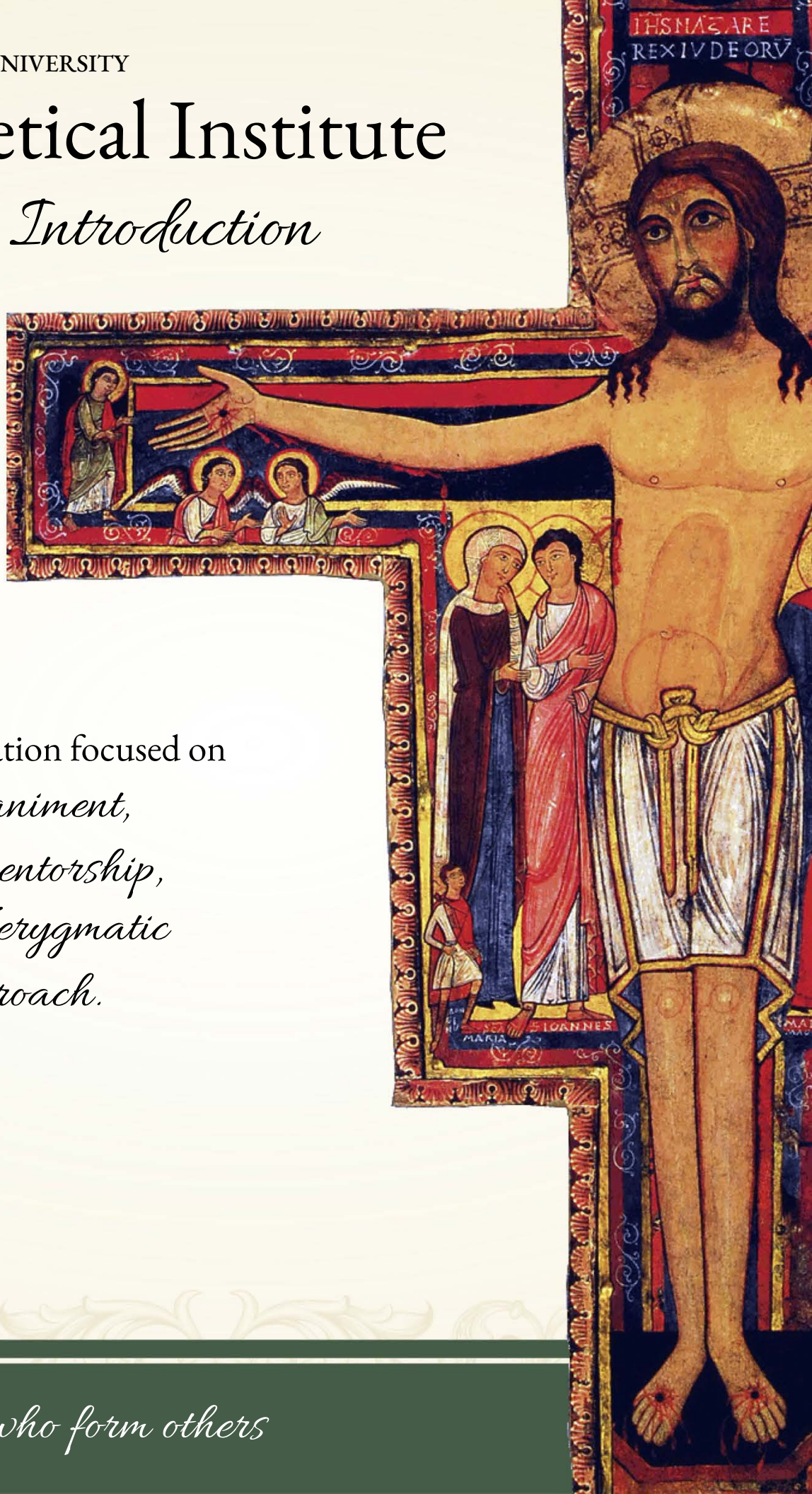
THE FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY

# Catechetical Institute

## *An Introduction*

Ministry formation focused on  
*Accompaniment,*  
*Mentorship,*  
and the *Kerygmatic*  
*Approach.*

*Forming those who form others*



# CATECHETICAL INSTITUTE

## *About Us*

### ABOUT US

The Catechetical Institute (CI) is an international outreach of Franciscan University of Steubenville. Publicly launched in 2017, our mission is to form those who form others in any ministry role—priests, deacons, religious, parents, parish and school leaders, teachers, catechists, and teams. We combine the University's strong academic resources and the outreach experience of the Franciscan Center for Evangelization and Renewal.

#### **Accompaniment & Mentorship**

The effectiveness of our formation critically relies on mentorship and person-to-person engagement, guided by assessments which give windows into the real progress of a learner. Our goal is to support—not supplant—your local catechists.

#### **Kerygmatic Approach**

We offer formation in basic evangelization skills, catechesis, mentorship, spiritual guidance, vocational discernment, healing, spiritual combat, team building, and many other practical topics. These workshops are created not just for professionals, but for anyone who walks daily with others on their spiritual journey.

### WHAT WE OFFER

By becoming part of our online community through our **International Guild for Catechists and Leaders**, you get access to:

#### **Resources for Ministry Formation**

- ✦ Online Workshops
- ✦ Live Webinars
- ✦ In-Person Events
- ✦ Supplemental Video Resources
- ✦ Printable PDF Resources

#### **Community for Catechists & Leaders**

- ✦ Mentoring for Certification
- ✦ Small Groups
- ✦ Discussion Boards
- ✦ Networking Opportunities





# *The Catechumenal Model ~ Paradigm for All Catechesis*

*Given that the *missio ad gentes* is the paradigm of all the Church's missionary activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is joined to it, is the model of its catechizing activity. It is therefore helpful to underline those elements of the catechumenate which must inspire contemporary catechesis and its significance . . . Post-baptismal catechesis, without slavishly imitating the structure of the baptismal catechumenate, and recognizing in those to be catechized the reality of their Baptism, does well, however, to draw inspiration from this preparatory school for the Christian life, and to allow itself to be enriched by those principal elements which characterize the catechumenate. ~ General Directory for Catechesis 90, 91*

Jesus looked at him and loved him.  
~ Mark 10:21



## **What's the point? ~ Conversion that is deep and lasting, authentic and spreading**

- ▲ A process ~ not a program of pre-set duration for all participants (GDC 143)
- ▲ A turning process ~ focused on conversion from sin to sanctity (GDC 82)
- ▲ A gradual process ~ building systematically piece upon piece (GDC 88-89)
- ▲ A personal process ~ mindful that conversion is highly individual (GDC 118; CT 31)
- ▲ A pervasive process ~ leaving no part of participants' lives untouched (GDC 116; CT 22)
- ▲ A community process ~ joining not just to God, but to his visible family (GDC 72, 158; CT 24)
- ▲ A supernatural process ~ "then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45)

## **What makes something catechumenal?**

- ✦ An authentically LITURGICAL aspect – pouring out God's changing graces, always as an act of movement, giving opportunities to the Holy Spirit to draw hearts nearer, and to follow trustingly the way of faith
- ✦ An authentically CATECHETICAL aspect – clearly and courageously proclaiming Christ Jesus, aiming for change, to accept all that He is, all that He offers, and all that He invites us to hope for in the Father's plan
- ✦ An authentically PASTORAL aspect – making abundantly present the sacrificial and generous love of the brethren, giving them a vision for the Catholic way of openness to life, calling them to heroic charity

She turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus . . .  
Then, Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him, "Teacher!" ~ John 20:14, 16

## **What are the elements of Christian initiation?**

- ✧ To know (GDC 174) ~ "...sincere and patient dialogue..." (AG 11)
- ✧ To be known (GDC 158-159) ~ "establish relationships of respect and love" (AG 11)
- ✧ Centered on the One to be known ~ Jesus is the point (GDC 89)
- ✧ Preparatory only ~ implying life-long pursuit of Christ at the feet of Mother Church (GDC 90)
- ✧ An invitation to participation ~ inculturation is reciprocal; the Church needs those who enter (GDC 109)
- ✧ Discernment ~ teaching them to read what God has written in themselves (GDC 152c)
- ✧ Definitive goal ~ peace, joy, the satisfaction of our deepest desires, the beginning of Heaven (GDC 117; CT 21)
  - ✦ Systematic and organic
  - ✦ Focused on essentials
  - ✦ Open to the fullness of the Christian life

*This comprehensive formation includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life...which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith, in such a manner that the entire person, at his deepest levels, feels enriched by the Word of God; it helps the disciple of Christ to transform the old man in order to assume his baptismal responsibilities and to profess the faith from the heart. (GDC 67)*

# 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.*



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

*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

CATECHUMENATE



### PRECATECHUMENATE

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

PRECATECHUMENATE

**Start**



CATECHUMENS



CANDIDATES



PERIODS



STEPS



Aside from the new “O” replacing the old “R”, a summary of changes in the OCIA Ritual Text is:

- ✧ The revised OCIA retains the identical arrangement and numbering as the current USA editions, and the appendices remain.
- ✧ Terminology has been refined to better clarify titles, e.g., “inquirer,” “catechumen,” “elect,” and “candidate.”
- ✧ The Rite of Acceptance for the unbaptized has been changed to the “Rite for Entrance” into the Catechumenate.
- ✧ New sample introductions are provided for use by the celebrant in the combined rites, making clearer the distinctions between groups.
- ✧ The combined rites for Easter Vigil also now include texts for the Baptism of an infant (adapted from the Order of Baptism of Children) since the Missal and other liturgical texts provides for this possibility.
- ✧ The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults will incorporate the newer Easter Vigil texts, and other relevant changes, so it matches with the current Roman Missal.
- ✧ OCIA Ritual Texts will be available for purchase on November 1, 2024 from several publishers. Use of this new book will be mandatory beginning Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025.
- ✧ Updates have been made to the Ritual de la Iniciación cristiana de adultos (RICA) and a new translation will be made available. The timeline for implementation is currently the same for the Spanish and English editions.
- ✧ The National Statues specific to the U.S. have been entirely revised – it is a short set of 18 norms – more succinct than the original, and covering fewer pastoral issues (expect a USCCB-authored supplement at some point to appear).





*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 Nicene Creed

**I believe** in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of Heaven and  
earth, of all things visible  
and invisible.

**I believe** in one Lord Jesus  
Christ, the Only Begotten  
Son of God, born of the  
Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from  
Light, true God from true  
God, begotten, not made,  
consubstantial with the  
Father; through Him all  
things were made.  
For us men and for our  
salvation He came down  
from Heaven, and by the  
Holy Spirit was incarnate  
of the Virgin Mary, and  
became man.  
For our sake He was  
crucified under Pontius  
Pilate, He suffered death  
and was buried, and rose  
again on the third day  
in accordance with the  
Scriptures.  
He ascended into Heaven  
and is seated at the right  
hand of the Father.  
He will come again in  
glory to judge the living  
and the dead and His  
Kingdom will have no end.

**I believe** in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the  
Father and the Son, who  
with the Father and the  
Son is adored and  
glorified, who has spoken  
through the prophets.

**I believe** in one, holy,  
catholic and apostolic  
Church. I confess one  
Baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins, and I  
look forward to the  
resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the  
world to come.

**Amen.**

# Kerygma

*Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him ...*

*~ Mark 10:21*



The desire for God is written in the human heart,  
because man is created by God and for God;  
and God never ceases to draw man to himself.  
Only in God will he find the truth and happiness  
he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact  
that he is called to communion with God.

*~ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 27 ~*



The Kerygma is not merely a set of external tenets.

It is an explanation of you.

It reveals a story that is to ring true in your interior;  
explaining you to yourself, answering your struggles,  
showing you the way forward to a hope  
beyond your highest imaginings,  
to a family you belong in.

## Bottomlines

Our Creed is a set of  
sentences that cost an  
immense number of  
people their lives, liberty,  
and earthly welfare.

These sentences form a  
prayer, and an invitation  
to respond –  
for **you** to respond.



You have a Father

You have a Savior

You have a Mother

You have an Advocate

You have a Church



These are known  
historical realities,  
not just philosophical  
ideas; we have an  
events-based faith.

We have a known and  
demanding continuity –  
the Church.

We have a known  
historical end,  
not just a nebulous  
passage to some  
other realm.

It will be the end of all  
time, of all history,  
of all sin.



So . . .

Which of these truths  
don't you understand  
well enough to love,  
and to feel a **deep** need  
to give to another soul?

Which of these truths  
do you need – what  
does it matter to you  
that these **are** true?

## Making the Gospel Personal

Reflect on some or all of these questions to help you see the “wonderful works of God” in your life:

How have I found joy in the Lord and in his Church?



When have I experienced the peace which surpasses understanding (through the Church)?



How have I experienced my heart being softened by Jesus (through his Church)?



How have I grown in virtue through Jesus and the Church?



What difference has the Holy Spirit made in my life?



Tell  
others  
about  
the truth  
that sets  
you free.

Pope Benedict XVI

# What is the Gospel

*It is the Good News about God and His wonderful works  
It is the Good News about God's love and His plan for us*



## Elements of the Gospel message and key *Catechism* passages to master its content . . .

- ▲ Revelation and Scripture, a plan for union in the divine life of the Holy Trinity (CCC 25; 293; 1027).
- ▲ Our sin problem (CCC 309; 1707; 1426).
- ▲ Prophecy and unfolding steps towards God's plan for salvation (CCC 400; 65; 702).
- ▲ Jesus, the fullness of time, His call, His sacrifice, His Resurrection (CCC 609; 1439; 516).
- ▲ The Church as necessary for salvation, firstly my means of calling people to metanoia and Baptism (CCC 760; 1989; 1427).
- ▲ The Christian life of grace: believing, hoping, loving until Christ's promised return (CCC 168; 1818; 826).



## The tone of an in-depth Gospel proclamation is . . .

- ✠ TRINITARIAN: He, who 'was sent by the Father' and 'anointed by the Spirit', is Lord, Messiah, and Savior, and the Son of God and Son of Mary (GDC 99-100).
- ✠ CHRIST-CENTERED: Through the saving action of his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven (the Paschal mystery), he has made a way for us to take advantage of the Father's plan for our salvation (Jn 14:6; GDC 98).
- ✠ ECCLESIAL: While on earth, he went about doing good and preaching the Kingdom of God, which he perpetuated in a visible Church (Eph 3:10; see CCC 760).
- ✠ PERSONAL: The Holy Spirit has made it possible for us to access in the Church the full power and merits won for us by Jesus, which dispenses them in the sanctifying action of the sacramental life (see GDC 43, 117).
- ✠ FORWARD-LOOKING: He ascended to the Father to prepare a place for his people who have been freed from sin and taken into the family of God (Jn 14:1-7).
- ✠ HEAVEN-FOCUSED: His family will endure the judgment that is to come and will enjoy his 'steadfast love that endures forever' in the Heavenly banquet; the Father's plan for our salvation is for us to "become partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pt 1:3-4).
- ✠ EXPERIENCED IN THIS COMMUNITY: 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 and participate in the Father's plan (GDC 102, 256).

## Making the Gospel Impactful

How has the Church's teaching on \_\_\_\_\_ impacted my life?

The Holy Trinity



Creation



Being made in the image and likeness of God



The providence of the Father



The Body of Christ



The Holy Eucharist



Grace as a sharing in Divine life



The redemptive value of our suffering



A person  
who is not  
convinced,  
enthusiastic,  
certain and  
in love, will  
convince  
nobody.

Pope Francis



# 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

# *A Few Helpful Questions for Sharpening Your Parish's Catechumenate*

## **What makes the initiation process truly catechumenal in the ancient sense, and effective in the modern sense?**

- ▲ The process must have authentic Liturgical / Catechetical / Pastoral components
- ▲ **Liturgies** are acts of movement – the discerned choice to step nearer to the living God, and depend on the graces therein
- ▲ **Catechesis** teaches for conversion – aims for change / harder choices / personal witness / call to trustingly embrace the Father
- ▲ **Pastoring** seeks to show authentic charity, and call it forth, to heal, to elevate, and to point our actions to Christ

## **What are the benefits to formation that seeks to incorporate catechumenal elements?**

- ✧ Fosters more genuine and deep conversions to God and His calling on individual lives
- ✧ Allows for more frequent and more full appropriation of grace
- ✧ More fully expressive of the Church nature
- ✧ Fosters docility to the ancient ways of the Church
- ✧ Mitigates polemic tendencies regarding the teachings of the Church
- ✧ Helps the parish community grow in its communal and liturgical life
- ✧ Helps people to grasp the liturgical life of the Church in a daily, pragmatic way
- ✧ Creates a greater diversity of ministries for differing gifts and abilities of parishioners
- ✧ Assists in vocational awareness due to the regular focus on saints who have lived fully their vocations
- ✧ The ordered nature and paschal focus of the liturgical year implies and demands systematic catechesis
- ✧ Provides more diverse means of approach for children; in better accord with the learning types of children
- ✧ Gives people a chance to experience their priest's liturgical ministry more frequently and in a less distant setting
- ✧ Because the liturgical year forms the context of parish life, people become that much more integrated into parish life
- ✧ Helps catechesis accord with the adult learning model better than more didactic and academic forms of teaching
- ✧ Demands more people (sponsors, godparents, team) to be more liturgically aware and in tune with the cycles of the Church's life



## **What are some of the dangers to the degree that a parish lacks this vision?**

- The catechumenate model is viewed as unnecessarily effort intensive, or it becomes “canned”
- Doctrine is explained without reference to Jesus. His simple call is lost in the details
- Not expecting serious progress; or not having patience with how Jesus woos a soul
- Liturgical rites become celebrations of community entirely, not encounters with Christ
- The trust given to catechists and leaders never translates into trusting Jesus
- Forgiveness explained poorly can result in seeing Jesus' mercy as weakness or lenience

### **What should a parish see in its neophytes over time that gives evidence as to whether your efforts have been successful?**

- ✧ Do your neophytes really feel they have a need for the Mass?
- ✧ Do your neophytes really have a desire for Jesus that is restless for more?
- ✧ Do your neophytes really desire to help others get to Heaven?
- ✧ Do your neophytes really have thankful hearts?
- ✧ Do your neophytes really need God in daily life?
- ✧ Do your neophytes really desire to sin less each day?



# Encountering Christ as Sacrament ~ Models of the Catechumenate

by Msgr. M. Francis Mannion

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

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

And yet all is not well. The very fact that the challenge is conversion, the conforming of imperfect men and women to Christ, means that the process will never be perfect. Initiation is, after all, the beginning of a process which has its ending in eternity. However, there are problems that are more concrete and, for that reason, can more readily be corrected. In general, three models of RCIA are operative today in U.S. Catholic parishes. Each of the models conceives of, and practices, Christian initiation differently. This chapter describes these models, discussing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of catechetical, liturgical, and pastoral/ecclesial dimensions.

## **The First Model: Doctrinal-Apologetic**

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

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



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

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

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

However, the duration of instruction tends to be relatively short, often fitting comfortably within the timetable of the secular school year. The catechumen is a student in the regular educational sense; though the process may take place with other learners in the classroom, the communal dimension might not be significant. The actual event of initiation in this model may also be non-communal and involve few people, and options that allow for private initiation will tend to be used. The ritual dimensions will accordingly tend to be truncated. An approach which gives priority to the doctrinal and the apologetic, and which highlights the formal and juridical features of the Church, tends not to have a high sacramental and liturgical consciousness. Thus, what is problematic about this approach is not the importance it accords to doctrine and apologetics, but rather the relatively low profile given to other crucial factors of initiation: the spiritual, the communal, and the liturgical. Spiritual and moral formation, and introduction into the sacramental life of the Church, have their place in this model, but they are expected to fall into place by themselves and are not systematically and carefully stimulated and promoted.

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

This process of formation, which has its roots in the pre-Vatican II Church, produces good converts; it would be arrogant and untrue to suggest otherwise. Indeed, the strengths of the conversion process of that era are very easily forgotten in the enthusiasm for the newer RCIA process. The problems are not found in what it actually does or seeks to do, but in what it could do more amply, comprehensively, and richly. Vatican II sought not to replace the old system but to take its strengths and to expand them, amplifying areas not adequately emphasized previously.

### ***The Second Model: Spiritual-Expressive***

The second model is the conception and practice of RCIA as a means by which the spirituality of individuals is brought to expression and given shape. The use of the word “spiritual” here does not mean what has traditionally been meant by the word in Catholicism, but instead what it has come to mean in our secular culture and, to a very significant and profound degree, in contemporary writing about spirituality in American Catholicism: the personal, intense search for meaning.

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

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

The operative image here is not the blackboard but the *mirror*, and the physical place is not the classroom, but the *support group*. The catechist is not a teacher, as is the case whenever anybody approaches a blackboard, but a *therapist* (see table below).

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***The Third Model: Sacramental-Acculturation***

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

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

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



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

The sacramental system, therefore, is a culture in which an individual moves, requiring interiorizing a set of skills by practice and training. Learning how to feel, how to act, and how to think in conformity with a religious tradition is a process that leads an individual to his or her true self. Learning the story of salvation history, of God acting in history, allows an individual to experience and interpret himself or herself, and the world, in its terms. Becoming a Christian is a matter of learning, interiorizing, and practicing the Scriptures, doctrines, sacraments, prayers, moral traditions, spiritual writings, and communal protocols of the Church. To become a Catholic is to be initiated into the culture and language of Catholic sacramental life.

If the image of the doctrinal-apologetic model is the blackboard, and the image of the spiritual-expressive model is the mirror, then the image of the sacramental-acculturation model is the *icon*, the living presence of God and His holy ones in our midst. If the place of the first model of formation is the classroom, and the place of the second model is the support group, then the place of the third model is the *worshiping assembly*. Finally, if in the first model the catechist is a teacher, and in the second model the catechist is a therapist, then in the sacramental-acculturation model the catechist is a *saint*, in the New Testament sense: the holy one (see table below).

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

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

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

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

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

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

The sacramental-expressive model is not simply a return to the catechetical theory and practice of the Church before the Second Vatican Council. It is, rather, the renewal of the Church’s fundamental intuition about the nature of catechesis that also takes into account the genuine insights into human formation offered by modern philosophy, the social sciences, and culture theory. It gives full play to doctrinal and apologetic aspects of catechesis while also giving the elements that the doctrinal-apologetic model neglect--the ritual, the communal, and the practical--more attention. The sacramental-acculturation model does not diminish the genuine values of the spiritual-expressive model either. The elements of experience and the importance of the personal and the affective are incorporated without falling into self-exploratory, introverted, and privatized subjectivism.

There is nothing ultimately novel in the sacramental-acculturation model. It is the model that is implicit in the RCIA itself, the model that most adequately accounts for all the aspects of the prayers, the texts, and the rites found in the ritual book. It incorporates all the central elements of the Church’s theology and its sacramental structure. It had its ancient expression in the catechetical instructions of Sts. Hippolytus, Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Augustine. Its early modern exponents were the fathers of the modern liturgical movement, for whom catechesis and liturgy were woven together in a rich and vigorous conception of Catholic culture. The Church is fundamentally a baptismal, Eucharistic reality, and from this all else in the life of the Church flows. It is into this great mystery that the believer is called, and it is this great mystery that all the institutions of the Church, each and every one of them, exist to serve. The RCIA has no other purpose than the service of the holy mystery, the saving sacrament, of Christ present and active in His living Body.

Table 1: Models of RCIA

Model	Role of Catechist	Place	Image
Catechetical-apologetic	Teacher	Classroom	Blackboard
Spiritual-expressive	Therapist	Support group	Mirror
Sacramental-acculturation	Saint	Worshiping assembly	Icon

# Christian Initiation

## A Liturgical, Catechetical and Pastoral Process

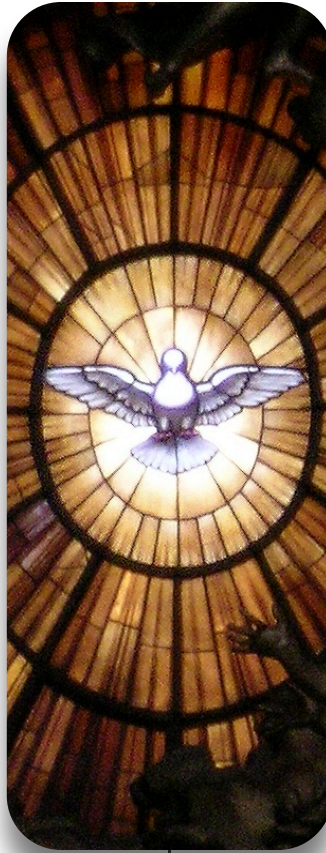
by William J. Keimig

RCIA is a privileged and, in many ways, challengingly complex form of adult formation. Its complexity flows from the need for the process to be authentically truthful (implying catechesis that is far removed from the easy sound-bite answers and errors of the culture), authentically personal (implying pastoral flexibility and sacrificial effort to call forth from people deep conversion), and authentically unitive (implying insertion into a profoundly countercultural liturgical way of life to realize union with a divine Spouse). In other words, to the degree that the RCIA process is complex, it is so because it must be *fully human*, so that it may be fully open to the divine. The restoration of the ancient catechumenal process, as called for in no less than five documents of the Second Vatican Council, is a reflection of the Church's wisdom in going back to a tried and true practice in order to lovingly bring people into her fold.

The catechumenal process is not a program. Programs have a fixed length of time and a determined course of studies. No one can “program” the Holy Spirit as he moves individuals to conversion; each person's conversion journey is unique. While a parish may do things systematically and make a calendar of events each year, it must also pay close attention to the fact that this is an individual conversion journey for each inquirer. The RCIA team's primary task is not to run a program but to be present to help facilitate conversion. For this reason, it is not desirable to call what parishes do “the RCIA program” as this invariably creates a false impression for all involved, and tends to imply that the journey of the participants is an isolated endeavor within the community of faith.

Catechesis is understood to be concerned with conversion in Christ and with how to live continuously in such a manner not only prior to but after initiation as well...Catechumens are viewed not as anonymous attendants at private educational inquiry classes, but as public persons in the local church. Their faith, progress, and prognosis in communal faith-living are the concerns of the entire local church met for solemn public worship (Fr. Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B., *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, Liturgical Press, 1978, p. 128; see also pp. 120-122).

One way to understand the Christian initiation process is by breaking it down its three distinct aspects: liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral. *All three are equally important.* It is an injustice to those considering or seeking union with the Church for a catechist to be unambiguously catechetical to the detriment of the liturgical aspect, or be wonderfully pastoral despite offering poor catechesis. In order for RCIA to be what it has the potential to be, directors and catechists can benefit greatly from understanding the implications of its liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral dimensions to make available the fullness of the process as intended by the Church.



The catechumenal process is divided into four periods: **1)** the Precatechumenate up to the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, **2)** the Catechumenate proper up to the Rites of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion normally held on the first Sunday of Lent, **3)** the period of Purification and Enlightenment which normally coincides with Lent, and **4)** Mystagogy, which traditionally spans the seven weeks of the Easter season, followed by the Neophyte Year, which lasts until the first anniversary of one's initiation. It is useful to discuss the nature and scope of these periods in light of the three aspects.

### ***The First Aspect of the Process: Liturgical Formation (see RCIA 40, 75.1, 75.3, 79, 141, 147, 247)***

The RCIA process is dynamically moved along by liturgical rites that serve as gateways into the major periods of the process. Beginning with the Rite of Acceptance for unbaptized catechumens and the Rite of Welcoming for baptized candidates, and going through all the subsequent minor rites and major gateways, liturgy propels the process and motivates conversion. Grace comes with every gateway and every liturgical moment. The sacraments of initiation — Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist — are the powerhouses for the whole process. This grace — all that it means to be reborn in Christ, to be infused with the theological virtues, to become a co-heir with Christ, to be sealed with a deeper and stronger configuration to the crucified One, and to come to the

Table of the Lord among his people — abundantly provides the ongoing impetus for the conversion process. For all involved in RCIA, it is crucial to understand the Catholic sacramental and liturgical sense of reality (see GDC 85):

The sacraments [in the catechumenate of the early Church] were seen as a totality coextensive with the Church's life itself...The liturgy was not seen as a matter of exquisite ecclesiastical ceremony to occupy clergy and religious but as the way a Christian people live in common...[The rites of initiation] were a unified sacramental discipline through which both convert *and* community moved in the Spirit from what each had been toward what each was capable of becoming under grace in that same Spirit — a movement shot through with both pain and glory, with affirmation and renunciation, exorcism and celebration toward a new degree of communion in faith that would leave both convert *and* community irrevocably changed (Kavanagh, pp. 118, 120-121; italics in original).

The RCIA process aims to lead participants to become “liturgical people,” moving them towards full and active participation in the worshipping community around the one Table:

[H]ere is the last and most decisive reason why teaching through worship is superior to all other forms of Christian teaching: *The liturgy gives what it teaches.* It not only



presents the mystery of Christ concretely: it also lets us immediately participate in this mystery. If there is anywhere in Christianity that a true initiation into the mystery of Christ takes place, it is here (Johannes Hofinger, S.J., and Francis J. Buckley, S.J, *The Good News and Its Proclamation*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, pp. 53, 56; italics in original).

The liturgical aspect in each particular period is the driving force behind the whole process and the primary means of inserting those along this journey into the mystery of Christ. In the first period, the Precatechumenate, the liturgical aspect is at a minimum. There are no formal liturgical rites during this stage, because the inquirer has not yet entered a publicly-recognized relationship with the Church. While no formal liturgy takes place at this stage, prayer is an important part of evangelization. Singing hymns, which is a form of prayer, can help draw the heart up to God and facilitate conversion.

The first liturgical rites, the Rite of Acceptance and the Rite of Welcoming, establish (for a catechumen) or deepen (for a candidate) a relationship between the Church and the participant and are the gateways into the period of the Catechumenate. There are numerous liturgical moments in this period that impart grace to participants and help them continue along the path of conversion. Blessings, minor exorcisms, anointings, and celebrations of the Word (which can also be called Liturgies of the Word) are all designed to introduce those in the Catechumenate into the liturgical life of the Church and the benefits of the graces of liturgy.

The next gateway, the Rite of Election for catechumens and the Continuing Call to Conversion for candidates, begins the intense period of preparation for the sacraments of initiation. Participants are greatly helped by the Scrutinies (for catechumens) and the Penitential Rite (for candidates), as well as the Presentation Rites and Preparations Rites, all directed towards their final preparation for complete Christian initiation and insertion into life with God. Lent becomes a rising crescendo of liturgical graces, the war against sin at the height of its strength (see Rom 5:20).

The third gateway, reception of the sacraments of initiation, fully inserts participants into the mystery of Christ. This is the climax of the catechumenal process, and it is not by accident that it occurs during the Easter Vigil, the Church's greatest and most solemn feast of the year. This third gateway gives birth to the new "fledgling Catholics" or neophytes who, while enjoying the fruits of all the sacraments like the rest of the faithful, are still watched over and cared for in a special way during the course of their first year. The Neophyte Year begins with seven weeks of Mystagogy, that is, Post-Baptismal Catechesis. During this period, neophytes are invited to participate in the main Sunday Mass of the parish as a group, and the readings during these seven weeks have been selected by the Church to meet their needs.

It is important to communicate to both current and future Catholics that liturgy is much more than ritual, and that it is through the liturgy (the summit of which is the Mass) that our relationship with Jesus Christ becomes as intimate as possible outside of Heaven. As RCIA participants move towards full communion with the Church, nothing is more fundamental to their catechesis, and more crucial to impart to the worshipping community, than the fact that it is through the liturgical rites of the catechumenal process, and the sacramental participation to which they point, that a foundational relationship with Jesus is most firmly established.

### ***The Second Aspect of the Process: Catechetical Formation*** **(see RCIA 38, 75.1, 78, 139, 245)**

Catechesis, stemming from the Greek verb *katekhein*, can be defined as the re-echoing or echoing down of that which has been received, developing "in women and men a living, explicit, and active faith, enlightened by doctrine", and concerning "itself not only with

nourishing and teaching the faith, but also with arousing it unceasingly with the help of grace, with opening the heart, with converting, and with preparing total adherence to Jesus Christ on the part of those who are still on the threshold of faith" (CD 14; CT 19; see DCG 17).

This *Manual's* focus is on the catechetical aspect of the RCIA process, and it is the mission of the other sections in this book to elaborate on this facet of RCIA formation. However, a brief overview at this point can serve as context for what follows.

The three major liturgical gateways of the RCIA process help to define the methodology and scope of catechesis during each of the four periods. During the *Precatechumenate period*, the focus is mainly apologetic and evangelistic, with a delivery of the basic Gospel message and unreserved answering of questions:

From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love. The whole period of the precatechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek Baptism may mature (RCIA 37).

The Precatechumenate prepares for and is ordered to the first liturgical step, which is the Rite of Acceptance for the unbaptized or the Rite of Welcoming for the baptized.

In the *Catechumenate period*, the focus moves to a systematic, organic catechesis involving the complete delivery of the essential elements of the Deposit of Faith, laying the flesh on the bones of the Gospel laid out in the previous period. Describing the Deposit of Faith, the Second Vatican Council stated:

What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the people of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church, in its doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that it itself is, all that it believes (DV 8). Tradition and Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church (DV 10).

The Catechumenate is typically the longest period of the Christian initiation process. It is also the most densely catechetical. Catechesis is to be "gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word" (RCIA 75). Instruction received during this period, "while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ" (RCIA 78).

This systematic and organic delivery of the Deposit of Faith seeks to ensure that, by the second liturgical gateway, participants sufficiently understand and desire to live the faith, that they may choose without hesitation to enroll their names among the elect or, if candidates, confidently continue their progress toward full communion with the Church. These rites call forth power and grace to nourish the elect (unbaptized) and the candidates (baptized) during the next period.

During the *period of Purification and Enlightenment*, the catechist places stronger emphasis on the spiritual and mystical life in preparing participants for the sacraments. The ritual book's guidelines for this period (which normally coincides with Lent) as well as the rites associated with them, direct catechists to shift the focus of teaching from an exposition of the Deposit of Faith to spiritual, reflective, and meditative preparation for the reception of the sacraments of initiation, seeking to foster a state of repentance and to effectively arouse the life of prayer and the practice of self-denial and charity. Before they receive the sacraments of initiation, "the elect must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and his

Church, and they are expected particularly to progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance” (RCIA 142).

In the *period of Mystagogy or Post-Baptismal Catechesis*, the focus is on a deepening of the neophytes’ understanding and practice of the sacramental life, in light of now being able to receive the fullness of sacramental grace, and to present ways to synthesize all that they have learned, applying it to their lives. The rest of the Neophyte Year would then be devoted to substantiating, strengthening, and deepening their understanding of the faith that will lead to more committed and mature Christian lives. “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).

### ***The Third Aspect of the Process: Pastoral Formation*** **(see RCIA 42, 45, 75.2, 75.4, 120, 244, 246)**

The RCIA process is a growth in intimacy as much as in knowledge. Aidan Kavanagh, in *The Shape of Baptism*, refers to the catechumenal process as “a structure of Christian nurture” (Kavanagh, p. 182). Along with the powerful liturgical moments of the process and the catechetical endeavor, there is also an intense pastoral activity, which must be initiated from the first time an inquirer expresses interest in the Church. This activity operates with the knowledge that each participant will vary in his or her background, lifestyle, motivation, and state in life. Those doing the RCIA apostolate steep themselves in the lives of participants, with gentleness, prudence, and a genuine desire to open their hearts wide to any whom the Spirit draws (see 1 Cor 6:11).

The pastoral components of RCIA are the *people* who participate, some intimately and others from a distance, in Jesus’ work of conversion and discipleship. The pastoral work of the catechumenal process is

accomplished through the love and labor of many people, including the clergy, catechists, hospitality people, sponsors, small group leaders, prayer intercessors, and parish members:

Christian initiation during the catechumenate is not the concern of catechists or priests alone, but of the whole community of believers and especially the godparents, so that from the outset the catechumens will have a sense of being a part of the people of God (AG 14).



This pastoral work is a people-to-person endeavor — all the people serving this one person for the Lord. The pastoral aspect of RCIA involves both information and formation. By instruction and by the experience of authentic fellowship, the catechumens and candidates learn who God is, what his plan is, and how to follow him as a member of the Christian community, “which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith” (GDC 68):

[T]he people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. Therefore the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ (RCIA 9).

Through the pastoral attention of others, participants are informed about him, and formed in him, so that their experience of the community of believers becomes an “apprenticeship of the entire Christian life” (GDC 67). As with liturgy and catechesis, the pastoral aspects change as participants move through the periods of the process. The Precatechumenate is a time of inviting people to come and see, of determining their motivation, and moving them from the initial stages of faith — an encounter with Jesus, turning away from sin, and finding a home in the Church. During the next period, the Catechumenate, the pastoral aim is to facilitate the work of Holy Spirit in moving the participants from initial motivation to firm conviction, with strong elements of fellowship and spiritual guidance.

The period of Purification and Enlightenment serves as a time of strong support, spiritual direction, and encouragement for participants to examine their conscience, intensify their life of prayer, and increase in works of charity. In the period of Mystagogy, new Catholics receive help to become more open to the pursuit of holiness by deepening their spiritual life through the communal experience of the sacraments, and by strengthening relationships in their new parish family. For the remainder of the Neophyte Year, the pastoral focus is to provide continued support and encouragement in living out a full Catholic life in a parochial setting where they feel comfortably at home. The process aims not just at making non-ignorant Christians — it facilitates transforming them into outwardly-focused Christians growing in an authentic Catholic worldview — sure in the conviction that the fullness of the truth has been revealed and can be shared with joy.

In summary, the RCIA process seeks to prepare people not merely for assent to eternal truths, but more so to fall in love with an eternal Lover. If participants are falling in love with the Person of Jesus, then it is only reasonable that, like anyone that we love in the human order, they would want to *know* him more. Without the teaching and converting aspects of the liturgy and the loving witness of the community, formal instruction runs the risk of becoming just information, instead of light for the path of faith in Christ (see CCC 89). The catechumenal process, a balance of liturgical, catechetical and pastoral aspects, thus becomes an engine of conversion today, as it was centuries ago, fulfilling the intention of its restoration by the Second Vatican Council (see SC 64-66).

The Church can be understood as the earthly configuration of Jesus Christ — to be a member of the Church is to be configured to Christ. Our inner being in Christ has its demands. They are not obligations imposed from outside, although one of Church’s missions is to articulate those demands for our guidance and growth. The Christian initiation process invites a beautifully simple view of the matter: the reason to be a Christian is to be perfectly configured to Christ — to be a saint. The reason to be a Catholic is because within the Church subsists the fullness of the means to become a saint — through her graces, her teachings, her people, and her Head, enabling those who so will to be perfected in love.



## *How to strengthen your RCIA 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 RCIA 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 RCIA 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 RCIA 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
7. **What other helpful resources does Franciscan have to offer to help our parish or school succeed in our mission?**
  - Our resources section on the site: [www.FranciscanAtHome.com/resources](http://www.FranciscanAtHome.com/resources).
  - Our annual [St. John Bosco Conference](#) – and all Franciscan University's [other](#) summer conferences.
  - Our ministry formation magazine – [The Catechetical Review](#).
  - Our [events](#) regularly held for dioceses, local and on-line, and our [tutorials and webinar series](#).
  - Our University's online and on-ground [degrees](#) and [School of Spiritual Direction](#).
  - Our priority on formation for pastoral accompaniment, with online workshops that help build you in that specific skill set, and the option to join the [Franciscan International Guild of Catechists and Leaders](#).

# Sample agenda for an initial team meeting:

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

## **Qualifications of a team member:**

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

## **Nature of the RCIA sessions:**

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

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

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

Who are potential inquirers that might come if asked?  
What the first session needs to be like.

## ***Prayer for those we seek to serve...***

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

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

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

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

Amen.

## ***Agenda for future team meetings:***

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



# Giving a Personal Testimony (Witness) in an RCIA Setting

*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.  
~ 1 John 5:11*

## The Importance of a Testimony

A testimony is a verbal sharing that describes a conversion to Jesus and his Church that happened through the action of grace. A testimony allows inquirers and participants to hear and see how conversion of heart takes place and how to enter the mystery of Christ and to join his Church. For inquirers and participants who do not have a strong relationship with Christ, or who may have limited experience of authentic Christian witness, fellowship, and service, the RCIA team needs to demonstrate what those realities are like. Otherwise, how will inquirers and participants know what they are called by God to be? How will they know what it looks like to respond to that calling and to try to live as a disciple of Christ?

There are three ways in which this calling and this response can be demonstrated:

- 1) Teaching the life of Christ as the model *par excellence*.
- 2) Teaching the lives of saints for the purpose of showing that Christ can be followed successfully in every era, every age-level, and every state of life.
- 3) Teaching your life to them, within the context of how you have heard, responded to, and are striving to live out the very personal call to holiness that the grace of the Holy Spirit makes possible.

This last point is the purpose of a testimony.

## The Purposes of a Testimony

A testimony is valuable to the work of conversion in the RCIA process for these reasons:

- ✠ It *removes misconceptions and barriers to relationships*: When inquirers and participants begin coming to sessions, they normally do not know members of the team, and cannot know what kind of person you are and what you think of them. Perhaps they wonder if you are a know-it-all, or the opposite — someone who knows little about Christ and the Bible. Perhaps they think you are there “just to do a job,” or to make the group larger, or to learn more about the Catholic faith yourself without any direct interest in them. They might wonder what you think of non-Catholics, or if you are judgmental. Done well, a testimony allows inquirers and participants to become knowledgeable about you, which may not otherwise occur quickly, or occur at all, in casual conversation. After you have given your testimony, their ability to relate to you is greatly increased, because you have given them “keys” to entering a relationship with you as a follower of Christ. Your testimony clears up misconceptions by communicating your humility, your joy at their presence in the RCIA process, your intention to serve them, and your desire to love them and have fellowship with them. The ice is broken. Instead of conversations and small-group sessions that are awkward and superficial, inquirers and participants can be at ease with you and are more likely to open their hearts to you.
- ✠ It *models conversion*: Inquirers and participants need to have others demonstrate what it would look like to turn one’s life away from sin and towards Christ and his Church. They may be aware of many poor examples of weak, lukewarm Catholicism that could be interpreted as the norm, unless countered by team members who give a more faithful witness to a life converted to Christ. Your testimony should reveal you as a real person, imperfect and struggling with sin, yet serious about sinning less and less, and seeking holiness, confident that God not only desires this, but will make it possible to any soul that seeks honestly to know and do his will.

### **What to Do**

- Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you to say only that which he wants you to say.
- Speak clearly; make eye contact.
- Be sure to speak to inquirers and participants, not to other team members; it is very easy to unconsciously default to speaking towards those you are most familiar with in the room.
- Consider practicing your testimony, perhaps in front of a mirror.
- Consider having a note card or a very simple outline on a sheet to remind you of the points you want to make.
- Be brief; generally between five and, at most, fifteen minutes is normal for a testimony in an RCIA setting.
- Know what you are going to say and what you hope to achieve.
- A possible outline could be:
  - ✘ Begin with an interesting story.
  - ✘ Describe your early faith life, to the degree that you were distant from, or not as close as you are now, to God and the Catholic Church.
  - ✘ Tell the story of how and why this changed, perhaps gradually or suddenly, in your life.
  - ✘ Explain what difference a relationship with Jesus and Holy Mother Church has made in your life.
  - ✘ Conclude with a thought-provoking comment, question, or loving challenge to those present.  
Keep in mind that a testimony is often a powerful way to help others think about what God and the Church are asking of them and offering to them.
- Allow inquirers and participants to see your joy in the Lord and your love for his Church.

### **What to Avoid**

- ✘ Do not give a biography of your life; although it is important to you. In a testimony only that which is relevant to how you came to love Jesus and his Church should be included, so every detail you include must in some way serve this purpose.
- ✘ Do not use Catholic terminology or phrases that would be unfamiliar to inquirers and participants.
- ✘ Do not exaggerate elements of your story, or downplay things out of a false sense of humility.
- ✘ Do not be negative about other people or other religious organizations; a testimony is about hope and your thankfulness for God's mercies.
- ✘ Do not read your testimony from a pre-written text; this is your story, to simply be told from the heart.
- ✘ Do not speak condescendingly to inquirers and participants, or give a lecture; you are giving a testimony, not a teaching.
- ✘ Do not be afraid; the focus is not on you, but on the works of God in your life.

### **Questions to Help You Consider the Content of Your Testimony**

Reflect on some or all of these questions to help you identify the “wonderful works of God” in your life:

- What prompted me to respond to God's grace?
- How have I found joy in the Lord and in his Church?
- When have I experienced the peace which surpasses understanding (through the Church)?
- How have I experienced my heart being softened by Jesus (through his Church)?
- How has my mind been changed by Christ and the Church?
- How have I grown in virtue through Jesus and the Church?
- What other blessings have I received from the Lord and his Church?
- What difference has the Holy Spirit made in my life?
- How have I loved those who are difficult for me to love?
- What are some things I am thankful to God for (to his Church for)?

*“The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith” (Guide for Catechists 8).*



# For Those Exploring the Teachings of the Catholic Church: A First Teaching

**By Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen**

Archbishop Sheen, who died in 1979, is being considered by the Catholic Church for sainthood. During his long life of service, he wrote 95 books on the Catholic faith, and preached hundreds of retreats, especially for priests. In 1951 he began his famous television series entitled, "Life is Worth Living." It eventually reached an estimated 30 million viewers each week, and won an Emmy. He wrote the following to those beginning to explore the Catholic faith...



Dear Inquirer...

**1. You are not here because you are going to join the Catholic Church – you are here to investigate it.**

There is no more obligation to embrace the Catholic Church because you come to learn about it in inquiry sessions, than there is a duty to buy a mink coat because you enter into a department store. On the other hand, even though you were willing, the Church would not let you join, unless you knew its teachings and the Church was certain of your good dispositions of soul. As St. Peter said: "If anyone asks you to give an account of the hope which you cherish, be ready at all times to answer for it" (1 Peter 3:15).

**2. There is only one thing required of you at the beginning, and that is good will.**

Good will is readiness to accept the truth. Someone might prove to you that there was sunlight outside of the window, but all the proof in the world would be useless, unless you had the good will to lift up the curtain to allow it to enter the room.

**3. Though good will comes from you, God must add something to it, and that is what is called actual grace.**

Actual grace is a momentary or transient illumination of the mind to see a truth which was not previously seen, or to do something about that truth which was not previously done. When conversion, therefore, is completed it will be found to be a union of good will with the grace of God.

You may think that you have decided to come to these sessions because you read a certain book, or were inspired by a certain person, or had reached a decision through your own wisdom. These are not the cause, but only the occasion. The real cause is God Himself.

As our Blessed Lord said: "I am the Way; I am Truth and Life; nobody can come to the Father, except through Me" (John 14:6). It is our good will that responds to a God-initiated call.

**4. To understand the fullness of the truth, it is necessary not only to study but also to lead a good life.**

Not all men are outside of the Church because of ignorance; some are outside of it because of the way they live. Most people do not have difficulty with the creed of the Church; they have difficulty with the commandments.

Good behavior or a moral life are just as essential as study and knowledge. It is the clean of heart that see God. As our Blessed Lord said: "Anyone who acts shamefully hates the light, will not come into the light, for fear that his doings will be found out" (John 3:20).

As a bank robber does not like to have the searchlight of a policeman fixed upon him in his crime, so neither do sinners who are unwilling to abandon their sinful ways like to have the searchlight of God's truth on their iniquity.

**5. You will not normally begin your time learning in these sessions with faith, you will begin them with reason.**

Just as you cannot go into any store and ask for credit without an investigation having been made of your ability to pay, so neither can you have faith in Christ without a reason for believing Him. These reasons are called motives of credibility. Instead, therefore, of faith being contrary to reason it actually begins with it. That is why instructions in Christian doctrine are not the same as indoctrination into Communism, for example. Communism is forced upon the mind, whereas Christianity is a free correspondence with God's grace.

Furthermore, Communism is contrary to human nature with its hate, whereas Christianity is the perfection of human nature and particularly of human reason. As the telescope does not destroy the eye, so neither does faith destroy reason, but rather opens up to the vision of other worlds.

**6. Though there will come a moment in these sessions when you will become absolutely convinced that Christ is the Son of the Living God, True God and True Man, you must not think that this acceptance of His Divinity is due solely to your reason, your judgment, or to a study of the motives of credibility.**

This tremendous conviction comes from God Himself through the gift of faith. When Peter affirmed the Divinity of His Master, he was told: "It is not flesh and blood, it is my Father in Heaven that has revealed this to you" (Matthew 16:17).

**7. The gravity and the number of your sins are not an obstacle to coming to the Church.**

It is rather the recognition of our sinfulness that makes our soul clamor for a Redeemer. Just as we sometimes can run up more debts than we can pay, so we know that of and by our own resources we cannot make up for sins. Hence Christ, Who is the Son of God, became Man.

As Man He could take our sins upon Himself, as God His reparation and atonement for them on the Cross would have infinite merit. The worst thing in the world is not sin, it is far worse to deny sin. He who is blind and denies vision has no hope for a cure. If you had never sinned you never could call Christ your Savior.

### **8. The teaching will lead to an understanding of another life than that of the physical or the natural.**

Two little tadpoles in the water were one day discussing the possibility of another kind of existence than their own. One said that he was going to look for another world. His companion said: "Don't be so foolish as to think there is anything else in the world besides water."

As it would be foolish for the rose to deny that there was a higher life than that of the plants, so it is foolish for us to deny that there is a higher life than that of the human. This life which is above the natural is called supernatural, which means above the natural, and is the life of God in which we participate once we are united to Jesus Christ.

You are natural because you were born of your parents; you are supernatural because you were born of God. That is why sacred Scripture always urges us to become something that we are not. By nature we are only creatures; by supernatural grace, we are children of God.

It is possible to put a pebble in a gold setting but the gold setting was made for a diamond; so it is possible for us to go on living human natural lives though we were made to become settings for the Divine life of grace.

### **9. All during your instructions you must pray.**

Though you may know few formal prayers, say many times during the day this simple invocation: "O Lord, give me a knowledge of the truth and a strength to follow it." Let your first petition be to know the fullness of truth, not mere fragments of it that come from human knowledge. When finally this fullness of truth does come to your mind, you will see that all the bits of information that you had before were like the crazy patterns of a Japanese lantern. But after Divine Truth comes into your mind it is like a candle put into that lantern, in which everything is revealed as a beautiful design.

But, it is not enough to merely know the truth. Truth implies tremendous responsibility. There are many who like to knock at the door of truth, but they would hate to see it open. That is why you must add the second prayer, the strength to follow the truth as you see it.

St. Paul condemned the pagan Romans: "Although they had the knowledge of God, they did not honor Him or give thanks to Him as God... and their senseless hearts grew darkened" (Romans 1:21). During the time of these inquiry sessions remember that there are thousands of blessings suspended from Heaven on silken cords, and prayer is the sword that cuts them.

### **10. Be prepared for the enmity and hatred of the world.**

If you joined a sun cult, or one of the Oriental religions, or became a Muslim, or started a religion of your own, your friends would say to you, "Well he's free and that is the way he believes." But just as soon as you embrace the Catholic Church you will be accused of having lost your reason, of having surrendered your freedom, and of cutting off the pleasures of life. It is the Church that makes the difference.

So long as you join any natural religion you are part of the world, therefore, the world accepts you. But when you embrace the Church, you are lifted out of the natural into the supernatural order; your mind undergoes a complete reversal of values, the world sees that it has lost its own and therefore, it will despise you.

Our Blessed Lord warned that this would happen. "If the world hates you be sure that it hated Me before it learned to hate you. If you belonged to the world, the world would know you for its own and love you; it is because you do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you from the midst of the world that the world hates you. Do not forget what I said to you. No servant can be greater than His Master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you" (John 15:18).

### **11. Be not disturbed by any prejudices against the Catholic Church which you bring to your first sessions.**

Perhaps if I had been told the same lies against the Church that so many in our society have been told, I might have hated the Church ten times more than some. People, I find, do not hate the Church, they only hate that which they mistakenly believe to be the Church.

When you look at stained glass windows from the outside of a church, they seem to have no pattern, they are only a mass of crazy leaden lines; but once you are in the church, these windows glow with Scriptural figures. So the Church will shine before your soul as Christ continuing and living through the ages, once you are in it.

### **12. Your greatest joys are before you.**

Even if there are sorrows and trials in your life they will be made sweet through the cross. All other religions are sunshine religions. The Catholic faith begins not with sunshine but with the shadow, not with the feast but with the fast, not with the Resurrection but the Cross. We begin with defeat and end in glory.

In the faith, you will come to the fullness and perfection of love. As the highest peak of love in the natural order is the union of two in one flesh in matrimony, so in the reception of Communion you have the union of two in one Christ which is the perfection of love. In the future, you will refrain from sin not because it is the breaking of a law, but because it is the wounding of Someone you love.

From the day of your conversion onward, you will read your own autobiography on the crucifix. Every sin of pride will be seen as the crown of thorns, every grasping avarice will be seen in His nailed hands, every wandering from God's grace will be told in His riven feet, every errant love will be read in His wounded Heart, but there will never be despair but love, for you will say with St. John of the Cross:

**Oh sweet burn! Oh, delectable wound!  
Oh, soft hand, Oh, delicate touch  
That savors eternal life and pays every debt,  
In slaying thou has changed my death to life.**





# 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?



# Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Election or the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion

**Interviewer:** Before beginning, read RCIA 120 and the questions that are asked of the catechumens and candidates during the Rite of Sending (RCIA 537-542) and the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion (RCIA 551-557). 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 catechumen or candidate. As you talk, let him or her know how you have seen God at work in his or her life during the initiation process. Be sure to explain that, while some individuals may be ready to celebrate the sacraments at this time, others may not, and that if someone needs more time to learn about and decide to live 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 say that it might be in the person's best interest to delay celebrating the sacraments for a period of time. At the conclusion of your conversation, unless you or the catechumen/candidate needs more time to come to a decision, let the person know whether or not he or she will participate in the Rite of Sending and Rite of Election or the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion. Notes on the conversation should be taken as needed.

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

☐ Catechumen   ☐ Candidate for full communion   ☐ Candidate for completion of initiation

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

- 1) What has been your experience during the initiation process? What has affected you the most? What have you enjoyed the most? What has challenged you the most?
- 2) How has your life changed in the time that you have been in the catechumenal process?
- 3) What changes have occurred in your relationship with God or with your family or friends during this time?
- 4) How has your relationship with your godparent/sponsor been working out?
- 5) Tell me about some of the people in the parish whom you have come to know or experiences in the parish you have had during the initiation process.
- 6) How comfortable are you reading the Scriptures?
- 7) Tell me about how you pray.
- 8) How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?
- 9) Do you find yourself relating to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints?
- 10) Do you understand what it means to be faithful to the teachings and magisterium of the Church?
- 11) Do you feel that you have a good grasp of the teachings of the Church? Do you have questions about any of them? What areas do you wish to learn more about?
- 12) Do you understand what becoming a member of the Catholic Church entails? How would you describe what being a Catholic/living a Catholic life means?
- 13) To what degree do you see yourself turning away from sin and developing a desire for virtue?
- 14) How do you understand the call to holiness? What does it mean to you that a Catholic is called to live a life of charity?
- 15) Do you desire the sacraments? Specifically the Eucharist?

Explain to the initiate what will take place at the Rite of Sending (RCIA 537-542) and the Rite of Election or the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion (RCIA 551-557), then ask:

- 16) Do you understand what is being asked of you in these Rites? Are you prepared to take this step?
- 17) Do you wish to be baptized/be received into full communion/complete the sacraments of initiation?



## 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>	-----

