

TIMELY TOPICS

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

Lent is all about Baptism

Lent grew out of the time in the early church when those preparing for Baptism at Easter underwent the most intense part of their formation.

In later centuries, the penitential aspect of Lent overshadowed the baptismal aspect. Vatican II restored the adult catechumenate and the baptismal focus of Lent.

Today we, too, know Lent as the time of intense preparation for those who will receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. We the baptized also are reminded that Lent is the time for *us* to prepare to *renew* our Baptismal Promises.

For most of us, the Baptismal Promises were directed to our parents and god-parents at the time of our Baptism. They and the assembly spoke for us when we were too young to speak for ourselves. For those who came into the Church when we were older, we were able to speak those promises ourselves.

They are bold, faith-filled words, those “**I do**” responses.

**Do you reject Satan?
And all his works? And all his empty promises?
I DO.**

**Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of
heaven and earth?
I DO.**

**Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died,
and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at
the right hand of the Father?
I DO.**

**Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic
Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and
life everlasting?
I DO.**

**This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are
proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.**

Think about it:

Do I recognize the reality of evil in our world, and am I prepared to resist it?

Do I believe in the one God who is father to all of us and crea-

tor of all that is?

Do I believe in Jesus, the Christ, truly human and truly God, who lived and died as one of us but whose resurrection from the dead has conquered sin and death for all time?

Do I believe in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my life and in the life and teachings of the Church? Am I attentive to signs of the Holy Spirit’s action in my life and in the community?

Do I believe in the “comm-union”(the *with, as one*) of all of us, living and dead, in God?

Do I believe that, because of what Jesus has done for us, our sinfulness

can be forgiven and we will be raised up bodily to be with God forever?

Can I truly say “Amen” – that is, “So be it” – to all of this?

Lent is our time to be attentive to these Promises, to examine how (and if) they are alive and operative in our lives.

If we take the time to reflect prayerfully on them, asking God’s help to “see” the implications in our life, we may more readily see what is our journey through these remaining weeks of Lent.

And we may be ready, at Easter, to say with confidence, “**Yes -- I do**” to our Baptismal Promises. ✨

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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Baptismal Promises: What do they mean to you?

Baptismal Promises	What does this mean?	How do/could you LIVE this?
Do you reject Satan, and all his works, and all his empty promises?	Do we acknowledge the reality of evil? Do we resist all that hurts or demeans human life? Do we resist all that harms God's creation?	
Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?	Do we believe that we are all the children of the one true God, and thus responsible for each other? Do we believe that all creation is God's, and that we are responsible for its care?	
Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?	Do we believe that Jesus, truly God and truly human, is God's loving self-gift to us? Do we believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary and lived fully as a human person? Do we believe that Jesus, who lived and died as one of us, has -- through his death and his resurrection -- conquered the powers of sin and death for all time? Do we believe that the risen Christ is with us forever?	
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?	Do we believe that the Holy Spirit is one with Jesus and the Father, and is active in our lives today? Do we believe in the Spirit's guiding activity through the Church? Do we believe in the union that all of us, living and dead, share in God? Do we believe that, because of what Jesus has done for us, our sinfulness can be forgiven? Do we believe that we will, in the end, be raised up bodily to be with God forever?	
This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen	Do we truly believe these words? Is this what we profess, in words and actions, to the world?	

Correlation to Certification Standards & the Graded Course of Study

We continue to provide a correlation of the Timely Topics' themes to the RGCS and the National Certification Standards.

Expanded Sample:

Standard I, Personal and Spiritual Maturity:

- 1.1 Discern and respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- 1.4 Discern and address current realities in the church and the world in light of the Gospel.
- 1.7 Engage in personal, life-long faith formation and continuing education.
- 1.9PCL Recognize God's activity in personal life experiences and articulate this understanding with others.
- 1.10PCL Give witness to compassion, justice and charity in personal and pastoral relationships.

Remaining Standards:

- Standard II**, Lay Ecclesial Ministry Identity: 2.5; 2.6PCL
- Standard III**, Catholic Theology: 3.2 (3.2.1-3.2.4); 3.3 (3.3.2, 3.3.4); 3.13PCL; 3.15PCL; 3.17PCL
- Standard IV**, Pastoral Praxis: 4.1.3; 4.1.5
- Standard V**, Professional Practice: 5.1.13PCL; 5.1.16PCL

Baptismal Promises: In Service

Reproduce the table, “**Baptismal Promises: What do they mean to you?**” from page 2, for each participant.

Another helpful resource is: Dues, Greg. *Catholic Customs and Traditions*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000. (chap. 9, “Lent”)

Introduce the idea of **Lent** as a time to focus on **Baptism** and its meaning for *all* of us. Briefly sketch the history of Lent (*more detailed information available in the listed resources on page 4*):

Lent’s origins in the preparations of the early Church, for those who would be baptized at Easter

- ⌘ Part of the preparation included a period of penance, anticipating “birth” as a “new person in Christ” through the waters of baptism

The emergence of infant baptism and a spirituality that focused more on human sinfulness, so that the penitential aspect of Lent became more prominent

With Vatican II, the baptismal aspect of Lent comes back into focus through the restoration of the baptismal catechumenate and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

- ⌘ Lent now is the time of the most intense preparation for those who will receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil
- ⌘ As baptized members of the community we are called to support the catechumens in this process, by our words of encouragement, our prayers and our example
- ⌘ We also are called to examine our own lives, so as to be ready to renew our Baptismal Promises at the Easter celebrations

Distribute the work-sheets. Invite the participants to take a few moments to consider and to fill in the third column, “What does this mean to YOU?”

Depending on the group’s level of comfort with talking about personal reflections – allow a few minutes to talk about their responses with each other. Otherwise, simply allow the time to work on the sheet, then bring them to the final step.

Ask the participants to consider how, with appropriate adaptation, they might use this exercise with their particular learners.

Ideas for every age

✦ **Use the *Baptismal Promises: In-Service***, above, with high school, RCIA or adult faith formation groups

✦ **Obtain the names of persons in the parish catechumenate**

Remember them in prayers

Make “Welcome” cards to be given to them at Easter

Make special “Easter baskets” which could include

- ⌘ Prayer-card with patron saint of the parish, rosary, and/or at least one Easter treat!
- ⌘ Copies of original prayers and good wishes, decorated with art-work
- ⌘ Copy of “The Little White Book” (reflections, prayers for the Easter season) from the Diocese of Saginaw in Michigan; available at www.littlebooks.org

✦ **Learn more about the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults and the catechumenate**

The Rite contains a section with an adaptation for use with older children

The catechumenate is one of four main steps in the initiation process

The RCIA process is not so much about how much information one *knows* as it is about how deeply one’s life is being *changed* by God, and how ready one is for *living as a disciple*

✦ **Check the USCCB’s website** for the list of “10 Things to Consider for the RCIA” <http://www.usccb.org/comm./archives/2010/10-032.shtml>. How many of these could your group do?

✦ **Research: What is “mystagogy”?**

Why is it important?

What meaning might it have for **you**?

Resources

CHURCH PUBLICATIONS

- The Catechism of the Catholic Church. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994.
- The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.
- United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006.

BOOKS/PERIODICALS

- Altomose, Charlene. What You Should Know About the RCIA. Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Press.
- Costello, Gwen. Mystagogia Is for Everyone. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications.
- Dues, Greg. Catholic Customs and Traditions. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000.
(chap. 9, "Lent")
- Figgess, Sandra. Christian Initiation of Older Children. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press.
- Senseman, Rita Burns. A Child's Journey: The Christian Initiation of Children. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1997.
- Sinwell, Joseph. The Baptismal Catechumenate: An Inspiration for All Catechesis. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2002.
- Turner, Paul. The Catechumenate Answer Book: Modern Liturgy Answers the 101 Most Asked Questions. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 2000.
- Crosthwaite, Mia. "Four Ways Your Learners Can Live Out Their Baptism." Religion Teacher's Journal. March 2009, pp. 12-13.
- DeLuca, Lorraine. "Adult and Infant Baptism: What's the Difference?" Religion Teacher's Journal. March 2009, p. 14.
- Furtaw, Patricia. "Are Your Learners Celebrating ALL of the Easter Triduum?" Religion Teacher's Journal. March 2009, pp. 16-17.
- Olson, Bridget. "Teaching the Liturgy: Baptised in Christ." Religion Teacher's Journal. March 2009, p. 28.

CATHOLIC UPDATES

- Order from St. Anthony's Messenger Press at www.americancatholic.org*
- Senseman, Rita Burns. "A New Look at the RCIA: Journey for the Entire Parish." May, 2002.
- DeGidio, Sandra. "The RCIA: The Art of Making New Catholics." January, 1986.
- Mick, Lawrence. "Our Holiest Week: A Practical Guide for the Holy Week Liturgies." April, 1992.
- Richstatter, Thomas. "Sacraments of Initiation: Sacraments of Invitation." March, 2001.

VIDEOS/DVDS

- VTE 1494 An Invitation to New Life: The RCIA Described
- VTE 1491 The Catechumenate in Brief
- VTE 1497 The Catechumenate for Children, tapes 1 & 2
- VTE 1498 This is the Night: A Parish Welcomes New Members
- VTE 1368 What Catholics Believe About the RCIA
- DVD 1086 Initiation Sacraments for Young People, Part 1. The New Birth Day Club (grades 1-5)
- DVD 1009 Come to the Water . . . the Adult Journey to Baptism