Diocese of Baker

GUIDELINES, NORMS, AND CATECHETICAL REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS
AND
CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

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Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

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Diocese of Baker

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# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td><em>Ad Gentes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td><em>Catechesis Tradendae</em></td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td><em>Catechism of the Catholic Church</em></td>
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<td>CIC</td>
<td><em>Code of Canon Law</em></td>
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<td>EN</td>
<td><em>Evangelii Nuntiandi</em></td>
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<td>GDC</td>
<td><em>General Directory for Catechesis</em></td>
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<td>NDC</td>
<td><em>National Directory for Catechesis</em></td>
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<td>NS</td>
<td><em>National Statutes for the Catechumenante</em></td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td><em>Sarosanctum Concilium</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Contents

What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults ................................................................. 1

Outline for the RCIA .............................................................................................................. 3

The Integral Process of the RCIA ........................................................................................ 9

The Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate ....................................................... 10

First Step: Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens .................................... 14

The Period of the Catechumenate ....................................................................................... 18

Second Step: The Rite Election or Enrollment of Names .................................................. 21

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment .................................................................. 23

Third Step: Rite of the Celebration of Sacraments of Initiation ...................................... 26

The Period of Mystagogy ..................................................................................................... 29

Appendices .......................................................................................................................... 30

The Gospel Story – a framework ......................................................................................... 31

RCIA Checklist .................................................................................................................... 34

Inquirer Initial Interview .................................................................................................... 35

RCIA Data Intake Form (Adult) page 1 of 2 .................................................................... 36

RCIA Data Intake Form (Adult) page 2 of 2 .................................................................... 37

God-Parent / Sponsorship Acceptance and Agreement ...................................................... 38

Pre-Rite (Second) Interview .............................................................................................. 39

Catechesis on the Rite of Acceptance / Welcome into the Order of Catechumenate ......... 40

Catechetical Requirements for Period of the Catechumenate ........................................ 41

Celebrating the Word of God ............................................................................................. 46
Pre-Rite (Third) Interview........................................................................................................................................47

Sending of the Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition............48

Catechesis on Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion .................................49

Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion Parish Enrollment Form.................50

Catechetical Recommendations for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment........................................................................................................................................51

Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday ..................................................................................53

Catechetical Recommendations for the Period of Mystagogy ..........................................54

Recommended Resources .....................................................................................................56
What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

[RCIA is] 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, paragraph 5).

RCIA is a journey designed to lead a person to an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. RCIA engages a person where they are in their circumstances as an adult, teen, child, unbaptized or baptized. RCIA consists of four stages and three rites designed to lead an individual into a sacred journey of conversion and transformation. RCIA is adaptable to the uniqueness of individuals in their knowledge, cultural, and familial experiences.

The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process...[which] includes not only the periods for making inquiry and for maturing, but also the steps marking the catechumens’ progress, as they pass, so to speak, through another doorway or ascend to the next level (RCIA, paragraph 4, 6).

RCIA is a process that leads to a relationship with Jesus Christ. This process begins with the point of initial conversion and the desire to become Christian (or enter into full communion). As a person grows in faith they are lead into an intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation. After receiving Christ in the sacraments of Christian initiation, the process continues for a life-time of maturing in Christian experience and spiritual growth.

RCIA is an experience that has as its goal conversion and transformation in Christ. It involves the total person: intellect, will, passions, and spirit. First, RCIA engages the intellect through a dialogue in which the Church proclaims and the candidate inquires. Next, the RCIA engages the will and passions by addressing the desires, motivations, and choices of our human nature. Finally, RCIA touches the spirit – the center of our being – through purification and enlightenment, preparing the soul to receive Christ into their heart to enter fully into the life and unity of the Christian community.

The whole of initiation must bear a markedly paschal character, since the initiation of Christians is the first sacramental sharing in Christ’s dying and rising (RCIA, # 8).

RCIA is a rite of passage comprised of a series of liturgical rites. Each liturgical rite serves to enable a person to journey through a passage from death to life in the sacraments of initiation. These liturgical rites are powerful as they have the effect of showering God’s grace upon the candidates. The rites are meant to be public and shared with the entire Christian community. They are visible signs of the candidate’s declaration and the Church’s celebration of God’s grace! Each rite signifies a transition from one state to another as Christ, through the Church, claims, anoints, and protects these candidates in their journey towards life in Christ.

Finally, the RCIA is Christocentric. It proclaims Christ’s Gospel (evangelization), it echoes Christ’s teachings (catechesis) and it leads a person to journey into Christ’s Passion, Death on the Cross, and his Resurrection and Ascension to the Father (conversion).
On the origin and restoration of the RCIA

The origins of the RCIA trace back to the early centuries of the Church. This ancient process was only recently restored as a result of Vatican II (1962-65). Historical evidence shows that the journey to baptism was an intense journey of conversion involving years of catechesis accompanied by powerful and sacred rites of passage and initiation. This journey is called the “baptismal catechumenate.”

The modern *Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults* draws from ancient texts and were canonically approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 11, 1986 and subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See on February 19, 1987.

> The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be taken into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this, means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time (SC, 64).

> The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites (AG, 13).

> The baptismal catechumenate is both a process of formation and a true school of faith. It is a fruitful blend of instruction and formation in the faith; it progresses through gradual stages; it unfolds the Church’s rites, symbols, and biblical and liturgical signs; and it incorporates the catechumens into the Christian community of faith and worship (GDC, 91; NDC, 35, D).

As a leader of the RCIA, our job is to be faithful to the Church’s Magisterium and a courageous witness of true discipleship in Christ.

> The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader....

> Only fully initiated, practicing Catholics who fully adhere to the Church’s teaching in faith and morals and who are models of Christian virtue and courageous witnesses to the Catholic faith should be designated as parish catechetical leaders (NDC, 54, B, 5).
OUTLINE FOR THE RCIA

Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

Individuals are introduced to the Gospel Story and the Person of Jesus Christ who is “The way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). This period can last any length of time, but typically three to six months is the norm. No official commitment is necessary by the participant and no expectations by the Church are put upon the individual during this time. It is a time for listening, learning and asking questions. It is an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

1st Liturgical Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.
This liturgical rite marks the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express, and the Church accepts, their intention to respond to God’s call to follow the way of Christ.

Rites Belonging to the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

➢ Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (RCIA, 48-68)

Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates who have completed the period of Precatechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members. God showers his grace on the candidates in the candidates’ public declaration (cf. RCIA, 41–47). This rite is of utmost importance.

Proper or Usual Times: as a general guide, the Advent season is an optimal time and other fixed times as warranted (cf. RCIA, 18).

Optional Rites
- Exorcism and Renunciation of False Worship
- Giving of a New Name
- Presentation of a Cross

➢ Rite of Welcoming the Candidates (RCIA, 416-433)

This optional rite welcomes those baptized as infants either as Roman Catholics or as members of another Christian community; previously uncatechized adults who are seeking to complete their sacraments of initiation or are seeking full communion into the Roman Catholic Church.

The status of baptized candidates differs from that of catechumens since by baptism they have already become members of the Church and children of God. Their conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop. (cf. RCIA, 400 - 410).

1 Cf. RCIA, page 16.
**Combined Rites**

- **Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and rite of Welcoming Baptized but Previously Uncatechized Adults Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church** (*Rite of Acceptance and Welcome; RCIA, 507-529*)

Use this rite in communities where catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (baptized) who are beginning catechetical formation to complete their Christian initiation in the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or prior to being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA, 505).

**NOTE:** when celebrating the combined rites, care must be taken to maintain the distinction between the catechumens and the baptized candidates (RCIA, 506).
The Period of the Catechumenate

This is the time for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens’ faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process. Formal instruction in the faith, drawing from Holy Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, begins at this time. This period can last any length of time depending on the needs of the individual, but typically has duration of three to six months.

2nd Liturgical Step: The Rite of Election / Enrollment of Names.
Usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, the Church formally ratifies the catechumens’ readiness for the sacraments of initiation. The catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.

Rites Belonging to the Period of the Catechumenate

➢ Celebrations of the Word of God (RCIA, 81-89)

From the very beginning of the period of the catechumenate the catechumens and candidates should be taught to keep holy the Lord’s Day.

During the period of the catechumenate there should be celebrations of the word of God that follow the liturgical season and contribute to the instruction of the catechumens.

1. Gradually the catechumens and candidates should be admitted to the first part of the celebration of the Sunday. After the liturgy of the word they should, if possible, be dismissed, but an intention for them is included in the general intercessions (see RCIA, 67 for formularies of dismissal).

2. Celebrations of the word should also be held in connection with all catechetical meetings and model liturgical norms (see RCIA, 85-89 for appropriate structure).

➢ Minor Exorcisms, Blessings and Anointing’s (RCIA, 90-103)

Minor exorcisms, blessings and anointing’s may be incorporated as a part of the Sunday Mass or in special celebrations of the liturgy of the word as prescribed in the RCIA nos. 90-103.

NOTE: these prayers are reserved for catechumens (unbaptized) as they do not yet possess the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Care must be taken to maintain the distinction between the catechumens and the baptized candidates.

Appropriate prayers over the candidates (baptized) may be included drawing from the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for Baptized but Uncatechized Adults (see RCIA, 470).
**Passage Rites**

At the conclusion of the period of the catechumenate, a rite of sending the catechumens to their election and/or candidates for recognition by the bishop is highly desirable. Doing so emphasizes the unity of the particular Church (Bishop/Diocese) and universality of the Catholic Church (pope/Rome). Depending on the makeup of the parish RCIA participants’ one of the following sending rites are used.

- **Rite of Sending of the Catechumens for Election** *(RCIA 106-117)*

  OR

- **Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion** *(RCIA, 434-445)*

  OR Combined

- **Parish Celebration for Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop** *(RCIA, 530-546)*

- **Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names** *(RCIA, 118-137)*

  Of utmost importance; assembling publicly before the bishop (or bishop delegate), the godparents, catechists, and community testify to the readiness of the catechumens’ for final preparation to receive the sacraments of initiation. The catechumens reaffirm their intention to receive the sacraments of initiation. (cf. RCIA, 118-128).

  **Proper or Usual Times:** as a general guide, the **First Sunday of Lent** or other fixed times as warranted (cf. RCIA, 19). In the Diocese of Baker we have four celebrations across the diocese on the Saturday and Sunday of the first and second week of Lent.

**Combined Rites**

- **Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church** *(Rite of Election and Continuing Conversion; RCIA, 550-561)*

  This rite is used in communities where catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (baptized) who preparing either for confirmation and/or eucharist or reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church are celebrated together (RCIA, 547).

  **NOTE:** The celebrant is the bishop or his delegate (RCIA, 548).
The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This is the time immediately preceding the elects' initiation. It is usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of Christian initiation at the Easter Vigil. It is a time intensely centered on conversion and repentance and is marked by the celebration of the scrutinies, the presentations, and the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of initiation.
Usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist.

Rites Belonging to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Scrutinies (RCIA, 141-184)
  
  The scrutinies are solemnly celebrated on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. The readings with their chants are those given for these Sundays in the Lectionary for Mass, Year A.
  
  - 1st Scrutiny, third Sunday of Lent (RCIA, 150-156)
    - Gospel of the Samaritan woman
  - 2nd Scrutiny, fourth Sunday of Lent (RCIA, 164-170)
    - Gospel of the man born blind
  - 3rd Scrutiny, fifth Sunday of Lent (RCIA, 171-177)
    - Gospel of the raising of Lazarus

NOTE: because the prayer of exorcism in the three scrutinies for catechumens properly belongs to the elect and uses numerous images referring to their approaching baptism, the scrutinies are strictly for the unbaptized.

There is no combined scrutiny rite for candidates (baptized). The RCIA provides a separate “Penitential Rite (Scrutiny)” for the baptized candidates which may be celebrated the Second Sunday of Lent (RCIA, 459-472).

- Presentations (RCIA, 141-184)
  
  The presentations take place during the week after the scrutiny; preferably to be celebrated in the presence of a community of the faithful within Mass (or a special liturgy of the word celebration).
  
  1. Presentation of the Creed, Third Week of Lent (RCIA, 157-163)
  2. Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer, Fifth Week of Lent (RCIA, 178-184)
  3. Recitation of the Creed and Ephphetha Rite on Holy Saturday (RCIA, 193-205)
Passage Rites

The third step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God (RCIA, 206). The usual time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil (cf. RCIA, 23).

➢ Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (RCIA, 206-243)

Of utmost importance; when there are elect participating in the liturgy of the Easter Vigil the “Celebration of Baptism” and “Celebration of Confirmation” are fully incorporated.

Combined Rites

➢ Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA, 562-594)

Pastoral considerations may suggest that along with the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation at the Easter Vigil, the rite of reception of already baptized Christians into full communion of the Catholic Church may be included. The model provided in the RCIA can only be used properly in the light of nos. 206-217 and nos. 473-486 (RCIA, 562).

The Period of Mystagogy (RCIA, 244-251)

During this time (usually Easter Season) the deeper meaning of the liturgy and sacraments, the Christian life and prayer are examined. It is a time of growth as understanding of the faith begins to mature; particularly by participation in the eucharistic celebration and life of the Church.

Mystagogy (NS, 22-24)

The neophytes begin the period of mystagogy by participating in the principle Sunday Mass throughout the Easter season, which ends on Pentecost Sunday. They should do this as a body in company with their godparents and those who have assisted in their Christian formation.

After the immediate mystagogy or postbaptismal catechesis during the Easter season, the program for the neophytes continues until the anniversary of Christian initiation, with at least monthly assemblies of the neophytes for their deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community.
The Integral Process of the RCIA

This section provides a roadmap of the RCIA journey with each period and rite of the RCIA explained as follows.

1. Purpose and Goal.
2. Catechetical Requirements.
3. Pastoral Recommendations.
5. Key Steps and Instructions.
The Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith (RCIA, page 14).

During this period, priests and deacons, catechists and other laypersons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the Gospel. The candidates are to receive help and attention so that with a purified and clearer intention they may cooperate with God’s grace. Opportunities should be provided for them to meet families and other groups of Christians (RCIA, 38).

Purpose

- A time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all. (RCIA, 36)
- Proclamation and basic explain of the Gospel: the Church, usually via a trained catechist, proclaims and explains the basic message of the Gospel; God, Man, the Person of Jesus Christ and His Church. Every effort should be made to present the gospel message with vigor and zeal.
- Listening and answering questions: participants are encouraged to ask questions, to pray, and to reflect. No commitment is necessary. The RCIA leader should be attentive to discovering where each participant is in their faith journey and understanding of Christianity.
- Environment of hospitality: It is important to create an environment where potential candidates feel welcome and valued. It is a time to warmly encourage questions and to testify to the overwhelming joy of the heavenly hosts, and that of Jesus Christ, that he or she has taken the time to “come and see” (Cf. John 1:46).

Goal: faith and initial conversion.

From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love.

The whole period of the Precatechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek baptism may mature (RCIA, 37).
Catechetical Requirements

- **Proclamation and basic explanation of the Gospel Story**: topics should not be covered in depth, but rather in an introductory manner. This is an informal presentation and should be open to dialogue and conversation. More in-depth teaching is reserved for the period of the Catechumenate. *The Gospel Story* may be used as a suitable guide for this period.

**Key Proclamations**

1. God: known to all and is the one true God.
2. God: relational and desires a personal relationship.
3. God: is Love; all of His words and acts are based on His love for each of us.
4. God: his way is known in natural (moral) law written in the human heart.
5. Man: created in love, made in the image and likeness of God.
6. Man: our first parents (Adam and Eve) disobeyed God and lost the inner life of God.
7. Man: created to know, love and serve God in this life and the life to come.
8. Christ: salvation for all people is through Jesus Christ.
9. Christ: God became man, died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven.
10. Christ: Jesus Christ is Lord over all things.
11. Church: the means for restoring God’s life in us in the sacramental life.
12. Church: kingdom of God on earth and in heaven.
13. Conversion: faith and initial conversion cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love.
14. Baptism: to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gains entry into the mystery of God’s love.
15. Prayer: communication with God.
Pastoral considerations

- An Initial Interview with each inquirer should be completed prior to formally entering into the Precatechumenate or regular attendance to RCIA meetings. **Inquirer Initial Interview**

Guidelines for the initial interview include:

- Private prayer asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and intercessions of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Listening intently to the reasons the person is inquiring about the Catholic Church
  
  - Why is he/she here?
  
  - Are they baptized?
  
  - Are there any impediments to the possible reception of the Sacraments of Initiation?

**Pastoral Note**

If, in your interviews with the inquirer, sensitive material is revealed, or beginning to be revealed, it is recommended that the inquirer meet with a priest or the pastor of the parish.

- A Second Interview after the initial interview is completed and within the first two weeks of attendance to an RCIA meeting, an **RCIA Data Intake Form** is completed.

The primary goal of the second meeting with the inquirer is to collect all necessary data concerning themselves and their family status. Especially important is the early identification of any impediments to the possible reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, especially as related to marital status. Refer to **Pastoral Implementation of Sacraments of Initiation** for proper understanding and implementation.

**Tribunal Note**

If sacramental irregularities are identified in the RCIA Data Intake Form (e.g. divorce, uncertain baptism or sacrament records), the pastor and **Office of Canonical Affairs and Matrimonial Tribunal** are notified as soon as possible immediately following the interview. Under the guidance of the pastor and diocesan tribunal office the RCIA leader ensures communications and necessary processes are established with the RCIA participant expeditiously.

- The Pastor should meet with the individual or group in the Precatechumenate at least once during this period
It is important that the inquirers become familiar and comfortable with the pastor of the parish since he will be receiving them into the Church when the inquirers are ready. It is preferable that the pastor or a parish priest meet with each inquirer one on one during the period of the Precatechumenate. It is highly recommended that the clergy be present as often as possible at all RCIA events.

**Candidates’ Readiness and Conversion**

It is not yet necessary that the inquirers truly believe, but only that they “show some leaning toward the Christian faith.” (RCIA, 39)

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<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Conversion</th>
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<td>Do not yet fully believe, but show some leaning toward Christian faith.</td>
<td>Intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus or some aspect of the Christian faith.</td>
<td>Does not dismiss the idea of personal prayer, but will not necessarily initiate; quietly is taking it in.</td>
<td>Initial trust: able to have a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer or something identifiably Christian.</td>
<td>Acknowledges to him or herself and to God that he or she is open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change.</td>
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**Key steps and instructions**

This initial period should not be rushed. No pressure should be placed upon the potential candidates. Candidates must freely choose to enter into the *Rite of Acceptance and Welcome*. We must remember that this period has “no fixed duration.” While it is desirable for all candidates to participate in the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens* together, it is not mandatory to continue in the RCIA. The entire schedule of the RCIA should be made available to anyone who is interested, whether they are ready to celebrate the rites, or not. It is, however, mandatory that a catechumen celebrate the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens* at some point prior to receiving the Sacraments of Initiation.
FIRST STEP: RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" (John 1:38)

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God’s call to follow the way of Christ (RCIA, page 14).

Purpose

- **Enter into an eternal covenant**: the effects bestowed in the rite of acceptance are profound. Through the rite the candidate enters a covenant bound by an oath between him or herself and God with the Church as witness. The covenant is eternal because God is eternal.

  The candidate is entering into an eternal covenant made between man and God from the beginning of time with the creation of Adam and Eve, revealed to Noah, established in Abraham, promised to King David, and fulfilled in the words and deeds of the Son of God. This point cannot be over emphasized; it is this eternal covenant which serves as a central theme of the entire Gospel message.

- **United to the household of Christ and joined to the Church**: although not perfectly, the candidate is so bound to Christ, and the Church, that should they die during the catechumenate they are entitled to a Christian burial.

Goal: declaration of faith, God’s grace and consecration by the Church.

Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates who have completed the period of the Precatechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members (RCIA, 41).

God showers his grace on the candidates, since the celebration manifests their desire publicly and marks their reception and first consecration by the Church. (RCIA, 41)

In summary,

- The candidates are approaching Jesus Christ,
- make a public commitment to follow him,
- and ask for the necessary grace to begin their journey towards entry into the Kingdom of God as they prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation.

The Church and the rite serve as the visible signs of this supernatural reality.

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2 Cf. Dt 33:27; Rom 16:26.
3 Cf. Gn 1:28; 9:9; 17:17; 2 Sam 7:12-16; 23:5; Mt 26:28; Lk 1:72; Acts 3:25.
4 RCIA, 47.
Catechetical Requirements
For the candidates to fully participate in the rite, they need to understand what is happening in the rite. The candidates should be instructed about the celebration of the liturgical rite of acceptance. *Catechesis on the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*

Pastoral considerations

- Candidates’ motives and dispositions should be evaluated and purified: *with the help of the sponsors, catechists, and deacons, pastors have the responsibility for judging the outward indications of such dispositions* (RCIA, 42).

Discerning with the candidate, the RCIA Leader and pastor are responsible, if necessary, to “to purify the candidates’ motives and dispositions” or their intention. Ensuring pure motives is especially important with adult candidates who are either married to, or in an intentional relationship with, a Catholic. Ensuring pure motives is also pertinent with older youth who have Catholic parents.

It is common, and perfectly acceptable, for an individual to attend the RCIA classes based on their relationship with a Catholic spouse, friend or parent, to simply learn about the faith. But, *to participate in the rite, their intention must be theirs alone* and based on a personal experience of initial conversion in Christ. The candidate should be ready to make a public declaration to change the course of their life towards a life in Christ and to begin the journey of following the Way of Christ.

The RCIA Leader and pastor must also ensure that the candidate has *sufficient knowledge* in their understanding of the fundamentals of Christian teachings. We do not expect the candidate to have a full knowledge of the faith. A properly disposed candidate should be able to correctly describe the basics of the Gospel message:

- who God is,
- who man is in God’s plan,
- who Jesus Christ is and the significance of his actions in the Paschal Mystery,
- and why the role of the Church is integral to God’s plan of salvation.

Candidates’ Readiness and Conversion

*There must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization and Precatechumenate and of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ* (RCIA, 42).

The RCIA identifies specific experiences that should be present in a candidates’ journey prior to celebrating each rite. These experiences can be grouped into five categories: intention (will), knowledge (understanding), state of their prayer life, their relationship with Christ, and conversion of heart. Of these categories, conversion is most important!

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5 RCIA, 43.
This conversion is, indeed, only initial; sufficient however to make a man realize that he has been snatched from sin, and is being led into the mystery of God’s love, who invites him to establish a personal relationship with him in Christ (AG, 13).

To discern with the candidate their readiness for the rite, the Church provides the following guidelines as to the “evidence” that should be outwardly visible. Pre-Rite (Second) Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a declared intention to change.</td>
<td>The fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root.</td>
<td>A start of a prayer life.</td>
<td>A beginning sense of the presence of Christ and the reality of his Church.</td>
<td>An initial conversion in the first stirrings of repentance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key steps and instructions**

As a norm the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is celebrated at Sunday Mass with the pastor as celebrant. The Rite of Welcoming for Baptized Candidates is often combined. The RCIA recommends that this first rite not be scheduled too early, and “should be delayed until the candidates...have sufficient time to conceive an initial faith and to show the first signs of conversion.”

The RCIA also recommends that two or three dates be established as the usual times for celebrating this rite and “should be delayed until a group is formed that is sufficiently large for catechesis and the liturgical rites.” As an alternative, these rites (acceptance and welcome) may be celebrated individually, or combined, on any day of the week and the celebrant can be a deacon. These rites require that they be celebrated within a liturgy of the Word, with their sponsors and a group of the faithful.

Extreme care should be taken to ensure the rites are in full compliance with liturgical norms and that they include a suitable homily. This is easily accomplished by following the script of the rites as provided by either “The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume One” or “The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Study Edition.” Both of these resources provide the complete text and explanation of all the Christian initiation rites as approved for use in the dioceses of the United States.

- The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is strictly reserved for the un-baptized (CIC, 851)

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6 RCIA, 42.
7 Refer to RCIA, 505 – 529 for the combined Rite of Acceptance and Welcome.
8 RCIA, 18.
9 Ibid.
10 RCIA, 48.
11 Ibid.
- The **Rite of Welcome of Baptized Candidates** is for the **baptized**, where the candidate is welcomed into the Catholic community

- When combining the rites of acceptance and welcome, *care must be taken to maintain the distinction between the catechumens and the baptized candidates (RCIA, 506)*

**Note**: in practice, maintaining distinction between the unbaptized catechumens and the baptized candidates means keeping the catechumens and candidates visibly separated throughout the rite; for example, catechumens stand on the left side of Altar and candidates on right side. In addition, the prayers, ritual signing of the cross, and presentations (e.g. a cross and Bible) should be distinct between catechumens and candidates.

- Presiding celebrant is a priest or deacon (RCIA 45)

- Godparents/sponsors should attend in order to present the candidates to the Church (proxies may be used where it is impossible for the sponsor to be present)

- After the celebration of the rite, the names of the catechumens, sponsors, celebrant are to be inscribed in the register of catechumens

- Catechumens may be married and buried in the Church (CIC, 1183, 1)
THE PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

*Make me to know thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation; for thee I wait all the day long* (Psalms 25:4-5).

This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens' faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.

As with the period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, this period has *no fixed duration*. For catechumens it is an opportunity to learn and enter into God’s plan and way of life. For baptized candidates it is the opportunity to understand and adopt the Catholic worldview of Christianity.

**Purpose**

- **Growth of the catechumens’ faith:** proclamation of the Gospel transitions to instruction of the faith, called catechesis.

  This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.¹²

- **Conversion to God:** sincere conversion of heart which results in desire to know better Jesus to whom he or she has entrusted him or herself: to know His mystery, the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him.

  [Becoming] a Christian means saying "yes" to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this "yes" has two levels: It consists in surrendering to the word of God and relying on it, but it also means ... endeavoring to know better - and better the profound meaning of this word.¹³

**Goal: enlightens faith and deepens conversion.**

*The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ (RCIA, 78).*

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¹² RCIA, 75.
¹³ CT, 20.
Catechetical Requirements

Instruction provided during this period must be a comprehensive presentation of the faith that:

- enlightens faith,
- directs the heart toward God,
- fosters participation in the liturgy,
- inspires apostolic activity,
- and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ (RCIA, 78).

A schedule should be defined for the period of the catechumenate that includes the following.

1. Catechetical topics in alignment with the Gospel Story and catechetical requirements.
   - Catechetical Requirements for the Period of the Catechumenate

2. Celebrations of the word of God following the weekly Sunday readings.
   - Celebrating the word of God

3. Liturgical rites as prescribed by the RCIA.
   - Outline for the RCIA

Pastoral recommendations

There should never be a rush to have someone enter the Church.

_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 an 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)._  

One, or more, meetings should be scheduled with each candidate during the course of the period of the catechumenate to:

- Discuss and answer questions specific to the candidate
- Address any needs concerning irregularities such as previous marriages
- Develop a meaningful relationship with the candidate
Candidates’ Readiness and Conversion

A progressive change of outlook and conduct manifested by means of a transition with social consequences ... should develop gradually during the period of the catechumenate (RCIA, 75, 2).

We should see increasing evidence of change in the candidate’s intention, knowledge, prayer life, relationship and conversion in Christ. Outward signs of their conversion should be seen as a positive change in their disposition towards others, their outlook, and in morals. Their godparents should be able to testify to these changes.

- **Intention:** deliberate will and full intention to receive the sacraments.

- **Knowledge:** a marked improvement in the level of the candidate’s knowledge in their understanding of Christian teachings, liturgical worship, dogma, and of the moral life in Christ. There should be We should expect the candidate to be able to recite several specifics by correctly describing Church teachings, especially in areas of morality and chastity that run counter to our culture; for example:
  - abortion, contraception, euthanasia, fornication, and same sex marriage.

The candidate should be able to demonstrate that they understand the integral nature of the role of the Church in God’s plan of salvation. Finally, the candidate should know key dogmatic teachings, especially related to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Communion of Saints. This is also an ideal time to address any doubts or misconceptions the candidate may have.

- **Prayer life:** an established prayer life.

- **Conversion:** a deepening awareness of Christ leading to conversion in mind and action resulting in an experience of the Holy Spirit in faith and charity.

**Key steps and instructions**


3. Anointing of the Catechumens (RCIA, 98 – 103).


5. Pastoral interviews with catechumens and candidates.


7. Social community events/celebrations.

8. Rite of Sending of Catechumens for Election / Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop.

   *Sending of the Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition*
SECOND STEP: THE RITE ELECTION OR ENROLLMENT OF NAMES

*But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life* (Revelation 21:27).

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens’ readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express their will to receive these sacraments (RCIA, page 14).

**Purpose**
- Closes the period of the Catechumenate
- Begins the period of Purification and Enlightenment

The enrollment of names is an integral part of the *Rite of Election*. Having the catechumens sign their names is a public affirmation of their commitment to persevere in joining the Church. The *Rite of Election* is the visible sign of God’s election of the catechumens. The community of faith celebrates and witnesses the catechumens’ conversion and transformation.

**Catechetical Requirements**

Suitable catechesis should be provided to the catechumens and candidates on the significance of celebrating this rite, to include a review and explanation of their expected responses during the course of the rite. *Catechesis on Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion*

**Pastoral considerations**
- Rite of Election Interview *Pre-Rite (Third Interview)*
- Verification that catechumens and candidates are free from all pastoral irregularities *Pastoral Implementation of Sacraments of Initiation*

**Candidates’ Readiness and Conversion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>

We should see strong evidence of change in the candidate’s *intention, knowledge, prayer life, relationship* and *conversion* in Christ. The candidate’s intention to receive the sacraments should now be deliberate will. This is often experienced as a deep, sometimes anxious, desire for the sacraments. Statements such as, “I can’t wait,” or “I have such a desire,” or “I am anxious to receive” are typical responses. A careful examination of their motives should validate that their intention to join the Catholic Church is theirs alone and is based on a deepening awareness of Christ in their life. Outward signs of their conversion should be seen as
a positive change in their disposition towards others, their outlook, and in morals. In addition, the candidate should have had some experiences of the Holy Spirit in profound faith and love. Their godparents should be able to testify to these changes.

The candidates’ prayer life should be established as a regular occurrence in their life. As a result, the candidate should be able to describe deepening experiences of the presence of Jesus Christ in their life. As their prayer life continues to grow, the leader should be prepared to offer advice on practical forms and expressions of prayer (e.g. Rosary, devotions, novenas, rote prayers, and *Lectio Divina*).

**Key steps and instructions**

- In the Diocese of Baker, the *Rite of Election* with the Bishop is scheduled on the first few weekends of Lent at various locations across the Diocese; be sure to check with the Chancery office for places, dates and times.
- If it is not possible to travel to a designated *Rite of Election* with the Bishop, the rite may be celebrated by the Pastor of the Church, with the Bishop’s permission.
- Please ensure that the *Rite of Election* enrollment form is sent to the Chancery office at least one month prior the celebration.
- The signing of the catechumens’ names in the “Book of the Elect” will happen as a part of the *Rite of Election*.
- Godparents/sponsors (or proxies) are required to accompany the catechumenates and candidates – family and friends are encourage to attend as well.
- A designated parish representative to present the catechumenates and candidates is required – this is usually the RCIA leader or Pastor.
- The RCIA leader, catechumens, candidates, and their sponsors/godparents should arrive at the location of the *Rite of Election* one-hour prior the start date to receive final instructions.
- Catechumens, candidates, and their sponsors/godparents should be familiar with their expected responses as part of the rite (RCIA, 552 – 554 and 555 – 557).
**The Period of Purification and Enlightenment**

*And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification... according to the command of David and his son Solomon* (Nehemiah 12:45).

*And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* (Luke 2:22).

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart* (1 Peter 1:22).

*It is desirable that the liturgy of Lent and Paschal time should be restored in such a way that it will serve to prepare the hearts of the catechumens for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, at whose solemn ceremonies they are reborn to Christ in baptism* (AG, 14).

**Purpose and Goal**

*This is the time immediately preceding the elects’ initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday* (RCIA, page 14).

- To **enlighten the minds and hearts** of the elect with a **deeper knowledge of Christ** the Savior

After the **Rite of Election** the “elect” begin a period of intense purification and enlightenment coinciding with the season of Lent. As directed by the RCIA, the elect are called to a life of prayer and purification, “as they search their own consciences and do penance.”  

This period, aided by the scrutinies, is intended to “enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ as the Savior.”  

The period of purification and enlightenment is designed to prepare the elect to become a “new creation” in Christ at the Easter Vigil.

**Purpose of the Scrutinies (RCIA, 141)**

- Solemnly celebrated on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent they are reinforced by a minor exorcism. The scrutinies are **rites for self-searching and repentance** and have above all a spiritual purpose.
- They are meant to **uncover and heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful** in the hearts of the elect; as well as to bring out and strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good.
- They are meant to **aid the elect from the power of sin and Satan**, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ.
- They **aid in completing conversion** of the elect, deepening their resolve to hold fast to Christ, and carrying out their decision to love God above all.

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14 RCIA, 139.
15 Ibid.
16 Cf. 2 Cor 5:17.
Catechetical Requirements

The need for purification prior to receiving the indwelling of God is evident throughout salvation history. All candidates should be aware of the consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve (Original Sin): Man born in his wounded nature can no longer be in the presence of God, but requires an intermediary to erase the stain of original sin and to reconcile Man to God.

Each candidate should also be aware of the effects of personal sin in their lives due to their wounded nature. During the period of purification and enlightenment, it is important to distinguish the different paths of reconciliation afforded to the elect versus the baptized candidates. For the elect, they are preparing for baptism which wipes away the stain of original sin and forgives all personal sins and temporal punishments. For the baptized candidates, they are preparing for their first reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which forgives all personal sin and provides them a “new heart.”

Whether preparing for baptism or for the sacrament of reconciliation, what is important for all candidates is that they experience a deepening conversion in Christ through prayer, contrition, and acts of penance.

Catechetical Recommendations for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

Pastoral considerations

Preparation for the Scrutinies

As with the major rites of the RCIA, the elect should be well prepared to fully participate in the celebration of the scrutinies. Prior to the celebration of each scrutiny, the elect should be exposed to the corresponding gospel story and the prayer of exorcism. In addition, the elect should be encouraged to prayerfully discern specific sins, spiritual or emotional wounds, weaknesses or infirmities, which weigh them down. They should not share these with anyone, but bring them in their thoughts to the rite and mentally offer them to the Lord as the priest prays over them. The RCIA leader should be prepared to share their experiences in the powerful healing of the Lord. Immediately after the scrutiny, the group should again read and reflect on the corresponding gospel story.

Preparation for First Confession

For the baptized candidates, it is important that the RCIA leader plan an appropriate amount of time to prepare candidates for a meaningful first confession. It is strongly recommended that a parish priest or pastor meet with each baptized candidate, outside of the normal RCIA class time.

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19 CCC, 1263.
Each baptized candidate must be given suitable instruction on how to do an examination of conscience as well as the mechanics of the sacrament (formal words and responses). If there are a large number of baptized candidates, a group meeting can serve for overall instructions. However, each individual should also be afforded the opportunity to meet privately with a priest or pastor to address specific needs or concerns. The role of the RCIA leader and the parish priest or pastor must be clearly defined.

**Candidates’ Readiness and Conversion**

- An intention to achieve an intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church
- Progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance
- Growth in the perception of sin and desire for salvation

**Key steps and instructions**

**Note:** the scrutinies and presentations are for the elect only. (RCIA 141, 148)

1. **First Scrutiny.** (RCIA, 150 – 156)
   - Third Sunday of Lent: *Gospel of the Samaritan Woman*

2. **Presentation of the Creed.** (RCIA, 157 – 163)
   - Ideally during the week after the first scrutiny

3. **Second Scrutiny.** (RCIA, 164 – 170)
   - Third Sunday of Lent: *Gospel of the man born blind*

4. **Third Scrutiny.** (RCIA 171 – 177)
   - Fifth Sunday of Lent: *Gospel of the Raising of Lazarus*

5. **Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer.** (RCIA, 178 – 184)
   - Ideally during the week after the third scrutiny

6. **Recitation of the Creed and Ephphetha Rite.** (RCIA 193 – 199)
   - Holy Saturday  *Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday*

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21 Ideally, the presentations occur during the week of the first and third scrutiny. In practice, how this is done varies widely depending on the circumstances of the parish. The directives of the RCIA allows for some flexibility on the timing of the presentations. Due to the shorter span of time in the period of purification and enlightenment, one or both of the presentations may be incorporated into the period of the catechumenate. But the presentations are not to take place until a point during the catechumenate when the catechumens are judged ready for these celebrations (Cf. RCIA, 79, 104, 105).
Third Step: Rite of the Celebration of Sacraments of Initiation

The third step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God. They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of kingdom of God (RCIA, 206).

Purpose and Goal

- Full initiation into the Church: the elect are fully admitted into the people of God

Catechetical Requirements

The elect should have a sufficient understanding of the parts of Mass prior to Easter Vigil. As with all of the rites, sufficient time should be spent reviewing and teaching the meaning of the expected responses during the course of their reception of the sacraments of initiation:

- Celebration of Baptism (RCIA 218 – 230)
  - Responses during the prayer over the water
  - Responses for Renunciation of Sin Profession of Faith – I do
  - Response after the other prayers – Amen

- Celebration of Confirmation (RCIA 231 – 236)
  - After the pastor says “be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit” – Amen
  - After the minister says “peace be with you” - and with your spirit

- Reception of the Eucharist
  - Prior to receiving – bow
  - After minister says “the body/blood of Christ” and before receiving the species – say Amen
  - After receiving each species – sign of the cross

Pastoral considerations

The RCIA provides a series of preparation rites for Holy Saturday.22 These rites should not be dismissed or minimized. All participants should be encouraged early in the RCIA process to reserve this time on their calendars. The directives of the RCIA recommend that the final stage of preparation for reception of the sacraments of initiation begins on Good Friday, and by extension to the Holy Triduum. Specifically, it is “encouraged to keep and extend the paschal fast of Good Friday...throughout the day of Holy Saturday until the end of the Vigil.”23 Both candidates for initiation, as well as those who assist them and participate in the celebration of the Easter Vigil are included in this recommendation.

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22 Appendix N: Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday
23 NS, 15; referring to CIC, 1251 and SC, 110.
### Candidates’ Readiness and Conversion

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full intention to live life as a faithful catholic.</td>
<td>Sufficient knowledge and ability to explain the basic precepts of the Church.</td>
<td>Regular prayer life.</td>
<td>A consistent awareness of the presence of Christ.</td>
<td>Sincere contrition and full intention to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We should continue to see strong evidence of change in the candidate’s **intention, knowledge, prayer life, relationship** and **conversion** in Christ. Their prayer life should be established as a regular occurrence in their life. Their knowledge level should be proficient enough to explain the following precepts:

2. The purpose of the liturgy and explanation of the seven sacraments.
3. Mary and the Communion of Saints.
4. Social and Moral teachings concerning respect life and sanctity of marriage (including contraception)
5. The five precepts of the Church.

In sum, the candidate’s intention to receive the sacraments should now extend to living their life as a faithful catholic and as an intentional disciple of Jesus Christ.
**Key steps and instructions**

The *Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation*, especially as incorporated into the Easter Vigil, is extensive. Hence, it is essential that both the RCIA leader and celebrating pastor spend an adequate amount of time studying and planning for the rite.\(^2^4\) **Scheduling a rehearsal walkthrough with all key participants is highly recommended!**\(^2^5\)

**Norms**

- **Celebration of Baptism**
  - Occurs immediately after the elect profess a living faith in Christ’s paschal mystery (RCIA, 212).
  - Either immersion or the pouring of water should be chosen for the rite, whichever will serve in individual cases and in the various traditions and circumstances to ensure the clear understanding that this washing is not a mere purification rite but the sacrament of being joined to Christ (RCIA, 213).

- **Celebration of Confirmation**
  - Adults are not to be baptized without receiving confirmation immediately afterward, unless some serious reason stands in the way. Accordingly, confirmation is conferred after the explanatory rites of baptism, the anointing after baptism (no. 228) being omitted (RCIA 215, 216).

- **Reception of Eucharist**
  - It is most desirable that the neophytes, together with their godparents, parents, spouses, and catechists, receive communion under both kinds (RCIA 243).

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\(^{2^4}\) The RCIA, 206 – 243, contains all the necessary instructions for celebrating the sacraments of initiation.

\(^{2^5}\) Key participants to be included in a rehearsal should include: the pastor, RCIA leader, sponsors, music/liturgy leader, and participating altar servers/acolytes.
THE PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church...
(Ephesians 5:32)

This a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of
the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel,
sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity (RCIA, 244).

The Purpose and Goal

➢ Postbaptismal catechesis of the mysteries of the faith
➢ Strengthening of the neophytes to walk in newness of life
➢ Integration into the parish community life

Catechetical Recommendations

The period of Mystagogy has two parts and spans a full year.

➢ Part one is the “immediate Mystagogy or postbaptismal catechesis during the Easter
season” (NS, 24)
➢ Part two continues until “the anniversary of Christian initiation” and should meet at
least monthly with the goals of “[deepening] the neophytes’ Christian formation and
incorporation into the full life of the Christian community” (NS, 24).

Catechetical Recommendations for the Period of Mystagogy

Pastoral considerations

The Period of Mystagogy requires a well-planned schedule of topics and events. The full-year of
Mystagogy should be communicated as an integral part of the RCIA journey. It should not be
treated as “optional” nor should it be communicated as such.

Unfortunately, an abbreviated version of Mystagogy is the norm with the majority of parishes.
This is a serious mistake. A comprehensive survey completed in 2000 by the United States
Catholic Conference identifies the period of Mystagogy as the weakest part of the RCIA. It was
reported that more than a third (36%) of those who participate in Easter Vigil stop attending
weekly Sunday Mass within one year.

An appropriate response to the problem of an abbreviated Mystagogy begins with an
understanding of the true nature of the RCIA as a life-long journey of conversion. How we
understand, plan, and implement the RCIA has a direct impact in our success of leading souls to
a personal relationship of Jesus Christ in the sacramental life of the Church.
Appendices

The following appendices are resources to aid the RCIA leader and parish pastor in administrating and leading the RCIA.

Please contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis with recommendations for improvement and edits. Questions and feedback are always welcome as we strive to serve the needs of our parishes, schools and mission across the Diocese of Baker.
THE GOSPEL STORY – A FRAMEWORK

The Gospel Story framework is presented in a deliberate fashion during the period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate allowing for reflection and discussion.

The Gospel Story

1. **God and Creation**: who is God and what does he want?
   In summary: In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth, to show forth his glory. (Genesis 1:1 CCC 1)
   - God is love (1 John 4:16), and because God is love is why everything else is happening
   - God is One Nature and Trinity of Persons, an eternal exchange of love in His inner life (CCC 200, 221, 252)
   - God wants to share his love and life, which is why he is making creation (Genesis 1, CCC 1)
   - Creation reveals the object of God’s love – and he desires us first (CCC 1, 27)

2. **Man**: God comes to meet man, in the beginning.
   In summary: out of his own sheer goodness, He created Man, male and female, in His own image and likeness, to share in His blessed life (Genesis 1:26, CCC 1).
   - Because God is love, personal love, He desire to share His love and life, which is why He created Man, man and woman, to share and, express, and reflect His love in creation (Genesis 1:26, CCC 1)
   - Because He is love, He made man free, because it is only in freedom that real love can be returned, real relationship can be entered into, which is what God wants (CCC 311, 396)

3. **The Fall**: freedom abused.
   In sum: Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, (which was God’s gift to man) disobeyed God’s command and fell into sin. From this Fall, Man lost the inner life of God and fell into sin - death, spiritually and physically, resulting in disorder and loneliness (Genesis 3, CCC 397).
   - True freedom not only to accept, but to reject the gift God was making of Himself, symbolized by the fruit of the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9)
   - Man, for a variety of reasons, turned away from God, and lost the gift of God. But there were consequences for this, because although free, man was made for only one thing, only one thing can truly make man happy: God, life with God, symbolized as fruit because we are meant to be fed (filled by) God.
   - And so man fell, lost the interior life of God he was meant to share, and became inwardly broken and disordered, expressed outwardly in all the disorders of human life and even in creation itself. (Genesis 3, CCC 397)
4. **The Plan**: *God foresaw what man would do and had a plan.*

**In sum**: But God, from the beginning, knew this would happen, and had a plan from the beginning, to overcome evil and restore man as true sons and daughters of God, as man was destined to be from the beginning. (Genesis 3:15, CCC 410)

- Even before creation came to be God foresaw what man would do with his freedom, and allowed it as the cost of real freedom, real love.
- But God’s plan remained the same, His love is unchanged, and even before the Fall He had a plan, and has continued working in history to bring about His goal: union with God, shared life in and with God who is love. (Genesis 3:15, Ephesians 1:9-10, CCC 410)

5. **Jesus Christ**: *God enters his creation to restore life.*

**In sum**: God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins and restore us to life with God.

- God worked all through history to prepare for the next great stage of His work: His own entering into creation in Jesus Christ, the Son, the second person of the Trinity.
- It is important it be the Son because it is in, through, and for the Son all creation came into being and is held in being (John 1:1-14, Colossians 1:15-17)
- In the Son all creation is to be raised up, remade, reborn, recreated (Ephesians 1:9-10, Colossians 1:19)
- *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* (1 Peter 2:24)
- *The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who ‘loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins’: ‘the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world,’ and ‘he was revealed to take away sins’* (CCC 457, 1 John 4:10; 4:14; 3:5)

6. **The Church**: *the means of restoring God’s life in us.*

**In sum**: Coming to faith in Christ, we are called out of the world, and into God’s family, to His kingdom. The Church is the means by which we access God’s life through the sacraments – it gives us the means to continue to be drawn into God’s divine life. It helps us on our journey to share in God’s Blessed Life forever. (Romans 12:2, CCC 751)

- **How we receive this life**: that is why Jesus founded the Church. The life of God pouring out through the crucifix is infinite, eternal, will never end, and is pouring out in the Church today, entering in the sacraments, and so into us. It begins with faith, which our first parents lacked, turning back and believing in God in Jesus, and opening up to Him. When we are baptized, our own lives are gathering into Christ on the cross, our fallenness done away with. In baptism we are recreated, make new, filled with the life of God, made real children of God.
- **God enters into us directly**: we are given the Eucharist, the fruit of the Tree of Life, which we were made for in the beginning and which God has gone to such great lengths that we may now receive: God Himself, in Christ, bodily, as well as spiritually. We eat and drink God in the Eucharist, and in that way God comes to live inside of us, filling us with His own life and love, changing us, repairing us, causing us to grow in Him.
God’s creative work is continued: as souls open up, turn back to God, and start receiving Him, He enters us and takes up His creative work in us, and works through us in the world, to bring about His work and love in creation. This is something we believe will happen until the end of time, when God’s creative work is complete, and Christ comes again.

7. The Kingdom: the New Creation now and to come.

In sum: The Church is the kingdom of God, living and growing on earth and in heaven, the beginning of the New Creation. At the end of time this physical creation will be renewed and those who have chosen Life with God in this short temporal life will live forever with God in happiness.

- The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15)
- Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.’ (Revelation 11:15)
- CCC 954
- Completion and Glorification of Creation: the goal of creation is the full indwelling of God in love, through human freedom and openness to God, something happening across time and yet to be completed
- In the end, we believe Christ will come again, take up His completed creation, raise it up in the power of the Holy Spirit, deliver it to His Father, and then God truly will be “all in all,” His goal from the beginning (1 Corinthians 15:28)
- The full Trinitarian life of God will truly permeate and glorify all creation, including our bodies, raised up and reunited with our souls, and it will be seen as it has never been seen before, all falleness and brokenness will done away with forever
- The New Creation is an ongoing work happening inside the Church now, growing in souls through the sacramental life of the Church
- Those who have loved God, and opened up and received Him, will live with Him forever in happiness
## RCIA Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Timing and Explanatory Comments</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Two Weeks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Inquirer Initial Interview</td>
<td>The first step is to meet with the potential candidate to understand their story, answer his/her questions, explain overall process of the RCIA and then invite him/her to participate in the Evangelization and Precatechumenate period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Data Intake Form</td>
<td>It is paramount that all information is collected at the beginning of the RCIA to determine if there are any sacramental irregularities or impediments. Of primary concern is divorce &amp; remarriage requiring an annulment, blessing of existing marriage and verification of baptism status.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior to Rite of Acceptance / Welcome</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Baptismal Certificate</td>
<td>Ensure all necessary certificates are secured in the catechumen/candidate file. This includes copies of baptism certificate, marriage certificate and any other religious certificate related to sacraments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Marriage Certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Sponsor Information</td>
<td>Ensure the catechumen/candidate selects a godparent/sponsor. The godparent/sponsor must have a pastor’s suitability letter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pre-Rite (Second) Interview</td>
<td>A private and prayer meeting with the catechumen/candidate to determine his/her understanding of the rite and their readiness to participate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior to Rite of Sending / Election</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Patron Saint</td>
<td>The catechumen/candidate chooses a patron saint.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Free from any impediment verification</td>
<td>The catechumen/candidate must be free from any irregularity or impediment to receiving the sacraments of initiation; especially that he/she has completed any necessary annulment(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pre-Rite (Third) Interview</td>
<td>A private and prayerful meeting with the catechumen/candidate is held to determine his/her understanding of the rite and their readiness to participate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior to Receiving Sacraments of Initiation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Sacramental Information</td>
<td>Ensure that all sacramental information is properly recorded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pre-Rite (Fourth) Interview</td>
<td>A private and prayerful meeting to determine his/her understanding of the sacramental life, their readiness to receive the sacraments, and their commitment to fully participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mystagogy (Easter Season and extending through first full year)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Stewardship</td>
<td>Ensure that the newly initiated are provided a mystagogical experience inviting deeper reflection on the sacraments and a life of stewardship (time, talent and treasure).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Post Sacrament Reception Follow-up</td>
<td>A final private and prayer meeting to ensure the newly initiated are happily participating in the life of the Church.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INQUIRER INITIAL INTERVIEW

The purpose of this initial meeting is to get to know the person and their journey in faith, to be welcoming, to answer their questions and invite him or her to come to a RCIA meeting. Collection of demographic data via the “Data Intake Form” should be scheduled as a follow-up only after they have accepted your invitation and attended a RCIA meeting.

Name of Catechumen / Candidate (Print) ___________________________ Date _____________

Name of interviewer: ____________________________________________

Pastoral Assessment Questions and Comments

1. What is the reason (or source) for your interest in the Catholic faith?

2. What is your religious education or church experience?

3. What is your experience with God?

4. What are your expectations – what are you seeking?

5. Are there any questions that I can answer at this time?
RCIA DATA INTAKE FORM (ADULT) PAGE 1 OF 2

Collect within two weeks of first attendance to an RCIA meeting, after an initial interview.

Date: ______________

1. Name__________________________________________
   (Last) (Middle) (First)
   Address__________________________________________

2. Phone (H)_________(W)_________(C)_________

3. Email__________________________________________

4. Date of Birth(mm/dd/yyyy)________________________City________________________State_______
   (Copy of birth certificate)

5. Father’s Name___________________________________Mother’s Name_____________________
   (Last) (First) (First) (Maiden)

6. Have you ever been baptized? __________ If yes:
   Name of Church________________________________Address_______________________
   Denomination________________________Date of Baptism__________________________
   An official certificate of Baptism (with notations, if applicable) must be presented before the Rite of Acceptance.

7. Have you ever been confirmed? __________ If yes:
   Name of Church________________________________Address_______________________
   Denomination________________________Date of Confirmation____________________
   An official certificate of Confirmation must be presented before the Rite of Acceptance.

8. Have you ever been accepted as a catechumen or candidate in the Catholic Church? __________ If yes:
   Parish Name________________________________Parish City and State________________

9. Who sponsors you for initiation? __________________________________________
   (Last Name) (First Name)
   Parish Name________________________________Parish City________________________
   An official pastor’s letter of suitability must be presented before the Rite of Acceptance.
RCIA Data Intake Form (Adult) Page 2 of 2

Collect within two weeks of first attendance to an RCIA meeting, after an initial interview.

10. Have you ever received religious instruction in a church that was not Catholic?_____If yes:

   Church Name and Denomination________________________________________________________
   Religious Education_____Sunday School______Seminary_____ How many total years?____

11. If baptized Catholic, did you receive any formal religious education training? _______If yes:

   Parish Name and City_______________________________________________________________
   Catholic School____________Religious Education_______ How many total years?____

12. Please indicate your marital status at the present time:

   Single_____Engaged_____Married_____Separated___Divorced___Widowed____

13. Prior to this engagement or marriage, has your fiancé or spouse ever been married to another person in church, civilly, or in common law?____ If yes: how many times were they married?________

   To whom was he/she married?_____________________________________________Date________
   Place of marriage______________________________________________________________Officiate_____________________

   If their former spouse is deceased, please indicate:
   Date of death____________Certificate Number______________________________

   This former marriage was dissolved or declared null by the Church:
   Diocese and Protocol No.________________________________________________________Date________
   If not dissolved or declared null, check here_____  

14. Prior to this engagement or marriage, have you ever been married to another person in church, civilly, or in common law?________ If yes: how many times were you married?________

   To whom were you married?_____________________________________________Date________
   Place of marriage_____________________________________________________________Officiate_____________________

   If your former spouse is deceased, please indicate:
   Date of death____________Certificate Number______________________________
GOD-PARENT / SPONSORSHIP ACCEPTANCE AND AGREEMENT

(To be signed and returned to the parish.)

Please read this acceptance and agreement carefully before you agree to accept this vital role in your catechumen or candidates Christian formation.

To be chosen as a god-parent (in the case of an un-baptized catechumen) or sponsor (in the case of a baptized candidate for full communion) (hereinafter “sponsor”) is a special honor and carries with it an awesome responsibility to participate in the formation of the catechumen/candidate in an authentic Christian life (hereinafter “candidate”). The Code of Canon Law requires that the sponsor:

- Must be an adult who has been fully initiated into the Catholic faith, i.e., one who has validly received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation as recognized by the Catholic Church.
- Must be a practicing Catholic.
- Must not be laboring under a canonical penalty – whether imposed or declared, e.g., having remarried without the benefit of an annulment.
- Must be willing to fulfill the role of a sponsor.
- May not be a parent of the candidate.

A sponsor makes on a lifelong commitment to help his/her candidate fulfill the obligation of the sacraments which are received. During the time of preparation, the sponsor will be expected to take an active role in the RCIA program by meeting and praying with his/her candidate on a regular basis. The sponsor will be expected to regularly attend the RCIA meetings with the candidate. The sponsor must attend the two scheduled sponsor meetings and be present at the various RCIA Rites celebrated by the Church.

The role of a sponsor stresses a love of the gift of faith God has given us and a willingness to engage in faith-sharing activities with the candidate. A person who is too young, who lives too far away, or who is too busy to devote the necessary time and care to the candidate would not be a good sponsor choice.

In the event that the candidate has discerned that the appropriate sponsor is a person who lives out of town, a proxy may be designated. A proxy is a person who will agree to represent the sponsor in his/her absence.

The chosen sponsor must have a written statement from his/her pastor stating that he/she is a registered member of the parish and in good standing.

After prayerful consideration, I agree to act as sponsor for __________________________ as he/she pursues this journey of faith and prepares to receive the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church. I have read the requirements listed above and state that I am canonically qualified to act as such.

___________________________ (Print Full Name)

_____________________________ (Signature) (Date)

Pastor’s suitability Letter attached.
PRE-RITE (SECOND) INTERVIEW

The purpose of this second interview is to prayerfully discern with the catechumen/candidate their understanding and readiness for the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome. The Church provides the following guidelines as to the “evidence” that should be outwardly visible (cf. RCIA, 42).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a declared intention to change.</td>
<td>The fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root.</td>
<td>A start of a prayer life.</td>
<td>A beginning sense of the presence of Christ and the reality of his Church.</td>
<td>An initial conversion in the first stirrings of repentance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of Catechumen / Candidate (Print) ______________________ Date ________________

Name of interviewer: __________________________________________

Pastoral Assessment Questions and Comments

1. What is your understanding of the purpose and effects of the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome?

2. Do you wish to participate in this rite? Why?

3. How have you experienced the presence of Jesus Christ in your life in the past versus now?

4. What are your expectations? Do you have any questions?
CATECHESIS ON THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE / WELCOME INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENATE

The *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumenate* begins with the candidate formally approaching the threshold of the Church, asking the Church for a certain kind of faith. They are asking for the faith that gives eternal life, *supernatural faith*. The celebrant (acting in the Person of Christ) responds with an explanation of what they are asking for and then asks if they are prepared to begin this journey. The candidates respond “I am.” With the candidates’ response, a sacred oath has been made. Next, the sponsors are asked if they are ready “to help these candidates find and follow Christ, they respond, “We are.” The celebrant then invites the candidates and sponsors to come forward to receive a visible sign of their new way of life as catechumens, which is the signing of the candidates’ senses with the sign of the cross.

The sign of the is a visible sign ratifying the oath just made and is a mark identifying the candidate as being under the protection of Jesus Christ. The practice of marking an individual has its origins in antiquity as evidenced by certain references in Scripture, notably *Ezekiel 9:4* (the mark of the letter *Tau*); and especially the *Revelation to John 7:3, 9:4 and 14:1*. In the early centuries of Christianity slaves and soldiers bore a mark on the hand or the forehead to show to whom they owed service. In Christianity the sign of the cross marks us as belonging to Christ and reminds us to whom we follow, and to not be ashamed. This is why it is common practice to present the candidates with a cross that should be worn throughout their journey in the RCIA as a visible reminder.

*Do not hesitate, do not be ashamed. When you first believed, you received the sign of Christ on your forehead... Remember your forehead and do not be afraid of another man’s tongue.... Do not then be afraid of the shame of the Cross.* (St. Augustine)

*...let us then not be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the cross our seal, made with boldness by our fingers on our brow and in everything; over the bread we eat and the cups we drink, in our comings and in goings; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we awake; when we are travelling, and when we are at rest.* (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

Having passed through the threshold of faith, the candidates are invited to share at the table of the God’s word in the Liturgy of the Word. From this point forward the candidates participate in a celebration of the Word prior to any catechetical setting.

At the conclusion of the homily it is common practice to present the candidates with a Bible so that the word of God may be constantly present in their life. The celebrant then leads the parish community in intercessory prayers for the catechumens, offers a concluding prayer, and joyfully dismisses the candidates to go in peace to reflect more deeply upon the word of God.
Catechetical Requirements
for Period of the Catechumenate

All teaching should be in the context of the Gospel Story and in full accordance with the Church Magisterium. Primary resources for catechetical preparation should be from Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This is not a complete list of topics or references, but serves as a guide for key precepts that must be included in a RCIA catechetical plan.

1. On God and Creation. (CCC 1 – 141, 199 - 354)
   - Primary theme: *who is God and what does he want*
   - Key precepts
     - God is love
     - God has revealed himself as personal
     - God is Trinity – Father, Son, Holy Spirit
     - God has a providential plan, fully revealed in Jesus Christ, and realized by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church (Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:9-10)
     - Revelation of God in Scripture and Apostolic Tradition
     - God desires to communicate himself personally to men and women
     - God creates from nothing – is the First Cause of all things
     - God is revealed – can be known – through creation

2. On Man and the Fall. (CCC 142 – 184, 355 - 421)
   - Primary theme: *God’s desire for us and our capacity for God*
   - Key precepts
     - God’s gift of faith
     - Man’s response in faith
     - Man (man and woman) as image of God
     - Man is made for participation in God’s divine nature
     - Original Justice
     - Freedom is the ability to freely choose God or not (free will)
     - Original Sin and consequences
     - Personal Sin and consequences
     - How we choose to live our life matters and has eternal consequences
     - The Last Four Things: death, judgment, purgatory, hell

An Introduction to Prayer (CCC 2558 – 2567, 2623 – 2649, 2759 – 2776)

- Common prayers (*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be*)
- Fasting
- Adoration
- Petition, Thanksgiving, and Intercession
3. God’s Plan. (CCC 1 – 141, 199 - 354)

- Primary theme: God foresaw what man would do and had a plan
- Key precepts:
  - God is all knowing
  - God is unchanging
  - God is good and works his good in all things
  - Man (man and woman) as image of God
  - God desires that all people be saved

4. Jesus Christ. (CCC 442 - 682)

- Primary theme: God enters his creation to restore life
- Key precepts:
  - Mystery of the Incarnation (fully man and fully God)
  - Mystery of Redemption (salvation for all men is gift of mercy and grace)
  - Salvation for all people is through the faithfulness of Jesus
  - All people must freely choose to accept and follow the way of Jesus
  - Mystery of Passion and Death
    (Jesus suffered and died for all of our collective and personal sins)
  - All sinners are the authors of Christ’s Passion
  - Mystery of the Resurrection (the beginning of the New Creation)
  - Jesus provides the way to God in heaven
  - Immaculate conception of Mary
  - Jesus’ Lordship and Kingship are universal – over all things
  - Jesus fully reveals God’s plan
  - Jesus Christ is intimately personal
  - Jesus Christ founded his Church upon Peter and the Apostles
  - Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead

5. Holy Spirit and the Church. (CCC 683 - 1065)

- Primary theme: the power and means of restoring life in us
- Key precepts:
  - Jesus and the Church are one thing – cannot be divided
  - The love between God the Father and God the Son is God the Holy Spirit
  - The Holy Spirit is the power of God operating through the Church
  - The saving plan of the Father is through the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church
  - The Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ
  - The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
  - The missionary nature of the Church
  - Bishops are the only valid successors of the apostles
✓ Church Authority and Apostolic Succession
  ▪ Hierarchy of the Church
  ▪ Magisterium (teaching body of the Church)
  ▪ Understanding infallibility concerning faith and morals
    • Extraordinary means / Ex Cathedra
    • Ecumenical Councils (in union with pope)
    • Ordinary means (pope and bishops)
✓ The Church is all these things: people of God, body of Christ, bride of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit and the universal Sacrament of Salvation
✓ The wounds to Christian unity do not take away from the fullness of truth in the Roman Catholic Church
✓ The Church is first and foremost missionary in nature
✓ The Church, with the Holy Spirit as guarantee, cannot error on matters of faith and morals
✓ Mary, as mother of Christ, is Mother of the Church
✓ The Church is in communion with heaven – the body of Christ includes all souls who have gone before us
✓ The Church has the power of Jesus Christ to forgive peoples sin
✓ The Church is the beginning of the New Creation on earth and in heaven

6. Liturgy, Sacraments and Sacramental Life. (CCC 1066 - 1690)
  ➢ Primary theme: the work of the Holy Trinity – the blessing of God fully revealed
  ➢ Key precepts:
    ✓ The Sacramental Life is the final era of working out God’s Plan of Salvation
    ✓ God the Father is the source and goal of all liturgy
    ✓ Liturgy is given to us by God, it is not an invention of man
    ✓ In the liturgy heaven and earth meet in a mysterious way
    ✓ A theological introduction to Holy Mass
    ✓ Jesus Christ instituted all seven sacraments through Peter and the Apostles
    ✓ Each of the sacraments should be explained in context to the following:
      ▪ Prefiguration in the Old Covenant
      ▪ The “form” and “matter” of the sacrament
      ▪ The “effects” of the sacrament on earth and in heaven
      ▪ The minister of the sacrament
    ✓ Baptism
      ▪ the gateway to, and necessity for, salvation
    ✓ Confirmation
      ▪ strengthening of the gifts of the Holy Spirit
    ✓ Eucharist
      ▪ Source and summit
• Real presence of Christ: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity
  ✓ Penance/Reconciliation
    • Necessity, and benefits, of confessing to a priest
  ✓ Anointing of the Sick
    • Spiritual healing
  ✓ Marriage
    • What makes a marriage – marriage as covenant
    • Promises made which make it a covenant (free, faithful, fruitful, forever)
  ✓ Holy Orders
    • Difference between “common priesthood” of baptism versus “ministerial priesthood” of Jesus Christ

7. Life in Christ. (CCC 1691 - 2557)
  ➢ Primary theme: living life in the fullest as partakers of the divine nature
  ➢ Key precepts
    ✓ Life in Christ is life of happiness
    ✓ Participation in life with Christ involves the total person: intellect, will, and spirit
    ✓ The Beatitudes fulfills the natural desire for happiness
    ✓ The Ten Commandments also known as “moral law” which is written in the hearts of all people
    ✓ Two Great Commandments (Love of God and love of neighbor)
    ✓ The necessity of forming the human conscience with the grace of God in the light of Christ
    ✓ The virtuous life is both human (Cardinal virtues) and divine (Theological virtues)
    ✓ Understanding the moral issues of our time and the Church’s teaching (both what and why in the context of being made in the image and likeness of God)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abortion</th>
<th>Artificial Insemination</th>
<th>Cloning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contraception</td>
<td>Death Penalty</td>
<td>Euthanasia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fornication</td>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masturbation</td>
<td>Pornography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ The Corporal Works of the Church (Matthew 25:34-40)
  • To feed the hungry
  • To give drink to the thirsty
  • To clothe the naked
  • To harbour the harbourless (interpreted today as To Shelter the Homeless)
  • To visit the sick
  • To visit the imprisoned (classical term is To ransom the captive)
  • To bury the dead (based on Tobit 1:16)
The **Spiritual Works of Mercy** (CCC 2447)
- To instruct the ignorant
- To counsel the doubtful
- To admonish sinners
- To bear wrongs patiently
- To forgive offences willingly
- To comfort the afflicted
- To pray for the living and the dead

**Note:** though ideally applicable for all faithful, not everyone is considered capable or obligated to perform the first three spiritual works of mercy if they do not have proper knowledge or canonical training to do so. The last four works are considered to be an obligation of all faithful to practice unconditionally.

**Precepts of the Church** (CCC 2041 – 2043) as the bare minimum
1. Attendance of Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
2. Sacrament of confession at least once per year.
3. Reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during Easter season.
4. Observing the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. Provide for the material needs of the Church.

8. **Mary and Communion of Saints.**
   - The dogmas of the Blessed Virgin Mary
     - Divine Motherhood
     - Perpetual Virginity
     - Immaculate Conception
     - The Assumption
   - Church includes both heaven and earth
     - Church Triumphant (Church in Heaven / Communion of Saints)
     - Church Militant (Church on Earth)
     - Church Suffering (Purgatory)
CELEBRATING THE WORD OF GOD

*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone,*

*but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.* (Mt 4:4 citing Dt 8:3)

*The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever.* (Is 40:8)

...the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God... (Lk 5:1)

Celebrations of the word of God are an integral part of the RCIA journey. We are instructed by the RCIA that they can be held within the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass or can be held outside of the Holy Mass. In either scenario, a celebration of the word of God must precede all catechetical instruction (RCIA, 81).

The RCIA provides a set of guidelines on the goals and benefits of the celebration of the word during this period of instruction (Cf. RCIA, 81 – 84).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of the celebration of the word</th>
<th>Benefits of the celebration of the word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To be in accord with the liturgical season.</td>
<td>To implant in the candidates hearts the teachings they are receiving, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To give instruction and experience in the different aspects and ways of prayer.</td>
<td>• On the moral characteristic of the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To explain the signs, celebrations, and seasons of the liturgy.</td>
<td>• On the forgiveness of injuries and insults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To prepare them gradually to enter the worship assembly of the entire community.</td>
<td>• A heightened sense of sin and repentance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• On the duties of Christians that must be carried out in the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In practice, many parishes choose to have the candidates celebrate the Liturgy of the Word in the Sunday Mass followed by a “breaking open the Word” group discussion. In this scenario, the candidates are formally dismissed at the conclusion of the homily. The dismissal should include a prayer of blessing by the celebrant. (See RCIA, 96, A- I for suitable prayers of blessing)

Key points:

- The priest may choose to dismiss with a minor exorcism which are intended for catechumenates only (RCIA, 89; See RCIA 90, A – K for suitable prayers of exorcism)
- Baptized Candidates, who already have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, are not to participate in any rites of exorcisms or prayers of blessing intended solely for the catechumens
- When both catechumens and baptized candidates are participating in the dismissal, the celebrant should offer distinct prayers for each type of candidate
  (Universal for all RCIA liturgy and rites)
PRE-RITE (THIRD) INTERVIEW

The purpose of the third interview is to prayerfully discern with the catechumen/candidate their understanding and readiness for the Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates who are Preparing for Full Communion of the Catholic Church. The Church provides the following guidelines as to the evidence that the catechumen or candidate has “undergone a conversion in mind and in action… [and has] a spirit of faith and charity (cf. RCIA, 120).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Name of Catechumen / Candidate (Print) ________________________________ Date __________________

Name of interviewer: _____________________________________________

Pastoral Assessment Questions and Comments

1. What is your understanding of the purpose and effects of the Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion?

2. Do you wish to participate in this rite? Why?

3. How have you experienced the presence of Jesus Christ in your life in the past versus now?

4. What does it mean for you to “take up your cross and follow Jesus?”
SENDING OF THE CATECHUMENS FOR ELECTION AND CANDIDATES FOR RECOGNITION

At the conclusion of the period of the catechumenate, a rite of sending the catechumens to their election by the bishop may be celebrated in parishes wherever this seems desirable.... This rite offers that local community the opportunity to express its approval of the catechumens and to send them forth to the celebration of election assured of the parish’s care and support (RCIA, 106, 107).

Although an optional rite, if the parish is able, it is highly desirable to celebrate this rite with the parish community. Celebrating the rite of sending promotes the integral role of the worshiping community with the RCIA journey. Often this rite is combined with the Rite of Sending for Recognition of the baptized candidates. With all the RCIA rites, distinction must be made between the catechumens and baptized candidates.\(^{26}\)

\(^{26}\) The combined rite is found on page 289 (Appendix I, 2) of the RCIA.
Catechesis on Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion

Come, Lord, stir us up and call us back. Kindle and seize us.
Be our fire and our sweetness. Let us love. Let us run.
(St. Augustine, Confessions (VIII; 4).

On the basis of the testimony of godparents and catechists and of the catechumens’ reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation. Thus the Church makes its “election,” that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who have the dispositions that make them fit to take part in the sacraments of initiation (RCIA, 119).

The Rite of Election and Call to continuing Conversion is a rite of solemnity and focal point of the Church’s concern for the catechumens. This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts. Admission to election therefore belongs to the bishop who is the presiding celebrant for the rite of election (or a priest or a deacon who acts as the bishop’s delegate.)

Before the rite of election the bishop, priests, deacons, catechists, godparents, and the entire community, in accord with their respective responsibilities and in their own way, should, after considering the matter carefully, arrive at a judgment about the catechumens’ state of formation and progress. After the election, they should surround the elect with prayer, so that the entire Church will accompany and lead them to encounter Christ. (RCIA, 121)

Within the rite of election the catechumens are presented to the Church by their priest, godparents and catechists. The bishop then inquires of the godparents, sponsors, and catechumens the readiness of the candidates for final preparation to receive the sacraments of initiation. The bishop, in the presence of the community, then declares the Church’s approval of the candidates for election. The catechumens (unbaptized only) then inscribe their names – called “enrollment” – as a pledge of fidelity in the “Book of the Elect” that lists those who have been chosen for initiation.

Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32)

The rite is celebrated within the Liturgy of the Word of the First Sunday of Lent. Due to the geographical expanse of the Diocese of Baker four rites of election are celebrated across the diocesan territory each year in the first and second weekends of Lent.

27 Cf. RCIA, 119.
Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion
Parish Enrollment Form

All Catechumens (un-baptized) and Candidates (baptized other than Catholic) are invited to celebrate
with Bishop Liam Cary their journey of faith and conversion.
A reception will immediately follow the Liturgy.

Please indicate which Rite of Election your Parish will be attending.

☐ Southern Deanery
(First Saturday of Lent)
(Chiloquin, Klamath Falls, Lakeview, Merrill)

☐ Northern & Western Deanery
(Second Saturday of Lent)
(Boardman, Condon, Dufur, Enterprise, Heppner, Hermiston, Hood River, La Grande, Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, The Dalles, Wasco)

☐ Central Deanery
(First Sunday of Lent)
(Bend, La Pine, Madras, Prineville, Redmond, Sisters)

☐ Eastern Deanery (St. Francis de Sales Cathedral)
(Second Sunday of Lent)
(Baker City, Burns, John Day, Jordan Valley, Ontario, Nyssa, Vale)

Please fax form to (541) 388-2566

Name of Parish:_______________________________City of Parish:____________________________

Name of Pastor:______________________________

RCIA Primary Catechist:________________________

Number of Catechumens Attending:___________Number of Candidates Attending:_________
(un-baptized) (baptized other than Catholic)

Number of others attending (sponsors, catechists, family members):___________

Total Number Attending:__________
CATECHETICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

During this period of final preparation for the Easter vigil, more time should be spent on interior reflection than in catechetical instruction. Some practical suggestions to aid the candidates in their interior reflection include:

- Employing Lectio Divina as a method of entering more deeply into relationship with Jesus, especially as related to:
  - Jesus’s desert journey (Matthew 4:1-10) and the relationship to our temptations in triple concupiscence (flesh, avarice, and pride; 1 John 2:15) and how our acts of penance (fasting, almsgiving, and prayer; CCC 1434)
  - The gospel of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), as it coincides with the first scrutiny
  - The gospel of the man born blind (John 9), as it coincides with the second scrutiny
  - The gospel of Lazarus (John 11:1-44), as it coincides with the third scrutiny
  - Jesus’s institution of the Last Supper, betrayal, trial, passion, and death, especially as rendered in the Gospel of Luke, chapters 22 – 24

- Selected readings by Church Doctors and guided group reflections as related to discovering humility and “self-knowledge” in prayer, for example:
  - St. Bernard of Clairvoux
    - Sermon 32, How Christ Adapts his Graces to Personal Needs
    - Sermon 37, Knowledge and Ignorance of God and of Self
  - St. Catherine of Siena, from her principal work, The Dialogue
    - Overwhelming Love
    - Unspeakable Mercy
    - The Circle of Self-Knowledge

- Selected readings from papal documents and guided reflections on sin and forgiveness, for example:
  - St. Pope John Paul II
    - Dives in Misericordia (chapter 5, “Parable of the Prodigal Son”)
    - Reconciliatio et Paenitentia
      (chapter 2, “The Love That is Greater Than Sin”)
Witness talks by former RCIA participants on examples of conversion, forgiveness and healing – this is very important.

Utilizing appropriate media to illicit deep interior reflection on the significance of the acts of Jesus for our sake: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

✓ Mel Gibson’s, *The Passion of the Christ*

✓ Joseph Campanella’s, *A Time for Mercy*

In summary, the goal of the period of purification and enlightenment is to lead the candidates into a deepening experience of conversion in Jesus Christ. The works during this final preparation are wrought by Jesus Christ. The role of the RCIA leader is to provide the stimuli for the candidates’ so that they might become intimately aware of their personal relationship with Jesus.

We trust in Jesus’s loving embrace to draw out the interior wounds of each person so that they may be properly disposed in receiving Him fully through the Sacraments of Initiation. This is a time where the parish priest or pastor should be readily available to minister to the private needs or concerns of the candidates.
PREPARATION RITES ON HOLY SATURDAY

The elect are to be advised that on Holy Saturday they should refrain from their usual activities, spend their time in prayer and reflection, and, as far as they can, observe a fast. When it is possible to bring the elect together on Holy Saturday for reflection and prayer, some or all of the [preparatory] rites may be celebrated as an immediate preparation for the sacraments (RCIA, 185).

The RCIA provides a series of preparation rites for Holy Saturday. These rites should not be dismissed or minimized. All participants should be encouraged early in the RCIA to reserve this time on their calendars. Due to the Easter Vigil being held at night, a temptation might be to minimize the amount of time the elect are required to be at the parish prior to the celebration of the Rites of Christian Initiation. The directives of the RCIA recommend that the final stage of preparation for reception of the sacraments of initiation begins on Good Friday, and by extension to the Holy Triduum. It is “encouraged to keep and extend the paschal fast of Good Friday...throughout the day of Holy Saturday until the end of the Vigil.”28 Candidates for initiation, as well as those who participate in the celebration of the Easter Vigil with them are included in this recommendation.

Recitation of the Creed

The rite of recitation of the Creed prepares the elect for the profession of faith they will make immediately before they are baptized (RCIA, 225); the rite also instructs them in their duty to proclaim the message of the Gospel (RCIA, 193).

Ephphetha Rite

By the power of its symbolism they ephphetha rite, or rite of opening the ears and mouth, impressed on the elect their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation (RCIA, 197).

This rite has its origin in the acts of Christ. St. Ambrose in his treatise “On the Mysteries,” provides a wonderful reflection on this rite.

Open, then, your ears, inhale the good savor of eternal life which has been breathed upon you by the grace of the sacraments; which was signified to you by us, when, celebrating the mystery of the opening, we said, ‘Ephphetha, which is, Be opened,’ (Mark 7:34) that whosoever was coming in quest of peace might know what he was asked, and be bound to remember what he answered. Christ made use of this mystery in the Gospel, as we read, when He healed him who was deaf and dumb.

This rite provides a powerful expression of the visible sign of Christ operating through his ordained ministers (priest or deacon). The celebrant touches the elects’ ears and lips as he speaks the words of Christ: Ephphetha: that is be opened, that you may profess the faith you hear, to the praise and glory of God.

28 RCIA National Standards, 15; referring to CIC, 1251 and SC, 110.
Catechetical Recommendations for the Period of Mystagogy

Part One: a new life, a new beginning

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* (Romans 6:4)

*Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Once a person has received the sacraments of initiation, the formerly “elect” are now called “neophyte” (*tender shoot*), which means a beginner or novice. Having been initiated into the life of Christ, the neophyte now begins to live as a *new creation* in Christ. In the period of mystagogy the deeper meaning of the sacraments, the Christian life, and the prayer life are examined. It is a time of growth, when understanding of the faith begins to mature, so that the neophyte can participate more fully in the Mass and in the life of the Church.

Part one of mystagogy includes two components:

A. Participation in the principal Sunday Mass through Pentecost and *appropriate post baptismal catechesis*. In the early Church, the homilies throughout the Easter season were exclusively oriented to in-depth teachings on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.  

The directives of the RCIA emphasize, “The period of post-baptismal catechesis is of great significance for both the neophytes and the rest of the faithful.” This is an opportune time for the entire parish community to benefit from post-baptismal homilies. Doing so, deepens the faithful’s grasp of the *paschal mystery* (Passion, Death, and Resurrection), especially in relationship with the sacramental life of the Catholic Church.

The RCIA also stipulates that, “Special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents (or sponsors). The homily and, as circumstances suggest, the general intercessions should take into account the presence and needs of the neophytes.”

B. Part one of Mystagogy should include a *celebration at the end of the Easter season*. Following these directives for the first part of mystagogy should be discussed with the parish pastor as part of the overall planning of the RCIA.

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30 RCIA, 246.

31 RCIA, 248.
The weekly RCIA meetings during the Easter season should be primarily concerned with the neophytes’ experience of the sacraments. Ample opportunity should be afforded for the neophytes to share with each other their individual experiences from Easter Vigil. This is an extraordinary time in the life of the newly baptized. As such, it should not be rushed, but relished. To foster in-depth reflections, utilize the post-baptismal sermons of the Church Fathers.

Other recommended sources are the vigil and Easter season homilies by our local bishop and the pope. Let the Church minister to the neophytes by exposing them to the best she has to offer. Exposing the neophytes to both ancient and modern reflections on the sacramental mysteries provides a powerful witness of the universal truths held intact for 2000 years. It is truly a witness to the splendor and symphony of our Catholic faith!

**Part Two: formation and community**

*For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully…*  
(1 Corinthians 13:9-12)

*Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity…*(Hebrews 6:1)

*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*  
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

Part two of mystagogy requires a well-planned schedule of topics and events. The full year of mystagogy should be communicated as an integral part of the RCIA journey. It should not be treated as “optional” nor should it be communicated as such. The two goals for this second part of Mystagogy are deepening the neophytes’ Christian *formation* and incorporating them into the full life of the Christian *community*.

There are many excellent programs available today, a few suggestions on topics for deepening the neophytes’ formation might include:

- Liturgical catechesis on the Holy Mass
- Theological teachings on the sacraments, especially the sacrament of reconciliation
- Enhanced methods of prayer (e.g. lectio divina, meditation, contemplation)
- Introductory Bible Study
- Structured study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

For more ideas on programs and topics, please contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

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32 For example: *Living the Easter Call: Discipleship & Mission*, USCCB Communications, Publication No. 7-520.
Recommended Resources

**Adult Participant Curriculum**

*Symbolon: The Catholic Faith Explained* by Augustine Institute.

*Symbolon* is available free of charge. Contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for information on how to use this resource as the primary curriculum for the RCIA.

*The Association for Catechumenal Ministry* ([http://acmrcia.org/](http://acmrcia.org/)).


**Teen Participant Curriculum**


This resource designed for teens (middle school and high school age) and follows the baptismal catechumenate model. Contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for information on how to purchase and use this resource as the primary curriculum for the RCIA adopted for teens.

**Children/Family Participant Curriculum**

*Be My Disciples* by RCL Benziger.

Contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for information on how to purchase and use this resource as the primary curriculum for the RCIA adopted for children.

**RCIA Catechetical Resources**


*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2d ed.

*Catholic for a Reason, Scripture and the Mystery of the Family of God*. Edited by Scott Hahn and Leon J. Suprenant, Jr. Emmaus Road, 1998

*General Directory for Catechesis*.


