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**RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION (RCIA) HANDBOOK**

## ***INTRODUCTION***

This resource offers an overview of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* to benefit both the seasoned and the novice initiation leader with practical applications. The official *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was upheld as the sole beacon and guide in the development of this RCIA Handbook. When the RCIA is implemented well in the parish setting, it has the power to transform not only the lives of those seeking to enter the Church, but also our entire parish communities. Paraphrasing from the various rites of the Church, we say to the many ministers who assist in the inquiry, catechumenal, and mystagogical process: "*May God, who has begun this good work, bring it to completion*" (Phil. 1:6).

It is important to remember that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is a "rite" of the Church, and as such, parishes should seek to follow it closely as they would any other rite of the Church (e.g. *Order of Christian Funerals, Rite of Marriage, Rite of Baptism, Rite of Confirmation*, etc.). Ultimately, the purpose of this handbook is to provide a firm foundation for pastors, RCIA directors, and initiation teams to faithfully implement, support, and promote the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in every parish of the Archdiocese of Regina.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

# ***General Overview of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)***

***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." [Matthew 28:19]***

## ***Introduction***

Ever since this command of Christ was issued to the Apostles, the Church has taken seriously the task of initiating persons into the faith. In every age Christianity has dealt with its own unique circumstances and understandings, all with the same goal of bringing into discipleship those who truly want to commit themselves to live as Christ did.

When the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* appeared in 1974, as an interim experimental ritual, it was met with a mixture of excitement and skepticism. It was different from any other ritual in the recent memory of the Church. It not only described the rubrics for the celebration but also introduced a language of process. In fact the introductory paragraphs introduced a new sacramental theology for initiation. The Rite spoke of a spiritual journey that "varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place" (*RCIA*, 5). The vision was that the whole process would take as long as necessary, even years, to complete. The process would be marked by rituals along the way to manifest the gradual growth the person was experiencing in his/her relationship with God. The process would call forth the gifts and effort of many members of the entire community so much so that the process would have an effect on the community as well as the individuals seeking initiation.

## ***Foundational Principles***

1. The use of the ***Roman Ritual***, the ***Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*** (*RCIA*, 1987 Canadian edition) is mandatory for the initiation of adults and children of catechetical age.
2. Where pastorally necessary, a local (inter-parish) form of catechetical sessions during the catechumenate may be observed; however, in such cases, each parish should take responsibility for the welcome and pastoral care of members and the celebration of the rites for its community.
3. The ministry of the catechumenate is concerned with welcoming people to the sacraments of initiation. It should be kept distinct from parish efforts for reconciling the alienated and for continuing adult enrichment.

## Questions

### 1. For whom is this Rite intended?

The Rite is intended for unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age (over the age of reason, i.e. 7 years).

### 2. For whom can the Rite be adapted?

A. Some of the Rite can be adapted for uncatechized/baptized Christians preparing for full communion with the Catholic Church. **The emphasis is on "uncatechized."** The understanding is that these persons were baptized as infants, but were never brought up in the faith of their baptism. When uncatechized/baptized Christians are included in the process it is important to remember that: ***Even though (they) have not heard the message of the mystery of Christ, their status differs from that of catechumens, since by baptism they have already become members of the Church and children of God. Hence their conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop (RCIA, 376).***

Catechesis for baptized candidates should help them come to know and appreciate the grace and power of God that already lives within them through their baptism. The prayers and rituals celebrated during the process with these candidates will also acknowledge that they are already part of the community because they have been marked by Baptism. Their journey with us is one to full communion not to baptism (*RCIA, Part II – Chapter 4*).

B. Some of the Rite may also be adapted for baptized/uncatechized Catholics who are seeking to complete their initiation by the celebration of Confirmation and first Eucharist. **Once again the emphasis is on "uncatechized"**. These persons were baptized as infants, but never brought up in the faith and thus never received Confirmation and First Communion.

### 3. Can baptized Catholics who have received first Communion and Confirmation and are returning to the Church be a part of the RCIA process?

No. The journey of persons returning to the church is not a journey to baptism. It is a journey to reconciliation. None of the ritual celebrations of the RCIA are appropriate for these persons.

### 4. Can baptized Catholics who have received first Communion, but have not received Confirmation be a part of the RCIA process?

No. It is proper for a parish to prepare these adults for Confirmation in a group of their own. None of the ritual celebrations of the RCIA are appropriate for these persons, including the Rite of Election.

## 5. Can unbaptized catechumens and baptized candidates participate in the same catechetical instruction classes?

Yes they may. However, it may require additional explanations due to the difference in prior knowledge. In many of our parishes the unbaptized catechumens and baptized candidates attend catechetical instruction together. Because catechumens may not have the religious vocabulary of candidates, it will be important to use adult methodology during these sessions, allowing for questions and a process that will engage everyone in the learning process. Catechumens are dismissed for catechesis every Sunday after the homily. Candidates may also participate in this catechesis.

Combined catechesis may be appropriate as long as it is not the only form of catechesis and formation that catechumens and candidates are receiving. They must also be afforded the opportunity, with the help of their sponsors and other members of the parish, to pray with the community, to practice the way of life they are learning from their reflection and study of the scriptures, and to join the community in its mission activity.

In addition, the difference between the two groups **must** be apparent in the celebration of the rites. There are rites that are only proper to the unbaptized. Only a few of the rites can be adapted for use with the baptized. **[None of the rites are proper for returning Catholics or for those preparing to complete initiation with confirmation only.]**

## 6. How long does the process take?

At least one complete Liturgical year. Please keep in mind, the process takes as long as is necessary for each individual person to come to conversion. This is so that catechumens can experience the elements of one full Liturgical year, which is necessary for complete catechesis, and have sufficient time to apprentice into the community's faith and life (*RCIA, 75, 76*).

## 7. How does RCIA proceed?

- The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is a **process**, it is a journey of conversion celebrated in steps marked by liturgical rituals in the context of the community. It is not a school class, program or lecture series (*See Chapter 5 on Catechesis*).
- The Rite describes **Periods** and **Steps**.
- **Periods** are spans of time spent in a particular kind of catechesis that introduces a person gradually to the faith, prepares a person to make a commitment, and discerns whether in fact the person has cooperated with the work of the Spirit, i.e. whether gradual conversion is evident in the life of the person.
- **Steps** are celebrations during the journey that mark the completion of one period and the beginning of another period.
- Discernment is a critical aspect of the process. Please note that if we honor the work of the Spirit in persons and the cooperation of the person in this work it is very possible that not all who begin the process together will proceed at the same rate. Some may move from step to step at a different rate than others.
- The following Schematic shows the various periods and steps that are used for the unbaptized.



**Schematic 1  
FOR THE UNBAPTIZED**

<b>Periods</b>	<b>During this period</b>	<b>Steps</b>
1. Pre-catechumenate	No liturgical rites are associated with this period.	When there is evidence of initial conversion a person is accepted as a Catechumen.  <b>Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens</b>
2. Catechumenate	Celebrations of the Word of God Sunday – Liturgy of the Word Minor Exorcisms Blessings Anointings Presentations (optional) Sending of the Catechumens for Election (optional)	When there is discernible evidence of conversion in attitude and behavior, the person is accepted into a more intense time of spiritual preparation for initiation.  <b>Rite of Election</b>
3. Purification and Enlightenment	First Scrutiny Presentation of the Creed Second Scrutiny Third Scrutiny Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday: -recitation of the Creed - <i>ephphetha</i> rite -choosing a baptismal name -concluding rites	During Lent, the person spends time in spiritual preparation and at the Easter Vigil receives the Sacraments of Initiation.  <b>Reception of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist</b>
4. Mystagogy	Masses for neophytes, that is the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season. Pentecost Celebration (on or close to the feast) Mass with the Bishop	From Easter until Pentecost the person participates in the Masses of the Easter season and reflects with sponsors and other members of the community on the experience of full initiation.

### **8. How is the Rite different when adapted for uncatechized, but already baptized, adults?**

The status of uncatechized but already baptized adults is different from the status of catechumens because they are already members of the Church and children of God. This is true whether they have been baptized as Catholics or baptized as members of another Christian community, but did not receive further catechetical formation nor, consequently, the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Their conversion journey must always recognize, celebrate, and bring to greater consciousness in them the dignity of their baptism (RCIA, 376-386).

Like catechumens, their formation in the faith takes as much time as is necessary for each individual. They too participate in the periods and steps with some liturgical differences as outlined in the following schematic.

The status of catechized and already baptized adults of another Christian community is different from the status of catechumens and uncatechized baptized adults. Chapter 8 addresses these individuals.

**Schematic 2**  
**FOR THE BAPTIZED**

**Periods**

1. Period of Preparation

**During this period**

No liturgical rites are associated with this period.

**Steps**

When the candidates have come to understand that their baptism calls them to a life of discipleship the community celebrates the **Rite of Welcoming the Candidates.**

2. Period of Catechesis

Celebrations of the Word of God  
 Sunday – Liturgy of the Word

When there is discernible evidence of conversion in attitude and behavior the person is called into a more intense period of final preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. The community celebrates the **Rite of Calling the Candidates to Lenten Renewal.**

3. Lent

Presentation of the Creed [if appropriate]  
 Presentation of the Lord's Prayer [if appropriate]  
 Penitential Services  
 Reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

During Lent, the candidates spend time in spiritual preparation and at an appropriate time the community celebrates the Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church and/or reception of Confirmation and the Eucharist.

4. Mystagogy

From Easter until Pentecost the person participates in the Masses of the Easter season and reflects with sponsors and other members of the community on the experience of full initiation.

### **9. What is expected of the assembly in the RCIA process?**

The initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized (*RCIA, 9*). The assembly is expected to:

- give the catechumens/candidates evidence of the spirit of the Christian community,
- welcome them into their homes,
- welcome them into personal conversation,
- welcome them into community gatherings,
- be present and actively participate at liturgical celebrations, and
- when called upon, give honest and carefully considered testimony about the catechumens/candidates.

### **10. What is expected of godparents/sponsors?**

Sponsors are persons who walk the faith journey with the candidate/catechumen. They are from the community and assist those seeking to be members of the Catholic Church.

Sponsors:

- may attend catechetical sessions,
- participate in discussions with their catechumen or candidate,
- introduce the catechumens or candidates to the life of the community,
- support catechumens or candidates during the Rites (*RCIA, 10*), and
- stand as witnesses to the moral character, faith, and intention of the catechumen/candidate.

### **11. What is expected of catechumens in the process?**

**During the Pre-catechumenate inquirers** (*RCIA, 36-40*):

- attend Mass, listen openly to what we as Church believe and how we believe we should be living what we believe,
- struggle with the question, "Is this where God wants them to be on their journey of faith?", and
- if they are sincere in asking to become Catholic, there ought to be evidence of the "first stirrings" of faith in the questions they ask, the stories they share, etc.

**During the Catechumenate, catechumens** (*RCIA, 75 -80*):

- are expected to be present at the Sunday Liturgy of the Word every week,
- are expected to participate in the Dismissal Catechesis,
- are expected to be actively engaged in the catechetical sessions,
- are expected to interact with their sponsors,
- are expected to manifest conversion by growing in their prayer life, joining the community in its social activities and its mission activities, and practicing the beliefs they are learning,
- are expected to take an active part in the discernment process, and
- are expected to participate in the rites of this period.

**During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the Elect** (*RCIA, 125-136*):

- are expected to be present at the Sunday Liturgy of the Word every week,
- are expected to participate in the Dismissal Catechesis,
- are expected to spend time each day in prayer and preparation for the Easter sacraments,
- are expected to participate in the Lenten disciplines of fast and abstinence, and
- are expected to participate in the Scrutinies and the reflections following them.

***During the Period of Mystagogy, the Neophytes (RCIA, 234 – 241):***

- are expected to participate in the Eucharist every Sunday,
- are expected to interact with their sponsors as they reflect on the Easter sacraments,
- are expected to participate in any gatherings of the neophytes that the parish has planned,
- are expected to continue their growth in faith with the whole community.

**12. What are the rights of the catechumens in the Church? Catechumens:**

- are considered part of the Church, catechumens have the right to be married in the Church,
- have the right to receive a Christian funeral in the Church, and
- have the right to the pastoral care of the Church community.

**13. What is expected of candidates in the process?**

***During the period of preparation, they:***

- attend Mass, listen openly to what we as Church believe and how we believe we should be living what we believe,
- struggle with the question, "Is this where God wants them to be on their journey of faith?", and
- if they are sincere in asking to become Catholic, there ought to be evidence of the first stirrings of faith in the questions they ask, the stories they share, etc.

***During the period of catechesis, they:***

- are expected to be present at the Sunday Liturgy of the Word every week,
- are expected to participate in the Dismissal Catechesis,
- are expected to be actively engaged in the catechetical sessions,
- are expected to interact with their sponsors,
- are expected to manifest conversion by growing in their prayer life, joining the community in its social activities and its mission activities, and practicing the beliefs they are learning,
- are expected to take an active part in the discernment process, and
- are expected to participate in the rites of this period.

***During the season of Lent, they:***

- are expected to be present at the Sunday Liturgy of the Word every week,
- are expected to participate in the Dismissal Catechesis,
- are expected to spend time each day in prayer and preparation for the Easter sacraments,
- are expected to participate in the Lenten disciplines of fast and abstinence, and
- are expected to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

***During the Period of Mystagogy, they:***

- are expected to participate in the Eucharist every Sunday,
- are expected to interact with their sponsors as they reflect on the Easter sacraments,
- are expected to participate in any gatherings of the neophytes that the parish has planned, and
- are expected to continue their growth in faith with the whole community.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### ***Timing Models for the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults***

***As a general rule, pastors should make use of the Rite of Initiation in such a way that the sacraments themselves are celebrated at the Easter Vigil and the Rite of Election takes place on the First Sunday of Lent. The rest of the rites are spaced on the basis of the structure and arrangement of the Catechumenate described in nos. 6-8 (RCIA, 17).***

#### ***Foundational Principles***

“The duration of the Catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances, such as the program of instruction for the catechumenate, the number of catechists, deacons, and priests, the cooperation of the individual catechumens, the means necessary for them to come to the site of the catechumenate and spend time there, and the help of the local community. Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough – several years if necessary – for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong. By their formation in the entire Christian life and a sufficiently prolonged probation the catechumens are properly initiated into the mysteries of salvation and the practice of the evangelical way of life. By means of sacred rites celebrated at successive times they are led into the life of faith, worship, and charity belonging to the people of God (RCIA, 76).”

The full implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* requires discernment and evaluation of the individual for readiness to move on to the next period.

#### ***Questions***

##### **1. What is the suggested time period for completing the RCIA Process?**

The initiation of adults and children is a gradual process that can last from one to three liturgical years depending on the individual.

##### **2. What is the recommended time frame for the Pre-catechumenate Period?**

There is no fixed duration of time for the Pre-catechumenate period. There should be sufficient time for the inquirer to ask questions and be introduced to Gospel values and the Christian way of life. The length of time is dependent on the inquirer’s previous faith formation, faith experience, and questions about the Catholic faith. The period ends when the inquirer and team have discerned the readiness and willingness to proceed. This is celebrated with the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

### **3. When should the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens be celebrated?**

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is celebrated after sufficient time elapses for the inquirers to show the beginnings of first faith, initial conversion, and that the fundamentals of the Christian way of life have taken root in their lives (*RCIA, 42*).

The Rite can take place as needed. This can take place for an individual or group of individuals. The Rite of Acceptance marks the beginning of their Catechumenate Period.

### **4. Is there a recommended time frame for the Catechumenate Period?**

No. The Christian initiation of catechumens is a gradual process. The period of the Catechumenate which begins with the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is an extended period of time depending on the discernment of the individual and the team. This period ends with the celebration of the Rite of Election and the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

### **5. When is the Rite of Election celebrated?**

The Rite of Election for Catechumens is celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent in the Archdiocese of Regina. This rite marks the end of the Catechumenate period and the beginning of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.

### **6. What is the recommended time frame for the Purification and Enlightenment Period?**

The Purification and Enlightenment Period occurs during the entire Lenten season. In this period three Scrutinies are celebrated for the Elect on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. Two Presentations, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, take place during the period of Purification and Enlightenment. The presentation of the Creed normally occurs the week following the First Scrutiny. The presentation of the Lord's Prayer takes place the week following the Third Scrutiny.

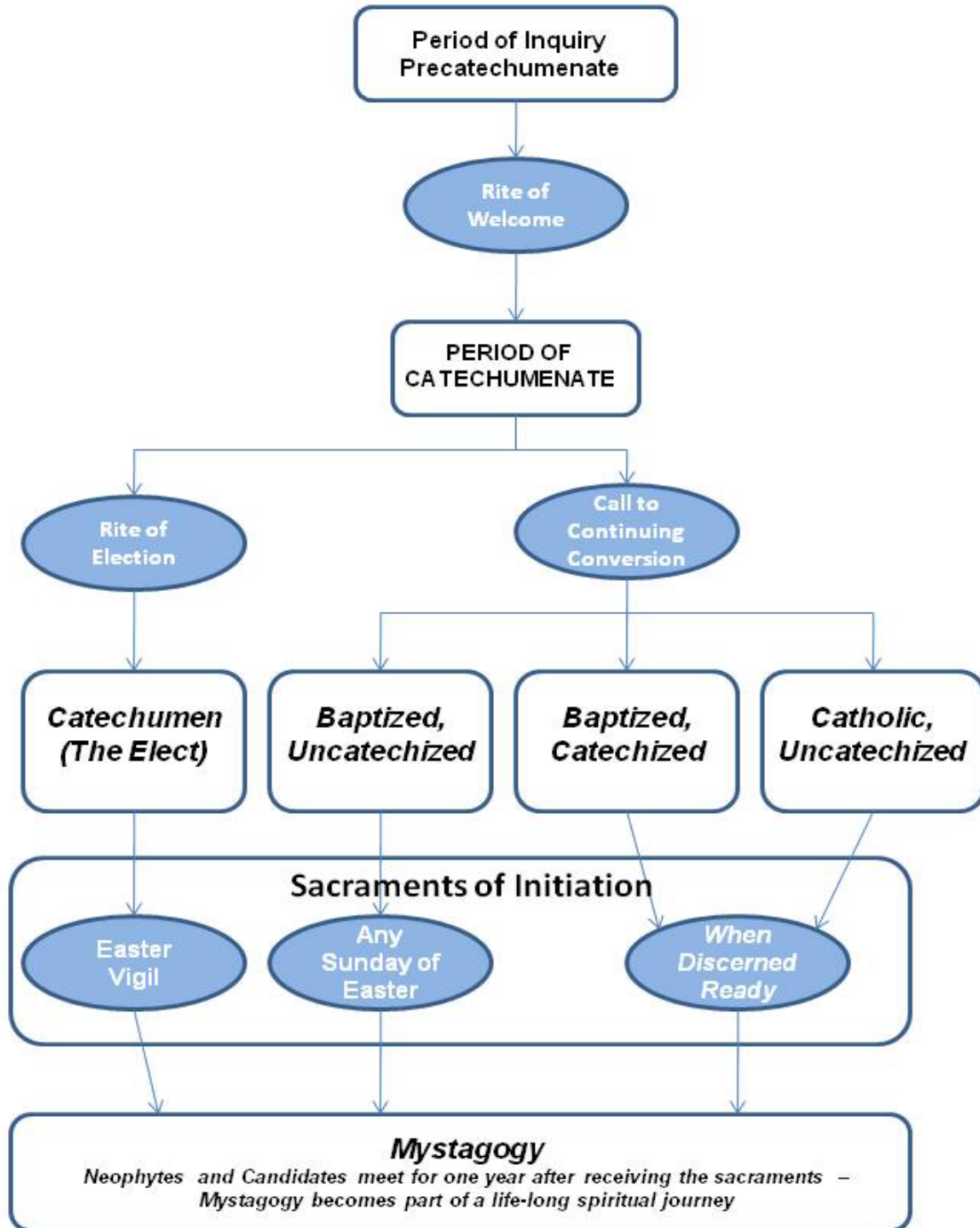
### **7. When should the Sacraments of Initiation be celebrated?**

For the Elect, the sacraments are celebrated at the Easter Vigil. For the candidates, the completion of their initiation may be done at any appropriate parish celebration of the Eucharist.

### **8. What is the recommended time period for the Period of Mystagogy?**

One form of mystagogical catechesis normally takes place between Easter and Pentecost. It is important to emphasize that ongoing catechesis is essential for all Catholics.

## *Recommended Model for the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*





### **Period of Pre-catechumenate or Inquiry Period:**

- Inquiry has no particular start time. When someone comes to the parish seeking to know more about God and/or our faith, we should accommodate them as is feasible. The opportunity may exist to begin a number of Inquirers in this phase of the process several times a year. The individual participates in the inquiry or pre-catechumenate for as long as it takes.
- **A retreat** may be appropriate as a means of discernment prior to entering into the Period of Catechumenate.

### **Period of the Catechumenate:**

- The recommended length of time this period should last is one year for unbaptized catechumens. Ideally, the period begins in January and runs until the following year's Purification and Enlightenment Period.
- For individuals who come to the Catholic Church with a sound understanding of the Trinitarian God, this period will address the nuances between their current knowledge and that of the Catholic faith.
- The Period of the Catechumenate begins with the ***Rite of Acceptance (ROA) into the Order of Catechumens***. There may be several celebrations of the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate throughout the year. For instance, you might schedule another *Rite of Acceptance* after the Easter Season. It is always prudent to discern the needs of those coming to inquire into our faith. A non-baptized and/or non-catechized individual may need more time in the catechumenate to experience conversion and growth in the Christian faith.

### **Period of Purification and Enlightenment:**

- For the unbaptized catechumens this period begins on the first Sunday of Lent and continues until Passion Sunday.
- The ***Rite of Election (ROE) for the non-baptized*** takes place on the First Sunday of Lent, generally in a centralized location within the Archdiocese (at the cathedral), and is celebrated with the Archbishop who elects the catechumens for the Easter Sacraments.
- During this period on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent respectively, ***three Scrutinies*** are celebrated for the Elect only. The ***"Creed"*** and the ***"Our Father"*** are also presented to the Elect and to the Candidates (if appropriate) during this period.
- For those individuals (baptized candidates) who come to the Catholic Church with a sound understanding of the Trinitarian God, this period will begin when they are ready to prepare for the celebration of their sacraments and rites of initiation (***Reception of Baptized Christians, Confirmation and Eucharist***) which may occur at the Easter Vigil or more appropriately on any of the Sundays of Easter.
- **A retreat** is appropriate as a means of final preparation before the celebration of the ***Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) which occurs at the Easter Vigil***.
- **Uncatechized Catholics** who come through the RCIA to complete their Sacraments of Initiation (Confirmation and First Eucharist) may progress through the process based on their individual growth in the faith. They may complete their Sacraments of Initiation as they are discerned ready at any scheduled weekend parish celebration of the Eucharist or at the Easter Vigil, (RCIA, 385).

**Period of Mystagogy:**

- This period begins the Sunday after Easter and lasts until Pentecost Sunday.
- It is appropriate during this period for the Neophytes (new Catholics) to gather once again with the Archbishop.
- All candidates and those Catholics who completed their Sacraments of Initiation should also participate in a period of Mystagogy either by joining with the neophytes or separately.
- Mystagogy could actually extend for a period of one year until the anniversary of the Neophytes entrance into the Church.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Ministries Involved in the RCIA Process**

*The initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. The community should be ready to give the candidate evidence of the spirit of the Christian community and to welcome them into their homes, into personal conversation, and into community gatherings. The 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 (RCIA, 9).*

### **Fundamental Principles**

1. The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful.
2. The initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized.

### **Questions**

#### **1. What ministries are involved in the RCIA Process?**

There are several ministries that the Rite envisions that involves the entire community. The Rite calls for several specific ministries, namely:

- The community
- Sponsors
- Godparents
- Bishop
- Priest
- Deacon
- Catechist

Pastoral need and practice have brought forth other ministries, namely:

- RCIA coordinator
- RCIA team members with various duties in addition to the catechist

#### **2. What is the role of the community?**

The community must be involved in the entire process. The faithful provide an example as seasoned companions sharing the mission of the church with the catechumens and candidates, while renewing their own conversion (RCIA, 9). The faithful act as master teachers leading the apprenticeship of these candidates in the Christian way of life including personal and public prayer, apostolic witness, and formation in the Word of God (RCIA, 75).

### **3. What is the difference between a sponsor and a godparent?**

A sponsor is a companion selected from the community to accompany a catechumen on his/her journey of faith. The sponsor's role begins early during the first period of the initiation process, at least by the time of the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate, and continues up to the Rite of Election.

A godparent's role begins publicly at the Rite of Election and continues throughout the rest of the person's Christian life. The catechumen chooses the godparent.

#### ***Godparents and sponsors must:***

- be a practicing Catholic who has been confirmed, has already received the most holy Eucharist, and who leads a life of faith,
- have completed the sixteenth year of age,
- not be bound by any canonical penalty, i.e. irregular marriage, and
- not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized or confirmed.

In addition, a baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism (*Code of Canon Law - CCL, 874*).

### **4. What is the role of the sponsor?**

The sponsor is a person from the community who comes to know the candidate well, who accompanies the candidate on their lifelong faith journey, and who testifies publicly in liturgical ceremonies to the candidate's moral character, faith and intention - that is, to the candidate's readiness to advance to each new step in the process. Sponsors should confidentially share the candidate's progress with the RCIA Director. A sponsor may also be the catechumen's godparent; however, at the time of baptism, a different person can be chosen as godparent (*RCIA, 10*).

### **5. What is the role of the godparent?**

An individual's godparent establishes a spiritual relationship with the catechumen that lasts forever. In the year that the catechumen will be baptized, the godparent journeys with him or her usually from the First Sunday of Lent through the entire Lenten season to the Easter Vigil and initiation, then continues through mystagogy and post-baptismal catechesis. A godparent upholds the catechumen in times of fear or hesitation, testifies to the catechumen's readiness, serves as a model and guides the catechumen in the Christian life (*RCIA, 11*).

### **6. What is the role of the deacon?**

Throughout the entire process, a deacon may assist in a variety of ways, including catechesis, blessings, and anointings. The needs of individual communities will determine the specific role of the deacon (*RCIA, 15*).

### **7. What is the role of the priest/pastor?**

The priest presides at the celebration of the initiation sacraments and oversees the celebrations of all the other rites of initiation. He has responsibility for the pastoral care of the catechumens and may work with the deacon and catechists in providing catechesis. He also celebrates the sacrament of Reconciliation with the baptized candidates before they are received into full communion with the Church (*RCIA, 13*).

### **8. What is the role of the bishop?**

The bishop of the diocese is responsible for establishing, regulating, and promoting the initiation process in his diocese. At the Rite of Election, he welcomes the catechumens, and declares them to be the elect who will receive the Easter sacraments at the next Easter Vigil. The bishop welcomes all who have joined the Catholic Church within the diocese to celebrate with him at the Neophyte Mass (*RCIA, 12*).

### **9. What is the role of catechists?**

Catechists have the responsibility of presenting the faith to the catechumens and candidates and of being visibly and actively involved in the liturgical rites. Catechists may, when deputed by the bishop, perform the minor exorcisms and blessings contained in the ritual (*RCIA, 16*).

### **10. What is the role of the Parish RCIA Director?**

The parish RCIA Director journeys in faith with the team members, catechumens, and candidates.

The Director:

- works with the pastor to plan and implement the RCIA,
- holds the vision of the whole process,
- keeps the team and parish on track in living out this vision,
- is an initiator who stimulates the thinking and action of the team,
- is an organizer and communicator,
- recruits team members and provides training and resources, and
- offers support, affirmation, and encouragement to the team members and then delegates responsibilities to them.

## **11. What are the tasks of the RCIA Team?**

1. **Hospitality** . . . provide for the physical and emotional comfort of the catechumens/candidates. They arrive early to ready the meeting space and provide hospitality.

2. **Liturgy Preparation** . . . work closely with the parish minister of music, the presider, and others involved in the parish's liturgical celebration.

3. **Communication** . . . coordinate communication with the pastor, parishioners, parish council, pastoral staff, other team members, sponsors, and families of the catechumens/candidates, as well as, the various groups in the parish essential to the implementation of the RCIA. They publish articles in the bulletin, place pictures of the catechumens in the church vestibule, and in general form a bridge between catechumens/candidates and the whole assembly.

4. **Prayer planners/leaders** . . . prepare prayer for each gathering. They give the catechumens an experience of the many forms of prayer within the Church's treasury of prayer and its connection to the liturgical feasts and seasons, including Morning and Evening Prayer, Scripture meditation, litanies, songs, devotions, etc.

5. **Responsibility for Sponsors** . . . select and form sponsors, appoints sponsors to particular catechumens/candidates, and supports sponsors. These team members meet regularly with the sponsors so that their issues can be discussed and resolved.

7. **Spiritual Direction** . . . give spiritual direction or refer catechumens/candidates to staff persons or other parishioners who are competent in spiritual direction. Spiritual companions are especially helpful during the discernment process before each of the major rites, and in developing a deeper prayer life as each catechumen/candidate may request.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Formation and Readiness in the RCIA Process**

*The catechumens learn to turn more readily to God, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self renunciation (RCIA, 75).*

#### **Foundational Principles**

1. Formation in all the stages of the Catechumenate includes catechesis, worship, community, and service.
2. Discernment is ongoing. It is essential before a person moves from one period to the next.

#### **Questions**

##### **1. What are the means of formation in the initiation process?**

While attending catechetical sessions is essential, the catechumens should also have the opportunity to participate in the communal life of the Church, namely **in prayer, in worship, and in service**. The more active catechumens are in word, worship, witness and service, the better understanding they will have of the communal life of the Church.

##### **2. What are the elements of formation during the pre-catechumenate?**

###### **A. Expectation**

- The time of the pre-catechumenate is spent introducing the catechumens to the person of Jesus Christ.

###### **B. Formation**

- Inquirers are encouraged to tell the stories of their journey.
- Catechists help inquirers come to an initial awareness of God's saving presence in their lives.
- Catechists address questions the inquirers may have.
- Catechists give inquirers a suitable explanation of the Gospel.

###### **C. Discernment**

Before inquirers can move to the next period of the RCIA process the community needs to discern that:

- there is evidence of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives,
- they have begun to enter into a relationship with God,
- they have begun to gain a sense of the meaning of Church and have some experience of the company and spirit of Christians, and
- there is evidence of the “first stirrings of repentance” (RCIA, 42).

Team members/sponsors must also discern the readiness of catechumens to proceed in the process of enlightenment and purification.

### **3. What are the elements of formation during the Catechumenate?**

#### **A. Expectation**

The period of the Catechumenate is an extended period of time for formation and guidance. For most catechumens it will last a full year. During this time they receive formation in the Christian life and deepening of initial conversion.

#### **B. Formation**

- Catechumens are present for the Liturgy of the Word every Sunday and are dismissed from the faith community after the homily for dismissal catechesis.
- They also receive suitable catechesis on the Church's teachings at some time after the dismissal catechesis, either on Sunday or during the week.
- They join community members at parish activities, in ministry to the poor, out-reach programs, and community building.
- They have the experience of one full liturgical cycle and one full year of scripture readings.
- Their formation also includes celebrations of minor exorcisms, blessings, and anointing.
- Their formation focuses on apprenticing them into the Christian way of life.

#### **C. Discernment**

Before a catechumen can move to the next period of the RCIA process the community needs to discern that:

- there is evidence of true conversion of mind and action,
- there is sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching, as well as, a spirit of faith and charity,
- the catechumens are ready to celebrate the sacraments and truly desire to do so, and
- there are no impediments to the reception of the initiation sacraments.

The catechumen, through the experience of the Rite of Election celebrated by the diocesan bishop, must also discern his or her readiness to proceed to the next period.

### **4. What are the elements of formation during the period of purification and enlightenment?**

#### **A. Expectation**

The period of Purification and Enlightenment usually coincides with Lent. It is the time for the elect to make their final preparations for initiation at the Easter Vigil.

#### **B. Formation**

- Since the community has declared at the Rite of Election that these elect are catechetically prepared, time is spent during this period on their spiritual preparation.
- The three scrutinies are celebrated to assist the elect in their perception of sin and their desire for salvation (*RCIA*, 128).
- The Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are celebrated during the season of Lent.
- The elect join the community in its disciplines of fasting and abstinence and in its reflection on repentance.
- The catechumen should continue to be introduced and invited to participate in non-liturgical parish ministries and activities.



### **C. Discernment**

- The very nature of this period will continue to lead the elect to discern what God is calling them to do and the team will discern the readiness of the catechumen to receive the sacraments of the Church.

## **5. What are the elements of formation during the period of mystagogy?**

### **A. Expectation**

- The formal period of mystagogy extends from Easter until Pentecost. This period gives the neophytes the time and assistance of the community to come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Paschal Mystery and the initiation sacraments they have received.
- The community continues to assist neophytes for at least a full year after initiation.

### **B. Formation**

- With the help of their godparents, catechists, and other community members, neophytes reflect on the experience of the Easter Vigil and come to a deeper understanding of the sacraments they have received.
- They are present with their godparents and catechists at the Sunday Masses throughout the Easter season, ending on Pentecost.
- Neophytes continue to be catechized with the entire community by the homilies at these Masses. The readings from the Lectionary for Year A are particularly suitable for the neophytes and may always be used if neophytes are present (*RCIA*, 237).
- This formal period closes with the Archbishop's celebration on or near the feast of Pentecost at the Cathedral.
- As with all members of the diocese, continued life-long growth in our faith is essential.

### **C. Discernment**

- As their new life within the community continues to grow, the neophytes **discern** their gifts and recognize their responsibility to serve the mission of God.
- It is also a time to discern their call to discipleship in the world, not only within the community of their faith family, but also in the workplace, home, and their community.

## **6. Do all the individuals in the RCIA process automatically move together in the process?**

No. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is very clear in its description regarding the journey of all persons coming to the Catholic Church. The entire journey can last from one to three years. Each individual journey is unique in growth, conversion, and readiness. We must respect the process of conversion that happens at different times in the lives of individuals. Not everyone will be ready at the same time, so, as catechists, we must realize our catechumens grow spiritually and embrace the life of Christ in their own time and experiences.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Catechesis**

***A suitable catechesis is provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful, planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word (RCIA, 75).***

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* describes the catechumenate as an "extended period during which the catechumens are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life (RCIA, 75)."

The Rite goes on to describe the catechesis as:

- suitable,
- planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage,
- guided by the Scripture proclaimed during the liturgical year, and
- solidly supported by celebrations of the Word.

### **Foundational Principles**

1. Catechesis during the catechumenate aims at the formation of catechumens as disciples of Jesus Christ. It includes:

- instruction in the doctrines of faith,
- formation in prayer life,
- formation in the worship life of the community, and
- immersion in the mission life of the community.

2. The Sunday readings of the Lectionary, rooted in the liturgical year, provide the matter for reflection and study.

### **Questions**

#### **1. What is catechesis?**

Catechesis is the process by which the Christian community shares its belief in the "mystery of Christ". We may distinguish between "initiator catechesis" and "ongoing catechesis". The catechumenate is involved in "initiator catechesis".

#### **2. What is the aim of "initiator catechesis"?**

The aim of initiator catechesis is to develop the initial faith of the catechumen. It includes instruction and apprenticeship in the Christian life. It nurtures the spiritual life and prepares the catechumen to be nourished at the table of the Eucharist and in the ordinary life of the Christian community.

### **3. What methods should be used for initiatory catechesis?**

The Rite directs that initiatory catechesis is to be rooted in the Scriptures of the Liturgical Year. During the catechumenate, catechumens are present every Sunday for the readings from Scripture and the homily that breaks open these readings. They are then dismissed from the worshipping assembly to reflect on the Word of God.

In *Catechesi Tradendae, (CT)* John Paul II affirmed that the "primary object of catechesis is the mystery of Christ" (*CT*, 5). Catechumens need this time on Sunday to become aware of how God is speaking to them in the Scriptures and in their daily lives.

At some time after the dismissal, either on the same day or on another one that the parish chooses, a formal catechetical session is held. During this session the facets of our faith are further developed. Depending upon what has surfaced during the dismissal catechesis, it may be an opportunity for an apprenticeship where a catechumen would accompany a parish member in their ministry.

For example:

- To the homebound to learn what we believe about suffering
- To small prayer groups to learn about sharing faith and prayer
- To wakes for the dead to learn what we believe about death

The last step in the process of catechesis is to send the catechumens back to their daily lives for further reflection upon what has been shared and how it impacts their every-day life.

In summary, initiatory catechesis involves:

- listening to and reflecting upon the Word of God,
- participating in formal study of faith,
- interacting with members of the community to see how they live their faith, and
- being sent for further reflection on the Mystery of Christ in their lives.

### **4. What are the characteristics of dismissal catechesis?**

When catechumens are dismissed, they should be guided to find nourishment in the Word they have heard. This time of dismissal catechesis is a continuation of the Lord's Day. Therefore, it is a time of prayer and reflection:

- the Scripture is re-read,
- questions are prepared to help catechumens remember the message of the scripture and the homily, and
- catechumens are invited to reflect on what they have heard and how it impacts the way they live their lives.

### **5. How are catechumens dismissed from the assembly?**

After the homily, the dismissal catechist comes forward to receive the Lectionary. The presider and assembly stand. The presider addresses the catechumens instructing them to be open to the Word of God they have just heard. He presents the Lectionary to the dismissal catechist and sends the group to another space for reflection and prayer. The assembly may sing a short response as the group leaves.

### **6. Should candidates be part of the dismissal catechesis?**

Candidates ordinarily remain with the community after the Liturgy of the Word, though they are not invited to receive the Eucharist until after they have been received into full communion or have completed their initiation. However, for pastoral reasons, the candidates may be included in the dismissal rites.

### **7. How does the catechist prepare for the dismissal session?**

The catechist/ facilitator needs to spend time reflecting and studying the Scriptures for that specific Sunday and surfacing open-ended questions that facilitate sharing:

- Personal experience
- Scripture message
- What implications the Scripture has on the catechist's daily life

During the time of dismissal the catechist/facilitator should take note of areas of faith expressed by the catechumens that will need further attention.

### **8. How does the catechesis of the catechumen differ from the catechesis of the candidate?**

- Catechumens are those preparing for full initiation. Their catechesis centers on the knowledge of Christ and the sacraments of initiation.
- Christian candidates from another faith tradition are preparing to come into full communion; their catechesis has a unique focus on unity and acceptance of the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Previously uncatechized Catholic candidates are preparing to complete their initiation. Their catechesis is the preparation for the sacraments that they have not yet received.

## **Chapter 6**

### ***Liturgical Celebrations***

*The Church helps the catechumens on their journey by means of suitable liturgical rites, which purify the catechumens little by little and strengthen them with God's blessing (RCIA, 75).*

#### ***Foundational Principles***

1. Liturgical celebrations are essential to the Christian initiation process.
2. Every liturgical celebration calls for the full, conscious, and active participation of the assembly.
3. In every celebration of the Rites of the RCIA, it is essential to maintain the distinction between catechumens and candidates.

#### ***Questions***

##### **1. What liturgical celebrations are included in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?**

The following table indicates the liturgical celebrations that belong to the **unbaptized** for each period of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

## **LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS FOR THE UNBAPTIZED**

### **Periods**

1. Pre-catechumenate

### **During this Period**

- No liturgical rites are associated with this period

### **The Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate**

2. Catechumenate

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Sunday – Liturgy of the Word
- Minor Exorcisms
- Blessings
- Anointings
- Presentations [optional]
- Sending of the Catechumens for Election

### **The Rite of Election**

3. Purification and Enlightenment

- First Scrutiny

Presentation of the Creed [if it has not occurred during the catechumenate period]

- Second Scrutiny
- Third Scrutiny

Presentation of the Lord's Prayer [if it has not occurred during the catechumenate period]

### **Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday**

- recitation of the Creed
- ephphetha rite
- choosing a baptismal name
- Oil of Catechumens

### **Full Initiation at the Easter Vigil**

4. Mystagogy

- Sunday Masses of the Easter Season
- Mass with the Bishop on or near the Feast of Pentecost at the Cathedral

## **2. Who is the proper presider for the various RCIA rites/celebrations?**

The Bishop is the chief liturgist of the diocese and is responsible for all liturgical celebrations within the diocese. Pastors are the Bishop's delegates at the parish level and they fulfill the leadership for liturgical celebrations within their assigned parish. Rites that are celebrated outside of Mass may be led by a deacon or catechist when priests are not available or at the direction of the pastor.

## **3. What celebrations are proper to candidates?**

The following chart indicates the liturgical celebrations that are proper for **baptized/uncatechized** candidates in each period of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

### ***LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS FOR THE ALREADY BAPTIZED***

#### **Periods**

#### **During this Period**

1. Period of Preparation

No liturgical rites are associated with this period

#### **Rite of Welcoming the Candidates**

2. Period of Catechesis

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Sunday – Liturgy of the Word
- Presentation of the Creed [if pastorally appropriate]
- Presentation of the Lord's Prayer [if pastorally appropriate]

#### **Rite of Calling the Candidates to Lenten Renewal**

3. Lent

- Penitential Celebration(s)
- Reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

#### **Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church**

4. Mystagogy

- Sunday Masses of the Easter Season
- Mass with the Bishop on or near the Feast of Pentecost at the Cathedral

#### **4. Who should receive the sacrament of Reconciliation?**

All candidates are to be prepared for and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the celebration of Confirmation and the Eucharist (*RCIA*, 384).

#### **5. The most important thing to consider in the preparation of the rites is to respect the difference between catechumens and candidates.**

- Catechumens are **not baptized** and are preparing for **initiation** (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist).
- Candidates are **baptized** and are already regarded as members of the Christian community. They are preparing to complete their initiation and establish **full communion** with the Catholic Church.
- Catholic candidates who are baptized are already regarded as members of the Catholic Church. They are preparing to **complete their initiation**.

In the actual celebration of the rites catechumens and candidates should be addressed separately. "Anything that would equate candidates for reception into full communion with those who are catechumens is to be absolutely avoided" (*RCIA*, 391). The address and the prayers should make clear the distinction between the catechumens and the candidates. Since initiation is the responsibility of all the baptized the whole community should be offered an active part in the celebration of the rites particularly in responses, prayers, singing, acclamations, and gestures. The music chosen for responses and acclamations should also reflect the different journeys of the persons in the group.

#### **6. Should both the elect and the candidates participate at the Easter Vigil?**

The norm of the Church is that the elect receive the initiation sacraments at the Easter Vigil liturgy. There is no prohibition for candidates to make their profession of faith and receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil. It is *preferable* that candidates be received into full communion at another Sunday Eucharist rather than the Easter Vigil.

\*\*\*\*If for pastoral reasons candidates for full communion and/or completion of initiation are included with those celebrating full initiation, the combined rites in **Appendix 1** of the Ritual must be used. When these combined rites are used it is essential that the difference between those preparing for initiation, those preparing for reception into full communion, and those completing their initiation be carefully respected.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Canon Law Issues**

***Through instruction and an apprenticeship in the Christian life catechumens are suitably to be initiated into the mystery of salvation and introduced to the life of faith, liturgy, charity of the people of God and the apostolate (cf. Code of Canon Law, CCL, 788).***

### **Questions**

#### **1. What is liturgical law?**

Liturgical law guides the way we worship, it is an extension of Canon Law. Just as all baptized Catholics over the age of seven are bound by Canon Law they are also bound to observe Liturgical Law. The words and actions of our liturgies form the principal structure of our sacraments and other forms of worship. Liturgical law keeps us as one universal church and allows us to celebrate the same liturgy throughout the world.

#### **Liturgical law is defined in three places:**

- It can be found in the supporting documents issued by the Holy See, the diocesan bishop, and the Conference of Bishops.
- In the Introductory Notes (*prænotanda*) of the liturgical texts.
- In the rubrics (red print) of the liturgical texts.

#### **2. Who can be a godparent or a sponsor (cf. CCL, 874)?**

To take on the responsibility of being a godparent a person:

- must be a Catholic who is not a parent of the one to be baptized or confirmed,
- must have received all the sacraments of initiation,
- must live a life of faith that befits the role to be undertaken,
- cannot labor under a canonical penalty like excommunication,
- cannot be under the age of sixteen. Must be nominated by at least one of the parents in the case of infant baptism, by the one to be baptized in the case of an adult baptism, or by the pastor or the one administering the baptism in cases where necessity requires it,
- sponsors may be chosen by the confirmation candidate, preference should be given to the godparent,
- a baptized non-Catholic may be a witness to the baptism, but not a godparent.

### 3. What constitutes a valid baptism?

In order for a baptism to be valid the ceremony needs to meet certain conditions, namely:

- Real water must be used and administered by pouring, immersion, or sprinkling of water.
- The formula must reflect belief in the Trinitarian God and the Blessed Trinity must be recited: "Father, Son, Holy Spirit (Ghost)."
- The minister of baptism must intend to perform the baptism. This intention must be informed by a correct understanding of the Christian faith.
- In the baptism of adults, the person must desire baptism.

The pastor, the diocesan ecumenical officer, a liturgist, or a canon lawyer should be consulted before making a determination on the validity of baptism in other denominations. In some cases, the church where the baptism took place might need to be consulted. A list of those churches and Ecclesial Communities that celebrate valid baptisms can be found at the following website: <http://www.rcan.org/images//worship/07BCNCC.pdf>

### 4. When and how does one administer conditional baptism?

To prove that baptism has been conferred, if there is no conflict of interest, it is sufficient to have either one unexceptionable witness or, if the baptism was conferred upon an adult, the sworn testimony of the baptized person (*CCL*, 876).

If one of the parents of the person is still alive, he or she may complete an affidavit. The affidavit needs to be signed in the presence of the pastor or pastoral leader. If neither parent is alive, perhaps there was someone else present at the baptism or knows for sure that the baptism occurred. That person may complete an affidavit in the presence of a pastor or pastoral leader. When completed, the information is noted in the baptismal registry. A copy of the affidavit is kept in a sacramental file.

After you have talked with the person and it is apparent that you will not be able to get the testimony of a witness to the baptism, then you may need to baptize conditionally.

When a baptism is given conditionally, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (393) states a "**non-solemn form of baptism is to be used**".

The only rites needed for a conditional baptism are:

- The use of water and the words of baptism: Father, Son, Holy Spirit,
- The conditional baptism begins with the words: "If you are not already baptized, I baptize you . . ."
- And conditional baptisms are recorded in the sacramental record as such.

### 5. What Confirmations are regarded as valid?

- Confirmation is valid in those churches that have preserved apostolic succession and valid sacraments (Orthodox, Old Catholics, Polish National Church)
- a Confirmation in other Christian denominations is not considered to be valid. A valid confirmation requires the use of the *oil of chrism* blessed by the diocesan bishop at the annual Chrism Mass. It is essential for the validity of the sacrament of Confirmation that the oil is placed on the forehead of the person confirmed and that they respond "Amen".

## 6. When does a priest have the faculty to confirm?

The ordinary minister of confirmation is the diocesan bishop, but priests can administer confirmation either by mandate of the law or by delegation by the bishop.

### **The following faculties may be exercised by priests within the Archdiocese of Regina as applicable:**

- To administer the sacrament of Confirmation to those persons who have attained the use of reason and whom they baptize in accord with the requirements of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.
- To administer the sacrament of Confirmation to those persons who have attained the use of reason and who are already baptized in another church or ecclesial communion, on the occasion of their profession of faith and admission into full communion with the Catholic Church in accord with the requirements of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (CCL, 883.2)*.
- To administer the sacrament of Confirmation at the Easter Vigil to **Catholics** who, although baptized earlier, **have not received their first Eucharist**, on the occasion of their reconciliation with the Catholic Church provided that such individuals have participated in the catechesis of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (CCL, 883.2)*.

**The priest does not have the faculty to confirm those baptized Catholics who have been catechized (received their first Eucharist)** but for some reason or other have not been confirmed. If the priest wishes to confirm these adults he would need to request a special faculty. However, the ordinary way for these persons to receive the sacrament of Confirmation would be by the Archbishop.

## 7. How does one know that a baptized Catholic has abandoned the Church by a formal act of defection?

For the abandonment of the Catholic Church to be validly configured as a true act of formal defection of the Church it is necessary that there be:

- the internal decision to leave the Catholic Church,
- the realization and external manifestation of that decision,
- and the reception of that decision by the competent ecclesiastical authority.

The formal act of defection supposes an act of apostasy, heresy or schism that is delivered in written form to the competent authority of the Catholic Church, that is, to the Ordinary of the Diocese. If the Ordinary judges the case to be a true act of defection he is to ensure that this act be noted in the baptismal registry (*Pontificium Consilium de Legum Textibus, Prot. N. 10279/2006*).

## 8. What does the RCIA team need to know about annulments?

Any inquirer who needs to receive any or all of the sacraments of initiation must be asked whether or not he or she has been previously married. If the answer is yes, ask if he or she entered into a subsequent marriage(s). If the answer is yes, the inquirer may need to seek an annulment.

As Catholics we hold that whenever any two people (Catholic or non-Catholic) exchange their marriage vows, a bond of marriage is created that the parties cannot break. Divorce does not break or end the religious bond of marriage. Divorce has no effect in Church law. This means

that subsequent marriages cannot be regarded as valid because the individuals were not free to marry again. Their living situation in the second civil marriage contravenes our moral teaching and for this reason the Church has established a disciplinary norm that prohibits these people from receiving all sacraments until they remedy their situation and celebrate a proper marriage with their second spouse. An annulment is usually necessary to resolve the prior bond issue.

If an inquirer is married and separated (and divorced) but not remarried, the divorce does not prohibit his or her reception of the sacraments since there is nothing objectionable with his/her lifestyle. These people need to be told that they are still considered to be in a marriage bond with their first spouse and do not enjoy a right to marry in the Church until declared free to marry through the tribunal or the death of the previous spouse.

### **9. What does the RCIA team need to know about the marriage of Catechumens?**

Once an inquirer officially becomes a catechumen through the *Rite of Acceptance*, he or she has the right to celebrate a marriage in the Church provided he or she is free to do so. Since the catechumen is still not baptized, the marriage will take place without a celebration of the Eucharist, even if the one he or she wants to marry is a Catholic.

A catechumen can marry a Catholic or baptized non-Catholic in a Catholic ceremony. In fact, a catechumen can even marry a non-baptized person in a Catholic ceremony.

In the case of the catechumen/Catholic (or baptized non-Catholic) marriage, the prenuptial investigation must be completed. When a catechumen wants to marry a baptized non-Catholic, he or she must make the pre-marriage promises (*cautiones*). The file then needs to be sent to the chancery office for a dispensation from the impediment of disparity of worship.

In the case of a catechumen/non-baptized marriage, the prenuptial investigation must be completed and in doing so, the catechumen must make the pre-marriage promises listed on the Diocesan marriage forms.

### **10. What does the RCIA team need to know about the convalidation of marriages?**

The meaning of the term convalidation is largely misunderstood. People wrongly perceive this as a ceremony that simply blesses an already existing marriage. The convalidation ceremony is simply the marriage ritual that is celebrated for people who are in a civil union, which begins their sacramental marriage. The ceremony can have all the trappings of a first time wedding, such as white dress and tuxedo; however, most people choose to gather themselves, the priest, and two witnesses quietly before the altar to exchange the vows.

A permanent marriage file should be created and the marriage recorded in the marriage register. The prenuptial investigation must be completed. Appropriate permissions and dispensations need to be sought through the chancery office. A copy of the civil marriage license must be obtained. The pastor or pastoral minister may determine that a marriage preparation course might be necessary.

### **11. What is *Radical Sanation of Marriage* and how would it be applied to Catechumens?**

The *radical sanation* of an invalid marriage is the recognition of the bond without the renewal of consent, granted by competent authority. The intention of the couple is key. There are three effects of *sanation*:

- The original invalid consent is made valid from the moment it was exchanged.
- The impediment which rendered the consent invalid is automatically dispensed.
- The canonical effects of a valid marriage are applied retroactively to the beginning of the union. (i.e., sacramentality of the marriage if both parties were baptized.)

### **12. What funeral rites are extended to the Catechumen?**

The catechumen has a right to the Church's funeral rites. The *Code of Canon Law* goes out of its way to state that catechumens are already recognized as members of Christ's faithful and deserve to be treated as such when they die. As for whether or not the funeral rite ought to take place within or outside of the Mass, is a matter of discretion for the pastor or presider.

### **13. Are there any special concerns relative to the Eastern Orthodox Church as to how these people become Catholic?**

The *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO)* concerns itself with Eastern Catholics but it also concerns itself with the Eastern Orthodox when they want to come into full communion with the Catholic Church. The *CCEO* states that whenever or wherever an Orthodox person makes a profession of faith and is received into the Catholic Church, he or she is ascribed (belongs to) the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church. This means that even though an orthodox person may make a profession of faith in a Roman Catholic Church, he or she does not become a Latin Catholic, but a Catholic in the corresponding Eastern Church.

When the Great Schism (1054 A.D.) took place, certain Christians in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India, and Africa wanted to maintain communion with the Pope. These communities were preserved through the centuries with similar liturgies and discipline along side of an enormous Orthodox Church. This is what corresponding Eastern Catholic Church means. Eastern Orthodox Christians have no place in the RCIA program since they already received *Chrismation* (i.e., Confirmation) and Holy Communion at Baptism. **To restate the principle: an Orthodox person becomes a member of the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church when he or she makes a profession of faith in a Catholic Church, regardless of what Catholic Church it is made in.**

**If the now Eastern Catholic would like to become a Latin Catholic, there are two ways of achieving this:**

- By acquiring permission to join the Latin Church from their Eastern Catholic bishop, as well as an agreement from the Latin bishop to accept him or her into the Latin Church. The Tribunal provides the forms for this procedure.
- If the Eastern Catholic is a woman, and if she is married to a Latin man, then she can make a simple declaration of her transfer to the Latin Church. This can simply be made to her Latin pastor. The *CCEO* does not permit an Eastern Catholic man to do this.

Individuals who are Eastern Orthodox have received all the sacraments of initiation and therefore do not participate in the rites of the RCIA other than the profession of faith in the Roman Catholic Church (*RCIA*, 388). For more information consult the Archdiocesan Chancellor/Canon Lawyer.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Catechized Candidates**

***The baptized Christian is to receive both doctrinal and spiritual preparation adapted to individual pastoral requirements for the reception into full communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA, 391).***

Part II, Chapter 5 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* outlines the Rite for the Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church. This rite is so arranged that no greater burden than necessary is required for the establishment of communion and unity (RCIA, 387).

Preparation, for baptized Christians, is incorporated into the typical RCIA sessions while observing the different needs of these particular participants, as outlined below.

### **Foundational Principles**

1. Regarding the reception of baptized Christians into full communion: Their doctrinal and spiritual preparation should be determined according to the individual case.
2. Catechized candidates have been validly baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with water being poured.
3. Catechized candidates may celebrate the Rite of Reception into Full Communion whenever they are prepared without waiting for the Easter Vigil, at the pastor's discretion. ***Suggested dates for this Rite of Reception may be celebrated on Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Trinity Sunday, Christ the King, Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord, or any Sunday in Ordinary time.***
4. Catechized candidates can also celebrate the Rite of Reception at Easter Vigil. The norm of the Church is that the elect receive the initiation sacraments at the Easter Vigil liturgy. There is no prohibition for candidates to make their profession of faith and receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. However, it is ***preferable*** that candidates be received into full communion at another Sunday Eucharist rather than the Easter Vigil.

## **Questions**

### **1 . Who is a catechized candidate?**

Catechized candidates are Christians who already believe and profess the teachings of the Catholic Church before they begin the initiation process. They have been practicing Christianity in a different Christian denomination. They should know the essentials: the meaning of the Nicene Creed, the Lord's Prayer, basic Judeo-Christian stories, the centrality of personal and communal prayer, basic moral principles, and the importance of living those principles in service to others. If these essentials are professed and demonstrated, and if the person in question has been validly baptized, then he/she may be considered a catechized candidate.

### **2. How is the process for catechized candidates similar to that of catechumens and uncatechized candidates?**

The process is similar in that all participants in RCIA, catechized and uncatechized candidates, require the foundation presented in paragraph 75 of the Rite:

- a suitable catechesis from Scripture and Tradition,
- incorporation into the Christian community, and
- growth in habits of prayer, service, and mission.

In many cases, catechesis of the catechized candidate can consist of similar/same content as other RCIA participants. Catechized candidates may require further resources or a deeper explanation.

These candidates will also work with a sponsor and maintain a close relationship with the Parish RCIA Director. They should celebrate the Rites of Welcoming, Call to Lenten Renewal, and the Penitential Rites/Sacrament of Reconciliation as a preparation for full incorporation.

### **3. How is the process different from that of the catechumens and uncatechized candidates?**

The candidate may already have a good foundation in Christian belief and therefore, may already understand items in the creed. However, he/she will still need instruction in specifically Roman Catholic doctrine and will need some experiences to become connected to the local church community and its ministry. The person must also experience and reflect on specifically Catholic forms of prayer - everything from the Eucharist and the sacraments to the devotion to Mary and other devotional practices.

An excellent opportunity for introduction to parish ministry groups is to have a ministry group representative come speak to the RCIA participants and invite RCIA participants to their gatherings.

Gathering together catechized candidates with uncatechized candidates and catechumens is one method of creating community and will improve discussion during RCIA sessions for all involved.



#### **4. When are catechized candidates ready to be brought into full communion?**

Ideally, catechized candidates are brought into full communion when:

- their readiness is a process of discernment on the part of the candidate, the sponsor, etc.,
- they understand and accept Catholic Christian teaching,
- they have begun to experience the local church as their spiritual home,
- their sponsors are confident that they understand the moral implications of the Christian life,
- they have developed faithful habits of personal and communal prayer, and
- they have accepted responsibility for service and witness to others beyond the boundaries of the Church.

A candidate may arrive at this sense of Catholic “belonging” during any season of the year. This rite can be celebrated on almost any Sunday of the Liturgical Year, or as suggested in this chapter’s *Foundational Principals*, n. 3. The Lectionary should be the guide.

#### **5. What are the doctrinal areas that need to be clarified with catechized candidates?**

Most catechized candidates will need to become familiar with the Catholic emphases on:

- The nature of the Church
- The role and structures of unifying ecclesiastical authority
- The nature of the sacraments
- The meaning of the communion of saints, especially the importance of devotion to Mary and the Saints
- The practices associated with Catholic tradition and ritual

Depending on the community from which they come, one or other of these elements of Catholic life and teaching will be unfamiliar to them. Even if they feel they are familiar with some of the noted items, review and discussion is part of the discernment process and should be included.

#### **6. Should these candidates receive the sacrament of Reconciliation?**

Yes. The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with candidates for reception into full communion is to be carried out at a time prior to and distinct from the celebration of the Rite of Reception.

**7. May catechized candidates of other Christian faiths be confirmed by the local priest whenever they are brought into the Church?** Yes. Parishes may celebrate Confirmation for catechized candidates at the Easter Vigil Mass or another date of reception (RCIA, 394).

## **Chapter 9**

### **Questions About Children**

*Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs (Mt. 19:14).*

### **Foundational Principles**

1. There are two paths to the waters of baptism for children:
  - The Rite of Infant Baptism for children who have not reached the age of reason.
  - The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (adapted for Children) who have reached the age of reason.
2. Validly baptized children who are under the age of reason and whose parents are being received into the Catholic Church, either as catechumens or candidates, are recognized as members of the Catholic Church. Their baptism should be recorded in the baptism records noting the date of the parents' profession of faith. Parents of these children desire to have them raised in the Catholic Tradition.
3. Any catechumenal effort with children is to be rooted in the implementation and understanding of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.
4. The initiating community for children is their age appropriate peers, including their families.

### **Questions**

#### **1. Is the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (adapted for Children) used with children of catechetical age?**

Yes. Children of catechetical age (7 years) canonically have the use of reason. According to Canon Law they are considered, for the purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (CCL, 852.1). Use of reason can be defined as the ability of human beings to know and understand truth. They are thus able to profess faith and undergo catechumenal formation. Children of catechetical age also have the ability to enter into a relationship with God.

#### **2. How do children for Christian Initiation present themselves?**

Children can be brought to the sacraments by parents or guardians. They may even come on their own initiative with parental permission (RCIA, 242).

#### **3. Which children are included?**

- Children of catechetical age who have never been baptized.
- Children of catechetical age who are validly baptized in a church other than the Catholic Church who wish to become Catholic.

#### **4. What is the catechumenal process for children?**

The catechumenal process for children is similar to that for adults. Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years, if need be, before they receive the sacraments. Their initiation is also marked by several **Periods** and **Steps** (*RCIA*, 243) namely:

##### **Periods/Steps**

Pre-catechumenate

↳ The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Catechumenate

↳ The Rite of Election

Purification and Enlightenment

↳ Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation ↗

Mystagogy

#### **5. How long does their initiation process last?**

Initiation is a gradual process happening over an extended period of time. As with the adult rite there is no set calendar that is followed for the conversion of children to take place; it happens when the time is right. As with the adult rite, the period of the catechumenate should extend for at least one year of formation and instruction.

Children can be expected to show faith changes in their lives that are personal and have developed over time. Readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation is not measured by academic knowledge but by the conversion that has taken place in the child. This conversion is expressed differently for each child.

#### **6. What are the elements of the formation process for children?**

Formation of children during the period of the catechumenate should include:

- instruction in the doctrines of faith,
- formation in prayer life,
- introduction to the worship life of the community, and
- immersion in the mission life of the community.

#### **7. How is the process for children similar to/different from the process for adults?**

It is expected that there are some adaptations made in the case of children. These adaptations are outlined in Part II-Chapter I of the Rite.

- During the catechumenate children who are catechumens are dismissed from the assembly with the adult catechumens before the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. They participate in dismissal catechesis which teaches them to take seriously the Word of God they hear proclaimed at the liturgy.
- During the catechumenate children also participate in catechetical sessions with their peers where they learn the doctrines of our faith.
- The Rite of Election is an optional celebration for children although experience demonstrates their presence to be a powerful witness.
- During the period of purification and enlightenment children should participate in the Scrutinies with the adult catechumens. However, the rite includes an adaptation of the scrutiny, a Penitential Rite, which can be used for children instead. "Because the penitential rites normally belong to the period of final preparation for Baptism, the condition for their

celebration is that the children are approaching the maturity of faith and understanding requisite for baptism"(RCIA, 268).

- These children will be initiated either at the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday of the Easter Season. The bishop or priest who baptizes them must confer confirmation and the children will, for the first time, participate in the liturgy of the Eucharist (RCIA, 281).
- After completing their Christian initiation in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, these neophyte children should begin the period of mystagogy by participating in the Sunday Eucharist of the community throughout the Easter season. This mystagogy should help them come to a deepened understanding of the mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

### **8. What is the role of the child's family in the initiation process?**

The child's progress in the initiation process is dependent on the influence of the parents.

- The family will have the opportunity to be catechized together.
- The parents give permission for the sacraments. The parents and other family members are expected to participate in the rites. (When the parents are divorced, the custodial parent must give permission for the sacraments to be celebrated.)

## ***Chapter 10***

### ***Record Keeping***

***For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).***

### ***Foundational Principles***

1. Each parish is to have parochial registers and the pastor is to see that they are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.
2. Parochial registers include:
  - Baptism Register
  - Confirmation Register
  - First Eucharist Register
  - Marriage Register

### ***Questions***

#### **1. Where are the names of the Catechumens recorded after the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate?**

Record the names of the catechumens in the parish Register of Catechumens with pertinent information. Include the date, place of celebration and names of sponsors and minister (RCIA, 46).

#### **2. Where are the names of the elect recorded after the Rite of Election?**

Record the names of the elect in the parish Book of the Elect. List the names of those chosen for initiation at the Easter Vigil. In addition, the Elect present their names to the Bishop at the Rite of Election.

#### **3. Where are the names of the elect recorded after the Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated?**

Record the names in the parish Baptismal Register with pertinent information:

- date of Baptism,
- place and date of birth,
- name of parents & godparent(s),
- name of the minister,
- Marriage if the neophyte is married, and
- Confirmation date and place, First Eucharist date & place.

Reception of Confirmation and First Eucharist are recorded in the Confirmation and First Eucharist registers of the parish as well.

**4. Where are the names of those previously baptized in a different Christian tradition who enter into full communion with the Catholic Church (make a profession of faith) recorded?**

Record the names of persons received into full communion with the Catholic Church in the Baptism Register of the parish. Record the baptism as it occurred in another denomination. In the notation column, report the:

- date and location of the Profession of Faith,
- Marriage if pertinent,
- Confirmation date & place; First Eucharist date & place,
- information on Confirmation and First Eucharist is also to be recorded in the proper parish registers, and
- include baptized children under the age of reason.

**5. Where are names recorded of baptized Catholics receiving Confirmation and first Eucharist?**

Record names in the Confirmation and First Eucharist Registers of the parish. Information on Confirmation and First Eucharist is sent to the Catholic parish where the person was baptized.

**6. Where is the sacrament of Reconciliation recorded?**

Information on the sacrament of Reconciliation is not recorded.

**7. How is information obtained from parishes that are closed?**

Parishes need to contact the parish to which that dissolved community of faith is now attached or contact the Chancery Office of the diocese in question for that information.

**8. Who is responsible to make the entries in the parish registers?**

The pastor is primarily responsible to ensure that sacramental records are properly maintained. He can, however, delegate someone else to make official entries into the books. The RCIA Director must make sure the entries are correctly completed in the sacramental books. (For previously uncatechized Catholics completing their initiation, notification to their church of baptism must also be sent.)

**9. Are the names of those who participate in the Rite of Welcome recorded?**

Parishes should also keep a listing of all who have participated in the Rite of Welcome.