



Essential Quick Guide for Catechists to *RCIA – The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*

Brief introduction to the RCIA:

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully.

(*The rite*) includes not simply the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, but also all the rites belonging to the catechumenate.

Endorsed by the ancient practice of the Church, a catechumenate that would be suited to contemporary missionary activity in all regions was so widely requested that the Second Vatican Council decreed its restoration, revision, and adaptation to local traditions.

(*RCIA – Introduction 1-2*)

Christian Initiation in Scripture:

Matt. 28:19-20 - Jesus commands the apostles to baptise all people "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38 - Peter commands people to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ

Acts 22:16 - Ananias tells Saul, "arise and be baptised, and wash away your sins."

Ezek. 36:25-27 - the Lord promises He will sprinkle us with water to cleanse us from sin and give us a new heart and spirit. Paul refers to this verse in **Heb. 10:22**, where the author writes, "with our hearts sprinkled clean" – purifying the conscience (the interior disposition of a person).

Gal. 3:27 - whoever is baptised in Christ puts on Christ.

Col. 2:12 - in Baptism, we literally die with Christ and are raised with Christ.

Rom. 6:4 - in Baptism, we actually die with Christ so that we, like Him, might be raised to newness of life.

Titus 3:5-7 - "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs of eternal life."

Christian Initiation in the Catechism:

CCC 1213 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word.

1229 From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

1230 This initiation has varied greatly through the centuries according to circumstances. In the first centuries of the Church, Christian initiation saw considerable development. A long period of *catechumenate* included a series of preparatory rites, which were liturgical landmarks along the path of catechumenal preparation and culminated in the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

1232 The Second Vatican Council restored for the Latin Church "the catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps." The rites for these stages are to be found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The Council also gives permission that: "In mission countries, in addition to what is furnished by the Christian tradition, those elements of initiation rites may be admitted which are already in use among some peoples insofar as they can be adapted to the Christian ritual."

1233 Today in all the rites, Latin and Eastern, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. In the Eastern rites the Christian initiation of infants also begins with Baptism followed immediately by Confirmation and the Eucharist, while in the Roman rite it is followed by years of catechesis before being completed later by Confirmation and the Eucharist, the summit of their Christian initiation.

1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptised sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;

- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;

- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

1271 Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: "For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptised are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Justified by faith in Baptism, [they] are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church." "Baptism therefore constitutes the *sacramental bond of unity* existing among all who through it are reborn."

1272 Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptised is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (*character*) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation. Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated.

1275 Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.

1322 The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.

1533 Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.

Christian Initiation in Canon Law:

Canon Law is the body of laws and regulations that govern the Catholic Church and all its members.

Can. 849 Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments, is necessary for salvation, either by actual reception or at least by desire. By it people are freed from sins, are born again as children of God and, made like to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church. It is validly conferred only by a washing in real water with the proper form of words.

Can. 850 Baptism is administered according to the rite prescribed in the approved liturgical books, except in a case of urgent necessity when only those elements which are required for the validity of the sacrament must be observed.

Can. 851 The celebration of Baptism should be properly prepared. Accordingly:

1° an adult who intends to receive Baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and, as far as possible, brought through the various stages to sacramental initiation, in accordance with the rite of initiation as adapted by the Bishops' Conference and with the particular norms issued by it.

Can. 865 §1. For an adult to be baptised, the person must have manifested the intention to receive Baptism, have been instructed sufficiently about the truths of the faith and Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian life through the catechumenate. The adult is also to be urged to have sorrow for personal sins.

§2. An adult in danger of death can be baptised if, having some knowledge of the principal truths of the faith, the person has manifested in any way at all the intention to receive Baptism and promises to observe the commandments of the Christian religion.

Can. 866 Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, an adult who is baptised is to be confirmed immediately after Baptism and is to participate in the Eucharistic celebration also by receiving communion

Can. 869 §1. If there is a doubt whether a person has been baptised or whether Baptism was conferred validly and the doubt remains after a serious investigation, Baptism is to be conferred conditionally.

§2. Those baptised in a non-Catholic ecclesial community must not be baptised conditionally unless, after an examination of the matter and the form of the words used in the conferral of Baptism and a consideration of the intention of the baptised adult and the minister of the Baptism, a serious reason exists to doubt the validity of the Baptism.

§3. If in the cases mentioned in §§1 and 2 the conferral or validity of the Baptism remains doubtful, Baptism is not to be conferred until after the doctrine of the sacrament of Baptism is explained to the person to be baptised, if an adult, and the reasons of the doubtful validity of the Baptism are explained to the person or, in the case of an infant, to the parents

Can. 856 Though Baptism may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that normally it be celebrated on a Sunday or, if possible, on the vigil of Easter.

The RCIA and Church history:

- The last thing Jesus said to his apostles was to "go . . . And make disciples of all the nations baptising them..." **Mt. 18:19**
- The Acts of the Apostles, tells us this is what they did – beginning on the day Pentecost after Peter's address to the crowds. **Acts 2:37-41**
- It was adults who had expressed their faith in "Jesus as the Christ" who were baptised although there were some accounts

of entire households such as the gaoler at Philippi **Acts 16:25-33** and the entire household of Lydia. **Acts 16:11-15**

- Baptism was a new beginning and Baptism brought about a real change in people's lives. One example is that of Saul – who became Paul.
- As it grew, the Christian Church became a victim of persecution and hostility. A simple profession of faith in Jesus Christ no longer sufficed for those who wanted to become members of a Christian community – which was now keen to test the seriousness of those who were interested.
- First of all, people had to find a sponsor from the community who would present them for Baptism after a period of preparation that lasted two to three years. In that time, the sponsor could ascertain whether the candidate was determined to change their way of life – hence their formation was more ethical than doctrinal.
- The third century document, *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, talks of this three-year period of preparation – but says it is not the time that is judged but the conduct.
- This time became known as the *catechumenate* and those wishing to join the Christian community were known as *catechumens* – a Greek word meaning "instruction".
- Thus, in the first 200 years of Christianity, things had changed. It was no longer Baptism immediately after conversion. It took three years of preparation by members of the community. Baptism had also become an annual celebration – linked to Easter – thus strengthening the theological link with the idea of death and resurrection to new life through the sacrament.
- By the sixth century, the Baptism of infants whose parents were Christians had become the norm. There was a shift, too, in the sacramental emphasis with Baptism seen as the washing away of original sin and the promise of eternal life. The emphasis had moved away from the beginning of a new life in Christ.
- At the time, infant mortality was high, and bishops began to encourage parents not to wait for the Easter Vigil but to have their infants baptised very soon after birth to save them from dying still stained with original sin.
- The Second Vatican Council had an important effect on how the sacrament of Baptism is viewed returning to St. Paul's image of dying and rising with Christ through Baptism – emphasising that, in Baptism, we are implanted in the paschal mystery of Christ; we die with him, are buried with him, and we rise with him.
- The bishops called for a revision of Baptismal rites, and in 1969 the revised *Rite of Baptism for Children* was published. The emphasis has now gone back to being welcomed into a Christian community and living a new life of faith. The Introduction states that the 'people of God, that is the Church, made present by the local community, has an important part to play in the Baptism of both children and adults'. RCIA16
- The entire vision of initiation in the Catholic Church today was given fresh impetus in 1972 with the publication of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. In many respects this was a return to the early Church model of initiation, a process whereby adults would enter into the Christian community.
- The process is divided into stages, with each stage marked by a special rite. The RCIA may take many years, and an inquirer is, of course, free to decide whether or not to continue along this path of Christian initiation.

The RCIA Process:

CATECHUMENS AND CANDIDATES

1. Catechumens are unbaptised adults and children of catechetical age.

2. Candidates are:-

Those who are uncatechised adults who are preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist (those who have been baptised in the Catholic Church or in another Christian Church RCIA 376
Those baptised Christians seeking reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church RCIA 387

The Process

The RCIA includes a four-stage journey with three major rites functioning as a passage from one stage to the next.

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.

FIRST STEP: ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

This is the liturgical rite, 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.

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

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.

SECOND STEP: ELECTION OR ENROLMENT OF NAMES

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 the will to receive these sacraments.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

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 centred on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

THIRD STEP: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect are initiated through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

This is the time, usually the Easter season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.

Sponsors:

Canon Law:

Can. 872 Insofar as possible, a person to be baptised is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation A sponsor also helps the baptised person to lead a Christian life in keeping with Baptism and to fulfil faithfully the obligations inherent in it.

Can. 873 One sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex.

Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1° be designated by the one to be baptised, ...and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;

2° have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;

3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;

4° not labour under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;

5° not be the father or mother of the one to be baptised.

RCIA:

10 A sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention. It may happen that it is not the sponsor for the rite of acceptance and the period of the catechumenate but another person who serves as godparent for the periods of purification and enlightenment and of mystagogy.

11 Their godparents (for each a godmother or godfather, or both) accompany the candidates on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. Godparents are persons chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest. It is the responsibility of godparents to show the candidates how to practise the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness, and to guide the candidates' progress in the Baptismal life. Chosen before the candidates' election, godparents fulfil this office publicly from the day of the rite of election, when they give testimony to the community about the candidates. They continue to be important during the time after reception of the sacraments when the neophytes need to be assisted so that they remain true to their Baptismal promises.

Resources to support Godparents and Sponsors

RCIA Godparent and Sponsor Handbook

Edited by William J. Keimig. Published by Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM).

When You Are An RCIA Sponsor – Rita Burns Senseman (Handing On The Faith Series) – pub. St Anthony Messenger Press 2001

Guide for Sponsors – Fourth Edition by Ronald Lewinski, Liturgy Training Publications 2008

Liturgical Rites:

ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

This rite is described as being 'of the utmost importance. It is the first time that those who have completed the precatechumenate will assemble publicly to declare their intention to the Church and the Church accepts them as persons intending to become its members. RCIA 41

The rite should be celebrated at the time 'when the candidates have had sufficient time to conceive an initial faith and to show the first signs of conversion.' 18 & 42

rites belonging to the period of the catechumenate

Celebrations of the Word of God 81

These are foremost and should be celebrated to accord with the liturgical season, to contribute to the instruction of the catechumens and the needs of the community.

Minor Exorcisms 90

These take place within a celebration of the word or at the beginning or end of a meeting for catechesis. They may be used on several occasions, as different situations may suggest.

Blessings of the Catechumens 95

Usually given at the end of a celebration of the word, but may also be given at the end of a meeting for catechesis.

Optional Rites: Anointing of the Catechumens 98

RITE OF ELECTION & ENROLMENT OF NAMES

Takes place in the cathedral on first weekend of Lent

RITE BELONGING TO THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION & ENLIGHTENMENT

Scrutinies 'The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out all that is upright, strong and good.... These rites, therefore should complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.' 128

The three scrutinies should take place on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. 133

Presentations 134

The presentation of the Creed should be during the week following the first scrutiny. 135

The presentation of the Lord's Prayer should take place during the week following the third scrutiny. 136

Preparation rites on Holy Saturday 172

On Holy Saturday the elect should be advised to spend their time in prayer and reflection, and, as far as possible, observe a fast.

Where possible the elect may be brought together on Holy Saturday for prayer and reflection and some, or all, of the following rites may be celebrated:

The presentation of the Lord's Prayer if it has been deferred

The recitation of the Creed

The ephphetha rite

The choosing of a Baptismal name

Anointing with oil of catechumens

Resources for Baptismal Preparation:

Published resources:

- *Foundations in Faith, Catechist Manual, Catechumenate, Years A, B and C*, Bob Duggan, Carol Gura, et al., publ. Resources for Christian Living, 1998 (also Participant's Book and other resource books)
- *Breaking Open the Word of God: Resources for Using the Lectionary: Cycles A, B and C*, Karen Powell (Editor), Joseph Sinwell (Editor) publ. Paulist Press 1988
- *Word and Worship Workbook for Years A, B and C.*, Mary Birmingham, Paulist Press, 1999
- *On the Journey series: RCIA Catechist's Manual, 2nd edition*, Edited by Barbara A. Morgan and William J. Keimig (Also Leader's Manual & participant's Book) publ. Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) 2006
- *Evangelium*, publ. Catholic Truth Society, 2006
- *RCIA: A Practical Approach*, Rosalie Curtin, SCL, Carl Koch, FSC, et al, publ. Brown-ROA, 1990
- *God for Grown-ups – Discovering Christ Today in the Catholic Church*, Fr. Kenneth O'Riordan, Fr. Gerry Murphy, Sr. Ellen McGrath, publ. Redemptorist Publications, 1997

Useful websites for purchase of resources:

Pauline Books & Media- www.pauline-uk.org

St Pauls – www.stpauls.org.uk

McCrimmons – www.mccrimmons.com

Kevin Mayhew - www.kevinmayhew.com

Liturgy Training Publications - www.ltp.org

Amazon Books – www.amazon.co.uk

Training for the Preparation Team:

- Formation and preparation on the RCIA will initially be given by the Parish Priest, who will give guidance on how he wants the sessions to be organised and structured
- For further formation contact your diocesan Catechetical Adviser or check the diocesan website: www.rcdow.org.uk, to ask what training opportunities there are in the diocese.
- Check the diocesan website for information, articles and resources

Reading & Resources for Catechists:

- *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Study Edition*, publ. Veritas Publications, Dublin, reprinted 2004, **ESSENTIAL READING**
- *Foundations in Faith – Handbook for Catechists*, Bob Duggan, Carol Gura, et al., publ. Resources for Christian Living, 1998 (Also the Director's Guide)
- *The RCIA: Transforming the Church, A Resource for Pastoral Implementation*. Revised and Updated Edition, Thomas H. Morris, publ. Paulist Press 1997
- *Focus on Faith – a resource for the journey into the Catholic Church*, Deborah M. Jones, publ. Kevin Mayhew 1996
- *Year-Round Catechumenate*, Mary Birmingham, publ. Liturgy Training Publications, 2002
- *A Mystagogy of Sacrament – Saying Amen*, Kathleen Hughes, publ. Liturgy Training Publications, 2002
- *Echoing God's Word*, James Dunning, publ. Liturgy Training Publications, 1993
- *Faith Alive – an Introduction to the Catholic Faith*, by Rowanne Pasco (Editor), John Redford (Editor) publ. Hodder & Stoughton Religious; New Edition 1999
- *Celebrating the Rites of Adult Initiation: Pastoral Reflections*, edited by Victoria M. Tufano, publ. Liturgy Training Publication, 1986
- *Making RCIA Work*, Christine Dodd, publ. Geoffrey Chapman, 1993
- *The Hallelujah Highway: a History of the Catechumenate*, Paul Turner, publ. Liturgy Training Publications, 2000.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, revised 1999

Diocesan Guidelines:

Baptism of Older Children

Young people from the age of 14 should be prepared for the sacrament following the normal RCIA process - see policy for Adult Baptism.

Baptism of Adults

The norm for adults seeking Baptism is to follow the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults in their local parish and to be baptised at the Easter Vigil when it is discerned they are ready, following the scrutinies of the RCIA.