

History of the Initiation Process

Early Church: Small communities took individuals into their company and introduced them to their way of life. Religious persecution prevailed and so a strong faith was demanded in the face of possible martyrdom.

100-200 AD: Initiation began to take on formal shape and requirements – the beginnings of “catechumenate” as we know it. The conversion of Gentiles called for a more comprehensive formation in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Third-Fourth Century: Initiation developed into a fully structured process, (a minimum of three years). The Peace of Constantine in 315 AD made Christianity legal; now there were large numbers of candidates, but poor quality control. Although this was the time of the most developed structure, during this period there were a variety of models of initiation developed in the various local communities.

Fifth Century: The gradual disintegration of the catechumenate occurred due to large numbers of people being baptized; the practice of infant *Baptism* eventually became normative. In the West, *Confirmation and Eucharist* were separated from *Baptism*.

Twelfth Century: Catechumenate no longer existed. Elements were incorporated into religious community formation and seminary training during intervening centuries.

Sixteenth Century: Dominicans and Augustinians tried to counteract the mass *Baptisms* occurring in some places. In 1538 a synod of bishops urged pastors to return to the missionary principles of Alcuin and establish a catechumenate.

Vatican Council II:

The Council called for reinstating the catechumenate. The bishops' vote on restoration of the catechumenate was: Yes- 2,165; No-9; Null-1

Post-Vatican Council II:

- 1966 – provisional ritual for catechumenate distributed
- 1969 – second draft distributed for experimentation
- 1972 – promulgation of the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* by Pope Paul VI
- 1974 – provisional English translation available titled *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*
- 1986 – U.S. Bishops' Conference approved present edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* with U. S. adaptations, national statutes, and a national plan of implementation
- 1987 – Canadian Bishops' Conference approved the present edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* with Canadian adaptations