

Preparing the Catechumens for the Rite of Election

Discerning the Catechumens' Readiness

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* calls for great responsibility by the catechumenate team prior to the *Rite of Election*, since it is the Church who elects and calls in God's name: *"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"* [RCIA 119]. It asks for serious deliberation by the team: *"Therefore to exclude any semblance of mere formality from the rite, there should be a deliberation prior to its celebration to decide on the Catechumens' suitability"* [RCIA 122].

What is this "suitability"? What does this rite celebrate? Prior to this rite, the RCIA calls for *"formation of the catechumens' minds and hearts," "conversion in mind and action" "sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity." "With deliberate will and an enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church"* [RCIA 118-120].

This assumes that the Catechumen has realized the goal of the catechumenate period, i.e., that there is progress in all four dimensions of catechesis described as follows [RCIA 75]:

1. Suitable catechesis...gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the Word...(leading) to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts...and a profound sense of the mystery of salvation.
2. Catechumens learn the Christian life through sponsors and the community, to pray, to witness to faith, hope and love, with a change of conduct manifested in social consequences.
3. Catechumens are helped by liturgical rites which purify and bless, including celebrations of the Word and Sunday Liturgy of the Word.
4. Since the Church's life is apostolic, Catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and to build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.



Discerning the Catechumens' Readiness (cont.)

Types of conversion developed from Rev. Bernard Lonergan, SJ, (1904-1984), philosopher/theologian parallel the four dimensions of catechesis in [RCIA 75]. Teams might ask the following questions based on those conversions:

1. SCRIPTURE, DOCTRINE and PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Religious Conversion	Are the candidates moving <i>from</i> life as problem <i>to</i> the scriptural Good News that life is mystery, wonder, and gift and that God is the giver?
Theistic Conversion	<i>from</i> God as impersonal <i>to</i> God in a personal relationship of love?
Christic Conversion	<i>from</i> Christ as historical figure in pages of Scripture <i>to</i> Christ risen and present in our lives today?
Intellectual Conversion	<i>from</i> Scripture and doctrine as facts <i>to</i> Scripture and doctrine as meaning for life?

2. PRAYER AND MORAL

For prayer, e.g. theistic and Christic conversions above.

Ecclesial Conversion	<i>from</i> the Church as "them" <i>to</i> "us"?
Moral Conversion	<i>from</i> pleasure or law as the criteria for choices <i>to</i> values as the criterion?

3. LITURGY

Intellectual Conversion	<i>from</i> solely analytic, logical thinking <i>to</i> the world of symbols, gestures, and imagination?
Effective Conversion	<i>from</i> blocking <i>to</i> showing feelings?

4. APOSTOLIC WITNESS

Moral Conversion	<i>from</i> egocentricity <i>to</i> values in and for others?
Gospel Conversion	<i>from</i> concern for personal salvation <i>to</i> commitment to the reign of God in the world?