



Diocese of Westminster

AGENCY FOR EVANGELISATION

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

RCIA

Preparation Pack for Priests & Catechists 2023/24



"I came so that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

Since the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was restored to the Church in 1972 after the Second Vatican Council, our parishes have endeavoured to implement it and we have witnessed the entry of many people into the Church through Baptism, and the reception of many others into full communion with the Church.

The RCIA is the sacramental process established by the Church for the initiation of adults. The beautiful rituals of this process, properly celebrated in the midst of our parish communities, call everyone in the parish to conversion and renewal, not just those seeking initiation. There are diverse roles involved in the process and the whole Catholic community is asked to participate.

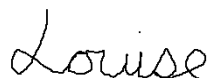
One of the joys many of us experience is meeting with Catechumens, Candidates and the RCIA Teams when they gather with Cardinal Vincent in the Cathedral on the first weekend of Lent for the Rite of Election & Call to Continuing Conversion. After Easter each year, those who were initiated at the Easter Vigil - the neophytes – and those received into full communion with the Church, gather with the Cardinal at the Cathedral once again for a Paschal Eucharist. Having been nourished on their journey by the Word of God, they witness to their faith with joy as full members of the Church, now nourished by the Bread of Life in our parish communities.

This RCIA resource pack is designed to assist clergy and catechists to celebrate the RCIA process and the Rites of the Church which are a key parts of the RCIA process.

Please do contact us if we can be of assistance to you and RCIA process in your parish.

We look forward to seeing you in the Cathedral for the Rite of Election in 2024.

On behalf of the Catechetical team,



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Please note

While this document sets out to be a useful summary guide to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* it is not meant to replace suitable formation and training which clergy and catechists should undertake. *The Diocesan Catechetical Team will arrange for this formation on request at deanery or Diocesan level.*

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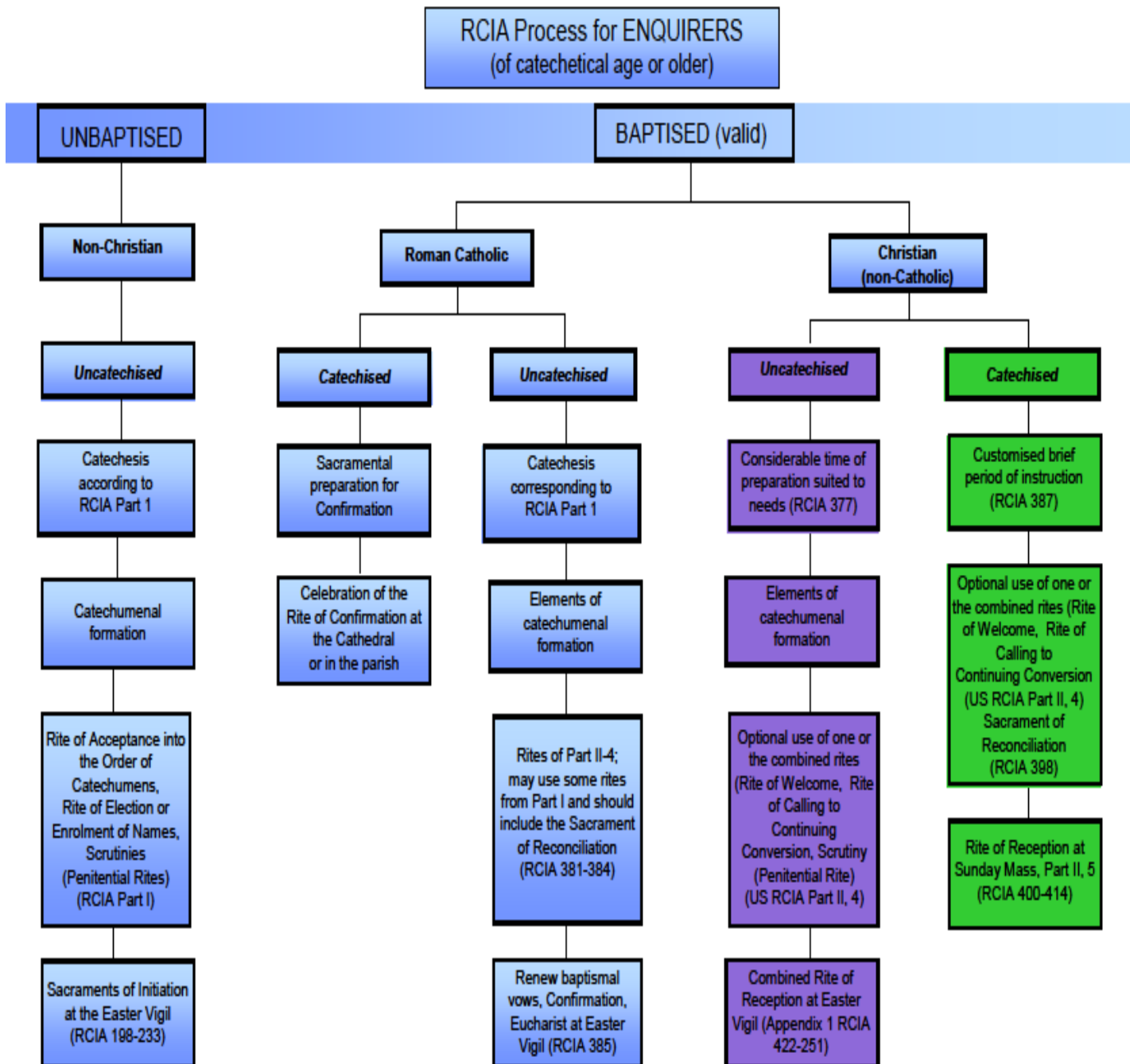
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Part 1: Understanding the RCIA

The RCIA Process



It may not be necessary or always appropriate for a baptised person (one seeking full reception into the Catholic Church or a baptised Catholic adult seeking Confirmation) to go through the whole RCIA process and receive the Sacraments at the Easter Vigil. Baptised adults may be received into the Catholic Church at other times in the liturgical year outside of Lent.

Candidates from EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES should be received into the equivalent Eastern Catholic Church in a simple liturgy by the recitation of the Creed. For further information on this category, please contact the catechesis advisers and/or the Chancery office.

A Guide to the RCIA

Introduction

“The restoration of the catechumenate fostered by the Second Vatican Council was realised with the publication of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The catechumenate, “a training period in the whole Christian life” (AG 14), is a process structured in three phases or periods, aimed at leading the catechumen to the full encounter with the mystery of Christ in the life of the community, and is therefore considered a *typical setting* of initiation, catechesis, and mystagogy” (*Directory for Catechesis*, 63)

‘Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives.’

Lumen Fidei - Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis 2013 (4)

‘Rite of Christian Initiation – Introductory Material’ contains the guidance given in the Ritual Edition of the Rite, for the use of clergy and catechists, and accompanies this document. All the RCIA references contained here can be found in this document. It can also be downloaded at

<https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RCIA.pdf>

Who is on this journey?

1. Unbaptised adults (who will become catechumens) asking for baptism, confirmation and communion
2. Adults baptised in another Christian tradition – or candidates - asking for reception into full communion in the Church
3. Uncatechised adults, baptised Catholics asking for Confirmation and Eucharist
4. Children who have reached catechetical age (7-14 years of age), who are asking for the sacraments of initiation – who will generally be prepared as a separate group

Generally in our parishes the first three groups are prepared together but it is important to recognise where candidates are on their journey of faith and provide an appropriate catechesis.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is essentially designed for unbaptised adults, and the Rites in Part 1 are to be celebrated with the unbaptised.

Part II of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is entitled “Rites for Particular Circumstances”. It includes materials for the adaptation of the rite to those already baptised who are to be catechised and complete their Christian initiation or are to become part of the full communion of the Catholic Church — and, circumstances in which the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church is integrated with the celebration at the Easter Vigil of the sacraments of initiation.

‘The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously. (RCIA 4)

The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults 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 5)

This journey includes not only the periods for making enquiry 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.

1. The first step: reaching the point of initial conversion and wishing to become Christians, they are accepted as catechumens by the Church.

2. The second step: having progressed in faith and nearly completed the catechumenate, they are accepted into a more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation.

3. The third step: having completed their spiritual preparation, they receive the sacraments of Christian initiation.

These three steps are to be regarded as the major, more intense moments of initiation and are marked by **three liturgical rites**:

- the first by the **rite of acceptance** into the order of catechumens;
- the second by the **rite of election** or enrolment of names;
- and the third by the **celebration of the sacraments** of Christian initiation

The steps **lead** to periods of inquiry and growth; alternatively, the periods may also be seen as **preparing** for the ensuing step.

1. **The first period** consists of enquiry on the part of the candidates and of evangelisation and the precatechumenate on the part of the Church. It ends with the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens.

2. **The second period**, which begins with the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens and may last for several years, includes catechesis and the rites connected with catechesis. It comes to an end on the day of election.

3. **The third** and much shorter period, which follows the rite of election, ordinarily coincides with the Lenten preparation for the Easter celebration and the sacraments of initiation. It is a time of purification and enlightenment and includes the celebration of the rites belonging to this period.

4. **The final period** extends through the whole Easter season and is devoted to the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. It is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.

PERIOD OF EVANGELISATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE (a period of enquiry)

'During this period, priests and deacons, catechists and other laypersons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the Gospel (see no. 42). 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

What the Rite says:

Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the preceding period or precatechumenate is of great importance and as a rule should not be omitted. It is a time of evangelisation: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all. Thus those who are not yet Christians, their hearts

opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to him. For he who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life fulfils all their spiritual expectations, indeed infinitely surpasses them. (RCIA 36)

The new **Directory for Catechesis** published in June 2020 refers to this period as

'necessary in order to turn the initial interest in the Gospel into a deliberate choice. The Christian community, co-operating with the work of the Holy Spirit, welcomes the interest of those who are seeking the Lord and during the time necessary...carries out a first form of evangelisation and discernment through accompaniment and the presentation of the kerygma. This period...is important for the reception of the proclamation and for an initial response and conversion. In fact, it already brings with it the desire to get away from sin and to follow in the footsteps of Christ'
(*Directory for Catechesis* 33c)

'... kerygma, ... needs to be the centre of all evangelising activity' and goes on to say, 'The fire of the Spirit is given in the form of tongues and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ who, by his death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father's infinite mercy. On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you."' (Evangelii Gaudium 164)

The **kerygma** (from a Greek word meaning 'proclamation') is the first proclamation, the proclamation of the Good News, the Gospel, of Jesus' life death and resurrection.

This period is a time for

- Searching and asking questions about the Catholic faith
- Building relationships and developing trust
- The sharing of stories, the stories of the enquirers and stories of the team and the parish community,
- AND stories of our faith, from the scriptures, Old and New Testaments, stories of the community of believers over the centuries

The telling of such stories leads to a level raising questions of meaning, leading then to a recognition that it is here we come to encounter and know God

- Invitation into experiences of prayer of varied forms, leading to an awareness of prayer of petition and thanksgiving
- Introduction to the Christian community

The step which follows, when those enquirers desire to move on with their journey and desire to become catechumens, is the **RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS**. (RCIA 48)

The rite gives six criteria for enquirers who wish to become catechumens. (RCIA 42)

These criteria guide the content of the precatechumenate:

- Evidence of first faith
- Initial conversion
- Intention to change their lives
- First stirring of repentance
- A start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer
- Experience of the company and spirit of Christians

This step is the candidates' public declaration of their intention to continue their journey of faith towards full initiation in the Catholic Church. It is therefore important that the candidates are prepared for the liturgical rite through prayer and encouragement that they will be encouraged and supported during this public moment, as well as ensuring that they are ready for the questions they will be asked.

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

' during the period of the catechumenate the dynamics of this way of life are explored, taught, shared and given by members of the Christian community to the new member, as in any apprenticeship. Not only does one learn about the Christian way of life but one becomes a Christian, a disciple.' RCIA – Transforming the Church' Thomas H. Morris (P.116)

The **process of initiation** is described as 'an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life (General Directory for Catechesis 67). It is a lifelong journey, a continuous road of conversion, a gradual 'falling in love with God'.

The Rite describes the Period of the Catechumenate thus:

‘an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity.’ RCIA 75

The Rite goes on to explain how we achieve this maturity in faith. Paragraph 75 is a most important section guiding catechesis during the catechumenate, and those guiding formation in faith need to be very familiar with it.

There are four elements described.

- **catechesis**

‘planned to be gradual and complete...accommodated to the liturgical year, supported by celebrations of the word, leading to ‘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.’ (75.1)

- immersion in the **Christian way of life**, *‘helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community’.* (75.2) By living with Christians we are helped to become Christian and knowledge of people in the community helps with life within the community after initiation, initiation into the Body of Christ.

This exposure to the Christian life will expose them, also, to the spiritual life with that community leading the catechumens to *‘learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practise love of neighbour, even at the cost of self-renunciation.’*

- the support of **liturgical rites**, *‘which purify the catechumens little by little and strengthen them with God’s blessing.’* (75.3) The ritual provides a variety of liturgical rites to accomplish this; celebrations of the word, blessings, exorcisms, anointings. These rites celebrate and support moments on the journey but are often ignored by parishes. To deprive the catechumens of these celebrations deprives them of those moments when catechesis is strengthened by God’s blessing. Do look at the rites (RCIA 81-99) and consider their celebration.

- **apostolic witness.**

‘Since the Church’s life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.’ (75.4)

Consider how the catechumens may be formed to recognise that service in the name of Christ, serving the needs of the world, from the very beginning. It is not something that should wait until after initiation.

This section of the Introductory Material also addresses the question of **‘How long?’** It is a period of indeterminate length.

‘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.’ (76)

There is no need to rush. Some parishes run a year-round catechumenate, allowing catechumens and candidates to experience the whole liturgical year, others run a ‘rolling’ catechumenate, over a period of two years. Discernment that continues throughout the period of the catechumenate will guide decisions about readiness to move on in the process of initiation. Certainly, where parishes have baptised candidates preparing for full reception into the Church, some will be ready before others and this needs to be taken into account.

RCIA 78 draws together the **content of catechesis**. It 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 79 emphasises the importance of the **Minor Rites** during this period, stating that *'celebrations of the word of God are foremost'*. (See RCIA 81-89, where a model of a celebration of the Word of God is given). The rites are celebrated *'to mark the passage of catechumens from one level of catechesis to another.'*

During this period, too, consideration should be given to the choosing of godparents and sponsors for catechumens and candidates.

RCIA 83 states:

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

Parishes will want to consider how best, alongside catechesis, to lead candidates to a recognition of the centrality of the Sunday Eucharist to our lives. This is part of what is meant in RCIA 75.2 by *'immersion in the Christian way of life'*. In many parishes a catechist or sponsor arranges to accompany them to Mass. It is much easier to be with a member of the community who can help the catechumens to feel comfortable in what may be an unfamiliar experience.

The step which follows the Period of the Catechumenate is the RITE OF ELECTION OR ENROLMENT OF NAMES

RCIA 105 describes it as:

the liturgical rite called both election and the enrolment of names, which closes the period of the catechumenate proper, that is, the lengthy period of formation of the catechumens' minds and hearts...(it) also marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation, during which the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity.

At the Rite of Election, celebrated in the Cathedral by the Cardinal on the first weekend of Lent, *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, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation.* (RCIA 106)

Before the Rite of Election, RCIA teams will need to discern the readiness of catechumens to become the Elect. The Rite gives clear guidance on this discernment:

RCIA 107 tells us that the catechumens are expected to:

- have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and
- to have developed a 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,
- resolve they will express publicly in the actual celebration of the rite."

The importance of this discernment is articulated very strongly in the Rite. RCIA 109

'Within the rite of election the bishop celebrant, (for us the Cardinal), declares in the presence of the community the Church's approval of the candidates. 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.'

This deliberation is carried out by the

- *priests, deacons, and catechists involved in the formation of the catechumens, and*
- *by the godparents and representatives of the local community.*
- *If circumstances suggest, the group of catechumens may also take part.'*

It is important that the godparents are involved in this discernment as at the Rite of Election the Cardinal will address them, asking for their witness, saying:

'God's holy Church wishes to know whether these candidates are sufficiently prepared to be enrolled among the elect for the coming celebration of Easter. And so I speak first of all to you their godparents.

- *Have they faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church?*
- *Have they responded to that word and begun to walk in God's presence?*
- *Have they shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined with them in prayer? (RCIA 118)*

And the catechumens will be asked to state publicly their intent: RCIA 119

[The Bishop says to the catechumens:] *"Since you have already heard the call of Christ, you must now express your response to that call clearly and in the presence of the whole Church. Therefore,*

- *do you wish to enter fully into the life of the Church?*
- *through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist?"*

The catechumens are declared to be members of the Elect, to be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION & 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.' RCIA (Outline)

The significance of this period generally taking place during Lent cannot be ignored. The Universal Norms for the Liturgical Year states; *'Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance.'* (27)

This states clearly that the journey of Lent is one shared by the community and the Elect. The guidance from RCIA 125 clearly articulates that *'the liturgy and the liturgical catechesis of Lent...as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the Paschal Mystery'* and that for both the Elect and the community *'the Lenten season is a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery'.*

RCIA 126 uses these phrases:

- More intense spiritual preparation
- Interior reflection
- Intended to purify the minds and hearts as they search their own consciences and do penance
- Enlighten the minds and hearts with a deeper knowledge of Christ our Saviour
- Celebration ...of the scrutinies and the presentations

So, the **focus of catechesis** during this period has changed from the period of the catechumenate. The period of purification and enlightenment presumes that the catechesis of the earlier period, that of scripture, doctrine, liturgy, community and service have led the Elect to a readiness to make the commitment of baptism.

'The elect and candidates, firm in their resolve to embrace the gospel, experience a time set apart for deepened reflection on this gospel way of life, seeking the prayers of the community during these final days of preparation....This, then, is a time of prayer and reflection. This is not the time to cover materials that they may have forgotten during the catechumenate period. Rather, it is a time of focusing on God's gifting presence, and how that presence uncovers and reveals attitudes and lifestyles that are contrary to relationship with God – namely, sin – as well as raising up those attitudes and gifts that deepen the relationship with God.' Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA, Transforming the Church*, (pp 170 – 171)

It is best seen, perhaps, as a time of retreat, offering opportunities for both short and extended periods of reflection, in addition to the usual times of gathering, if possible an afternoon, or even a day, of reflection.

The Scrutinies

RCIA 128-133, 137-143, 151-156, 158-164

The major liturgies of this period are the scrutinies which certainly need this kind of reflection. The **Scrutinies**, which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, are intended *"to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect"* and *"then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good"* (RCIA 141). They include prayers of exorcism and call for deep repentance.

It is important to recognise – and to, perhaps, emphasise to the Elect, that the word 'scrutiny' refers to the **self-searching** of the Elect (not the scrutiny of the Elect by others).

'The period of catechesis following the scrutinies is primarily a time of support and care for the elect (and candidates), helping them to see God's love operative in the midst of the painful naming of sin. The focus is on God's love, not on our sin. This is not a time to be preoccupied with wretchedness (in fact there is no wretchedness). Rather, it is a time to be preoccupied with the freedom of being a child of God, and anything that keeps us from living that vocation to its fullness.'
Thomas H. Morris *ibid* p.176)

What, then will be the catechesis for this period? The RCIA intends that the readings for the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent of Year A are used for the scrutinies. The gospels of these Sundays tell of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-42), the man born blind (John 9:1-41) and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45), together raising the images of water, light and life.

The catechesis will offer the Elect the opportunity to reflect in readiness first for the scrutinies, and later for the celebration of the sacraments at the Easter Vigil. To reflect on their lives at this time, three questions might be asked of them, focussing on the three images, each with a strength and weakness side to it:

- What have you most drunk of in Christ? What do you continue to thirst for?
- What have you seen that you never saw before? What do you remain blind to?
- What is most life-giving on your new intimacy with Christ? What is still dead and needs resurrection?

The scrutinies are celebrated with the Elect (the un-baptised) only. Candidates (those baptised) would celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (The American edition of RCIA offers a Penitential Rite for candidates in preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation – RCIA 459ff)

The Presentations RCIA 134ff

'The Creed, as it recalls the wonderful deeds of God for the salvation of the human race, suffuses the vision of the Elect with the sure light of faith. The Lord's Prayer fills them with a deeper realisation of the new spirit of adoption by which they will call God their Father, especially in the midst of the Eucharistic assembly.' (RCIA 134)

Since the earliest years of the Church the Tradition of the Church was best expressed in the **Creed** and the **Lord's Prayer**, the foundations of our faith and our life of prayer. From the beginning these were presented orally to those preparing for baptism and the RCIA presentation is an oral one.

The presentations take place after the celebration of the scrutinies (unless they have been anticipated for pastoral reasons during the period of the catechumenate –RCIA 79,103-104). The Church entrusts to the Elect, who have completed their catechumenal formation, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, the ancient texts which express the heart of the Church's faith and prayer. They are presented in order to 'enlighten' the Elect.

The first presentation to the Elect is the **Presentation of the Creed**

- during the week following the first scrutiny.
- they are to commit the Creed to memory
- they will recite it publicly prior to professing their faith in accordance with that Creed on the day of their baptism. RCIA 135 (see Preparation Rites for Holy Saturday RCIA 172ff)

The second presentation to the Elect is the **Presentation of the Lord's Prayer**

- during the week following the third scrutiny (*but, if necessary, this presentation may be deferred for inclusion in the preparation rites of Holy Saturday; see no. 172*).
- From antiquity the Lord's Prayer has been the prayer proper to those who in baptism have received the spirit of adoption.
- When the Elect have been baptised and take part in their first celebration of the Eucharist, they will join the rest of the faithful in saying the Lord's Prayer. RCIA 136

Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday RCIA 172ff

These rites offer a final preparation for the Elect prior to the Rites of Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Holy Saturday is to be a day set aside for prayer and reflection before the rituals of initiation and so these preparatory rites serve as focus for the coming events of the Vigil. It is a time for the Elect to continue their spiritual preparation for their baptism.

The Rite states,

- 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 following rites may be celebrated as an immediate preparation for the sacraments. (RCIA 172)

The Elect may gather with their sponsors, their priest, their catechists, and others who have journeyed with them, to celebrate whichever of the rites is felt suitable. This often happens before a rehearsal of their part in the Easter Vigil.

It can be a very special moment in their journey, the relationships developed during the journey will have become very important and this is the final waiting time before the joy of their initiation into the Christian community. There is a model for this celebration at RCIA 174ff

Recitation of the Creed

The rite of the recitation of the Creed

- prepares the Elect for the profession of faith they will make immediately before they are baptised
- instructs them in their duty to proclaim the message of the Gospel. RCIA 180

The Ephphetha Rite takes its name from the word spoken by Jesus in his encounter with the deaf and mute man. To him Jesus says, “Be opened!”

- and for the Elect we pray that their ears be opened to hear God’s word and that their mouths be opened to proclaim God’s praise.
- Its symbolism impresses on the Elect their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation. RCIA 184

Choosing a baptismal name

- recognises and reveals the life transforming power of initiation, wherein one leaves behind the “old self” and takes on the life of Christ.
- It is a powerful reminder of the seriousness and surrender involved in authentically living out the Gospel.
- The Rite of Choosing a Baptismal Name may be celebrated on Holy Saturday, unless it was included in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.
- The Elect may choose a new name, which is either a traditional Christian name or a name of regional usage that is not incompatible with Christian beliefs.
- Where it seems better suited to the circumstances and the Elect are not too numerous, the naming may consist simply in an explanation of the given name of each of the elect. RCIA 187

The **anointing with the oil of catechumens** that ordinarily forms part of the liturgy of baptism may be anticipated on Holy Saturday to save time in the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

- The presiding celebrant is a priest or a deacon.
- When this anointing is anticipated, care is to be taken that the elect who are to be baptised understand its significance.
- It symbolises their need for God’s help and strength so that, undeterred by the bonds of the past and overcoming the opposition of the devil, they will forthrightly take the step of professing their faith and will hold fast to it unflinching throughout their lives.
- The oil used for this rite is to be the oil blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass, but for pastoral reasons a priest celebrant may bless oil for the rite immediately before the anointing. RCIA 190-192

And so to the **Third Step – CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**

RCIA 198ff

There is no need to consider the celebration of the liturgy here but it may be helpful to note:

*‘The **usual time** for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil... (RCIA 199)
When the celebration takes place **outside the usual time** (see nos. 26-27), care should be taken to ensure that it has a markedly paschal character (see Christian Initiation, General Introduction, no. 6). Thus the texts for one of the ritual Masses ‘Christian Initiation: Baptism’ given in the Roman Missal are used, and the readings are chosen from those given in the Lectionary for Mass, ‘Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil.’ (RCIA 200)*

THE PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

RCIA 234ff

'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 both pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.'
RCIA (Outline)

The word 'mystagogy' is from a Greek word meaning 'the interpretation of mystery' or 'the teaching of mystery'.

To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents and their parish priests should give them thoughtful and friendly help. (RCIA 234)

They should experience 'a fuller and more effective understanding of the mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and, above all, through their experience of the sacraments they have received. (RCIA 235)

Just as their new participation in the sacraments enlightens the neophytes' understanding of the scriptures, so, too, it increases their contact with the rest of the faithful and has an impact on the experience of the community. As a result, interaction between the neophyte and the faithful is made easier and more beneficial. (RCIA 236)

From the earliest years of the Church and in the Church today it has been a time of ongoing formation and maturation in the faith for those who had been baptised and received into the community during the Triduum (the Neophytes). Neophyte, again from the Greek, meaning 'newly planted' is the name given to the newly baptised.

The goal of this period of postbaptismal catechesis was to engage the newly baptised in a more profound experience of the Paschal Mystery both on an intellectual level as well as on the level of lived personal experience. Both the *personal* experience of the newly baptised and the *community* experience of the faithful were of crucial importance during this stage of the catechumenal journey.

In the Easter season the neophytes reflect on the meaning of the rites, the signs and symbols of the Easter Vigil as the visible means through which they were initiated into a new life of grace and into the Christian community of believers.

They gather each week to deepen their grasp of the great Paschal Mystery into which they have just been incorporated. These new Christians have received the Body of Christ and have indeed become part of the Body of Christ through their Baptism. The Church uses this time to help the newly baptised (and newly received) to live out their lives as part of the Body of Christ.

Mystagogy, too, is about mission. The new Christians, now part of Christ's body, must now go forth with us to continue the mission of Jesus Christ.

So, the period of mystagogy is a time for:

- living a sacramental life
- living out the gospel way of life
- becoming more involved in the parish

Practical Suggestions

- Successful Mystagogy begins with the first interview with an enquirer.
- Include the concept of Mystagogy as an integral part of the process from the very beginning (for all involved and in planning), avoiding any hint of Easter being the end or the goal.
- Include the formal period of Mystagogy in any written calendar of events for the entire process so that it is always seen in the context of the whole process.
- Develop competency at breaking open the Word during the Catechumenate.
- "Expect" Neophytes to gather the week after initiation to share stories and pictures of their Easter Vigil celebration and to share the Scriptures for the Sundays of Easter, in light of their sacramental experiences.
- Avoid the temptation to use the six weeks of Easter as a time for information and recruitment for parish service.
- Plan for monthly gatherings following the Pentecost celebration
- Plan with them from the beginning to celebrate their first anniversary at the next Pentecost.
- Encourage the Neophytes to take ownership of their gatherings
- Lead them into deeper prayer and into greater participation in the parish community.
- Offer a special invitation to Neophytes to participate in various sacramental experiences throughout the year, and then to reflect on them together.
- Hold a special gathering each year for all Neophytes from the previous years.

Some thoughts for the neophytes:

- Share your experience of sacramental initiation at the Easter Vigil.
- How did the signs and symbols and the scripture readings of the Easter Vigil deepen your understanding of the new life of faith you received in the sacraments of initiation?
- How will you continue your spiritual journey through participation in the sacraments, study of scripture and prayer, and service in the Christian community?
- How are you called to be a witness to your Easter faith in the resurrection of Christ?

Events for the newly baptised

- Masses of the Easter season – special places in the congregation should be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents. RCIA 238
- Some sort of celebration to close the period of postbaptismal catechesis during the Easter season near to Pentecost. RCIA 239
- On the anniversary of their Baptism neophytes should be brought together – to give thanks to God, to share spiritual experiences and to renew their commitment. RCIA 240
- The Bishop should meet and celebrate the Eucharist with the newly baptised at least once in the year. RCIA 241

The Mass for New Catholics, celebrated by the Cardinal, takes place at the Cathedral during the Easter season. This year this is planned to take place on **Saturday 11th May 2024** at 6pm.

Care for New Catholics (*Drawn from 'Six Steps to Effective Mystagogy – Miriam Malone, SNJM – <https://web.archive.org/web/20160406131049/http://www.rpinet.com/ml/2703mys.html>*)

- The community needs to maintain support for the neophytes. Having been part of small faith communities during the initiation process there is a need to have regular contact with a small community which will continue to provide support.
- Withdrawal/Removal of support of godparents and catechists, who believe that their job is done, causes problems. It may be that now they need the support even more.
- It is important to offer specific avenues by which new Catholics can be nurtured in faith and involved in parish life.

A Prayer for Catechists

God of all truth,
Our minds are muddled,
Our bodies strive in vain,
When we try to speak of your mysteries.
Be for us the God of infinite clarity!
Help us to say what we mean,
And mean what we say.
Bring light to our lives
That they may tell of your Light.
Inspire us to leave the shelters and the shields we
have built for ourselves.
By the power of the Holy Spirit make us open to
you
And open to each other so that in all we do and
say
The world may see and know
The Word who is life,
Jesus Christ, your Son.
AMEN

*(Conference prayer – Loud & Clear -Revealing God's Word Today – Exeter University
July 2004)*

Part 2: Resourcing the RCIA

RCIA & RITE of ELECTION PREPARATION 2023/24

Important steps in the RCIA process, related documentation and interviews:

Before you start the RCIA process

The **Parish Priest** should interview each person who asks to join the parish RCIA process before it starts to make sure that they are able and free to begin the process. **As this may involve them talking about possibly painful memories of the past and be of a very confidential nature, this task should not be delegated by the parish priest to anyone other than to another priest of the parish.**

In a gentle and pastoral way, he will be able to:

- ascertain the 'state of life' of each potential Catechumen and Candidate. He will be able to ask about their marriage and any previous marriage(s) and any other issues which might be inconsistent with being a Catholic Christian (cf, RCIA 5, 13, 35, 43, 108, Canon Law 530 and 865). (See page 20 – Marriage Status Chart) **If the person has been married and divorced, they should be referred to the Marriage Tribunal, even if they have not entered another union or have any immediate plans to do so**
- discern what catechesis or process is most appropriate for the Candidates who have already been baptised, exploring their understanding of the Baptism they have already received and their knowledge and practice of life as a Christian (cf RCIA 75). (See page 4 – RCIA Process Chart for Enquirers)
- Documentation: Complete an Initial Enquiry Form for all enquirers (see page 22).

At end of the Pre-Catechumenate period

Before the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (or at the end of the time of enquiry before the Rite of Welcome), the Parish Priest should interview each Catechumen and Candidate once more. At this point in time the weight of discernment on whether or not an individual should go forward rests with the individual; nonetheless, before the rite is celebrated, it is important for the Parish Priest to evaluate the person's motives and dispositions (cf RCIA 43).

- Note: Canon Law grants prerogatives to catechumens which are proper to all Christians. They may participate in some activities proper to Christians, but not in those that are exclusive to Christians. (Can. 206§2; cf RCIA 47).
- Documentation: Once they have been accepted into the Order of Catechumens the new Catechumens should be registered in the parish in a **Book of Catechumens**, together with the names of their sponsors, the minister, and the date and place of celebration should also be included. Candidates are not received into the Order of Catechumens because they are already baptised, but you may want to keep a record in a parish book.

Before the Rite of Election

The Parish Priest should interview each person again. This time the weight of discernment on whether to proceed rests with the Church (cf RCIA 75). In his discernment, therefore, the Parish Priest might fruitfully collaborate with Godparents, Sponsors and catechists.

Documentation

If the decision is to proceed with Baptism or reception, the parish priest should ensure that an **Application for Admission into Full Communion with the Catholic Church** is completed and returned to the Agency for Evangelisation for every Catechumen (*those who will be fully initiated by Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil*) and every Candidate (*those already baptised, who are preparing for reception, Confirmation and to receive the Eucharist*) before **26th January 2024**. These will be collated by the Agency and forwarded to the Chancery.

A copy of this form can be found on pages 23 and 24 of this booklet.

The completed application (both pages) must be signed by every Catechumen or Candidate and must be witnessed and dated by the parish priest and sent to the Agency for Evangelisation (not the Chancery office) prior to the Rite of Election. When sending your completed applications please also inform the Agency how many of your Catechumens and Candidates will be attending the Rite of Election. (using form on page 25)

The deadline for submitting completed applications and informing us how many Catechumens and Candidates will be attending the Rite of Election is **26th January 2024**. They should be sent to:

**Warren Brown,
Diocese of Westminster,
Vaughan House,
46 Francis Street,
London SW1P 1QN**

After the Easter Vigil (or when the Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated)

Please remember to enter the information into the Parish Registers:

Documentation

Catechumens (Neophytes)

- are registered in the baptismal register (noting their confirmation too).
- and also in the Confirmation register.

Candidates

- are registered in a special book of those received into the Church, Register of Receptions. A note of their place and date of Baptism should also be included.
- are also registered in the Confirmation register

If you have any questions, please contact the Agency for Evangelisation:

Louise Walton (Catechesis Coordinator) 020 7931 6090

louisewalton@rcdow.org.uk

Anna Dupelycz (Catechesis Adviser) 020 7798 9026

annadupelycz@rcdow.org.uk

or call:

Brenda Roberts or Laura Dale

Telephone: 020 7798 9037 or 020 7931 6042

e-mail: chancery@rcdow.org.uk

Notes:

You will find a letter to the Catechumens and Candidates to explain the arrangements for the Rite of Election page 28.

To assist you with the process, we have provided a practical checklist of things that need to be done during the RCIA process. (See page 19)

RCIA Practical Checklist

Before you begin the RCIA process:

- Have you interviewed each enquirer and filled out an initial enquiry form?
- Have you ascertained the enquirer's 'state of life'?
- Have you discerned what catechesis is desirable for the candidates?
- Have you informed the parish community that you have people enquiring about becoming Catholic?

At the end of the pre-catechumenate period:

- Have you interviewed each enquirer again to evaluate their motives and dispositions?
- Have you informed the parish community that there are people preparing to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (or the Rite of Welcome)?
- Have you registered the Catechumens in the Book of Catechumens?

Before the Rite of Election:

- Have you interviewed each catechumen and candidate again to discern whether they should proceed?
- Have you ensured that the Application for Admission into Full Communion with the Catholic Church is completed and sent to the diocese? This needs to be completed before **26th January 2024** for every Catechumen and Candidate.
- Have you celebrated a Rite of Signing in your parish or in your deanery – during the two weeks before the Rite of Election?
- Have you sent forth your catechumens and candidates from one of the parish Masses to the Cathedral for the Rite of Election? This can be done on the day or the week before.

On the day of the Rite of Election:

- Have you brought the signed signature card for the Catechumens to be inserted in the Book of the Elect?

After the Easter Vigil (or after the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation)

- Have you entered the names of the Catechumens and the Candidates into the appropriate Parish Registers?

Catechumens:

- Are they registered in the Baptismal register (where their Confirmation should also be noted)?
- Are they registered in the Confirmation register?

Candidates:

- Are they registered in a special book of those received into the Church noting the date and place they were baptised?
- Are they registered in the Confirmation register?

During the period of Mystagogy

- Have you invited your new Catholics to the Mass for New Catholics at the Cathedral?

(Saturday 11th May 2024 – 6pm at the Cathedral)

Marriage status chart

VALID MARRIAGES				
Status of person → ↓	UNBAPTISED	BAPTISED CATHOLIC ⁽ⁱ⁾	BAPTISED EASTERN NON-CATHOLIC	BAPTISED CHRISTIAN
UNBAPTISED	Public exchange of vows	Catholic service (2)		Public exchange of vows
BAPTISED CATHOLIC ⁽ⁱ⁾	Catholic service (2)	Catholic service (2)	Catholic service (2)	Catholic service (2)
BAPTISED EASTERN NON-CATHOLIC		Catholic service (2)	Eastern non-Catholic service	Eastern non-Catholic service
BAPTISED CHRISTIAN	Public exchange of vows	Catholic service (2)	Eastern non-Catholic service	Public exchange of vows
(2) Catholic Service: Exchange of vows in a Catholic Church before a priest or deacon delegated by the parish priest, with two witnesses (Unless a dispensation has been granted by the bishop). (Public Exchange of vows = legal marriage before a registrar or equivalent.)				
Summary of Marriages which needs investigation or declaration of freedom is required				
Status of person → ↓	UNBAPTISED CATECHUMEN	BAPTISED EASTERN NON-CATHOLIC	BAPTISED CHRISTIAN CANDIDATE	BAPTISED ROMAN CATHOLIC CANDIDATE
FORMER SPOUSE: UNBAPTISED	Public exchange of vows: Annulment needed or Pauline privilege.	Eastern non-Catholic service: Annulment needed or Petrine privilege. Outside Eastern non-Catholic service: No annulment needed.	Public exchange of vows: Annulment needed or Petrine privilege.	Catholic service: Annulment needed or Petrine privilege. Outside Catholic Church without permission. (i) Declaration of Freedom is required
FORMER SPOUSE: BAPTISED CATHOLIC	Catholic service: Annulment needed or Petrine privilege. Outside Catholic Church without permission. (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Eastern non-Catholic/Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Eastern non-Catholic or Catholic service: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Catholic Church without permission. (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Catholic Church without permission: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required
FORMER SPOUSE: BAPTISED EASTERN NON-CATHOLIC	Outside Eastern non-Catholic service. (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Eastern non-Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Eastern non-Catholic service: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Eastern non-Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Eastern non-Catholic service: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Catholic /Eastern non-Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Catholic Church without permission: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required
FORMER SPOUSE: BAPTISED CHRISTIAN	Public exchange of vows: Annulment needed or Petrine privilege.	Eastern non-Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Eastern non-Catholic service: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required	Public exchange of vows: Annulment needed	Catholic service: Annulment needed Outside Catholic Church without permission: (i) Declaration of Freedom is required
(i) Please contact the Chancery: chancery@rcdow.org.uk				
If you are in any doubt about the status of a marriage, please always contact the Chancery				

Priests should always submit **AN APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION INTO FULL COMMUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH** to the Chancery for all adult Candidates for reception & Confirmation.

Suggested newsletter inserts for RCIA moments:

At end of the pre-catechumenate period

(Generally the beginning of Advent – but whenever is appropriate)

- An insert for your newsletter at this time:
“At the [whatever] Mass this Sunday, we will celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, a liturgical rite for those who wish to become catechumens – when they will publicly express their desire to follow the way of Jesus. We will also celebrate the Rite of Welcome for those Christians who want to become Roman Catholics. Please pray for [N] as we accept their intention and welcome them into our parish community.”

For the Rite of Signing

(First Sunday of Lent or the week before)

- An insert for your newsletter at this time:
“At the [whatever] Mass this Sunday [or, in the deanery this week], we will celebrate the Rite of Signing with our catechumens. We will then send them forth to the Cathedral, where the Archbishop will formally acknowledge their readiness and will call them to the Sacraments of Initiation. The catechumens will now be called the Elect. Please pray for [N] as they prayerfully prepare for full communion with the Catholic Church.”

After the Easter Vigil (or when the Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated)

- An insert for your newsletter at this time:
“At the Easter Vigil [or whenever], the Elect and the candidates become full members of the Body of Christ, the Church. The Elect will celebrate the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist and the candidates will celebrate the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist. Please pray for our new Catholics.”

During the Period of Mystagogy

(Before Pentecost)

1. An insert for your newsletter:
“The final stage of the RCIA is called Mystagogy – understanding the mysteries – and this takes place during the Easter season and beyond. Our new Catholics will ponder the experience and meaning of the sacraments and participate with the faithful in the eucharistic life of the church and its mission for justice and peace. Please pray for our new Catholics and make them feel welcome in the community.”

Initial Enquiry Form

Confidential Information Enquiry Form for all enquirers

First Name _____ Family Name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Telephone number _____ E-mail _____

If you are not Catholic:

Are you baptised? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, in which denomination? _____

(Please let us have a copy of your baptismal certificate as soon as possible.)

Do you go to your Church on an occasional weekly basis?

Do you come to a Catholic Church on an occasional weekly basis?

If you are Catholic:

Do you come to a Catholic Church on an occasional weekly basis?

Have you received the following sacraments? Tick where appropriate

Baptism? Please give the name and address of the church where you were baptised:

Eucharist (Communion)

Reconciliation (Confession)

Confirmation (Church: _____ Date: _____)

Marriage (Place: _____ Date _____)

For all candidates:

Have you friends who are Catholic? If you wish, you may give their names:

Tick any of the following boxes which are appropriate:

I am married to a Catholic

I am married; but not to a Catholic

I have been married before

I am divorced but not remarried

I have been married once

I am presently separated

I have never been married

I am divorced and remarried

Is there any other information you would like to add about yourself?

Signature _____ Date _____

Protecting your privacy Your personal details will be held on file/stored on the parish computer securely. After the completion of the RCIA process your details will be entered into the parish Registers. *You can read our full privacy policy at <https://rcdow.org.uk/privacy/>*



Diocese of Westminster

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION INTO FULL COMMUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

* TICK AS APPROPRIATE

Date granted:

This form must be completed before the Rite of Election

CATECHUMEN * <input type="checkbox"/>	CANDIDATE * <input type="checkbox"/>
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

IT CAN ALSO BE USED IN THE CASE OF A CATHOLIC GOING THROUGH RCIA AND NOW SEEKING CONFIRMATION

CONFIRMATION * <input type="checkbox"/>

Surname *(in block capitals)*:

First Names:

Sex: **Age**: *If under 18, indicate whether parents or guardians have given their consent: 'Yes' OR 'No'*

(N.B. Petitions need only be sent to the Chancery Office for those aged 14 years and over)

Marital Status:

*(i.e. single, married, widowed, separated, divorced or *remarried) *if in a second marriage, the validity of that marriage should be investigated to make sure it does not require validation before Baptism / Reception / Confirmation*

To what Denomination, Religion or Sect has the person belonged?

.....

Has the person been *baptised?

*(*Evidence of baptism should be seen by the priest – if there is doubt about validity, please contact the Chancery Office before completing the form)*

If so, please state:

(a) In what Church:

(b) Date:

(c) Is there any reasonable doubt about the validity of the baptism?

What preparation has the catechumen/candidate received?

.....

Are you satisfied that the candidate is ready to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church?

Please provide the name of a Catholic who will sponsor and support the new member:

Signature of Priest / Deacon:

(Please print:)

Countersignature of Parish Priest:

(Required when a Deacon is making the application)

Address:

..... *Updated 2018*

**PETITION FOR ADMISSION INTO FULL COMMUNION
WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

It is my sincere and carefully considered conviction that God is asking me to find the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church.

I believe in what the Catholic Church holds and teaches, and I hope to grow in my faith and understanding; I wish to shape my life in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ expressed through the life of the Church.

I have been supported by the faith, prayer and example of my sponsor

.....
I now of my own free will ask to be welcomed into the Catholic Church through the sacraments of initiation.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Protecting your privacy

Your personal details are required to comply with canonical and statutory requirements for the specific purpose of processing your RCIA Petition. The information will be held on file/stored on a Diocesan Chancery computer securely.

You can read our full privacy policy on <https://rcdow.org.uk/privacy/>

RITE OF ELECTION CEREMONY 2024

Our Parish RCIA Group:

Number of Catechumens: _____

Number of Candidates: _____

We have no RCIA in the parish this year *Please tick the box*

Please return this form even if you do not have the RCIA running this year.

Will your group be attending the Rite of Election Ceremony in Westminster Cathedral?

Yes. **No.**

Please tick the relevant box

Who is your lead RCIA Catechist/Contact Person:

Name:

Email:

Tel:

PLEASE GIVE THE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS OF YOUR PARISH:

(Block capitals please)

NAME OF PARISH:

ADDRESS:

DEANERY:

Please return the required information by Friday 26th January 2024 to:

Tel: 020 7798 9152 Email: catadmin@rcdow.rg.uk

**Warren Brown
Agency for Evangelisation
Vaughan House
46 Francis Street
London
SW1P 1QN**

Key moments for RCIA 2024

(For details and references, please see pages 5-14 for A Guide to the RCIA above)

Autumn (no fixed date):

Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (in parishes)

Friday 26th January:

Deadline for returning forms for the Rite of Election to the Agency for Evangelisation*

Saturday 17th February:

Rite of Election (NB 2.30pm Westminster Cathedral)

Sunday 3rd March (3rd Sunday of Lent):

First Scrutiny (in parishes)

- During this week: *The Presentation of the Creed*

Sunday 10th March (4th Sunday of Lent):

Second Scrutiny (in parishes)

Sunday 17th March (5th Sunday of Lent):

Third Scrutiny (in parishes)

- During this week: *The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer*

Saturday 30th March:

Easter Vigil (in parishes)

Saturday 11th May:

Mass for New Catholics (6pm Westminster Cathedral with a talk at 5pm)

* The two forms for the Rite of Election are:

1. Application for Admission into Full Communion with the Catholic Church
2. Rite of Election Attendance Form

Please return these forms by **26th January 2024** to:

*Warren Brown
Agency for Evangelisation
Vaughan House
46 Francis Street
London
SW1P 1QN*

Rite of Election details 2024

THE RITE OF ELECTION 2024

**This year there will be only one celebration of the Rite of Election for all parishes:
Saturday 17th February, Westminster Cathedral at 2.30p.m.**

Names and Signatures of Catechumens

Parishes are asked to present a card with **the names of Catechumens** (*those to be baptised*) only. Only one card needs to be presented. The Catechumens should sign their names on the card at a parish or deanery Rite of Signing. This card should be brought to the Cathedral for the Rite of Election when it will be placed in the Book of the Elect.

A copy of the Rite of Signing Ceremony and the Card will be sent to parishes as soon as you have returned your forms letting us know your numbers for the Rite of Election. (See page 30: Attendance Form)

Who can come to the celebration?

- Catechumens (*those who will be fully initiated by Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil*) and their Godparents
- Candidates (*those already baptised, who are preparing for Confirmation and to receive the Eucharist*) and their sponsors
- Parish representatives (normally the catechists, the parish priest and other members of the parish)
- Relatives and friends of the catechumens and candidates.

Where can people sit?

There are no reserved seats in the Cathedral. In order to avoid disappointment or being split up you are advised to arrive at the Cathedral in plenty of time. **You will not be allowed to reserve seats for groups of people who will arrive later.** We advise that you arrive together. We suggest everyone is seated by 2pm and we shall introduce the service and the music at around 2.15pm.

Godparents and Sponsors – should sit next to their respective Catechumens and Candidates, but should remain in their seats when the Catechumens and Candidates are called forward to the front of the Cathedral to be greeted by the bishops. Each group of Catechumens and Candidates should be led forward by their parish priest or one of the catechists.

Order of Service

An order of service will be provided on the day. It will include a step-by-step guide of what happens during the Rite and include italicised notes telling Catechumens, Candidates, Godparents and Sponsors what to do at various times during the Rite.

Sample letter explaining arrangements for the Rite of Election at Westminster Cathedral

Dear

This letter explains the arrangements for the Rite of Election at the Cathedral on Saturday 17th February 2024 at 2.30pm

1. Godparents, Sponsors and guests.

Your Godparent(s)/ sponsor should accompany you to the Cathedral. Other members of your family and the parish are welcome to attend. The role of the sponsor will have been explained during our RCIA preparation meetings in the parish, and they would usually have been chosen well before this event at the Cathedral.

2. Travel

We will need to be in our seats at the Cathedral by 2.00pm for the introduction to the Rite of Election. In order to be in our seats by 2.00 pm we will need to leave our Church byat the latest.

3. The Rite

The Rite lasts about an hour and a half. It is divided into four parts: 1) Introductory Rites, 2) Liturgy of the Word, 3) Celebration of Election and Affirmation and 4) Concluding Rite. An order of service will be provided. It will contain a step-by-step guide of what happens during the Rite including helpful notes about what catechumens, candidates and sponsors should be do at various times during the Rite.

Act of Recognition

The name of each parish will be called out alphabetically by the deans, deanery by deanery. Please wait for the name of our parish to be called out, and then the elect and the candidates and one of our catechists will go forward to be greeted by the Archbishop and his assistant bishops. Their greeting of you is a mark of the affection and support that the whole Church wishes to offer you.

4. Dress

The Cathedral tends to be on the cold side in February/March so please dress accordingly. There is no formal dress code for those who will be meeting the Bishops, but most people would wear smart casual clothing.

5. If you have any outstanding questions

Please contact our parish priest or RCIA Coordinator

Mass for New Catholics 2024

Place, time and date

Westminster Cathedral at 6:00 p.m. Saturday 11th May 2024

Who can come to the celebration?

new Catholics, their godparents and sponsors
parish representatives (normally the catechists, parishioners
and parish priests), plus
relatives and friends of the new Catholics

Online resources for support and formation of RCIA Catechists

RCIA Network of England & Wales: <https://rcia.org.uk/>



'The RCIA Network is made up of people who have leadership roles in the RCIA process in Dioceses and parishes, and exists to support them in their work and to promote an authentic understanding of the Church's teaching about the Rite.' Its website is currently under reconstruction but many of its resources are accessible.

TEAMRCIA: <https://teamrcia.com/>

TEAMRCIA 'provides accessible and effective RCIA resources that help parish teams initiate and form disciples for Christ's mission.' It offers online training, articles supporting the RCIA process, free subscription to a weekly newsletter. TEAMRCIA have given us permission to give access to one of their downloadable resources here – a free ebook - so you can have an idea of what they offer: 'RCIA's Six Keys to Making Lifelong Disciples' - <https://teamrcia.com/sixkeysbook>

CATECHUMENEON: <https://catechumeneon.org/>

LTP (Liturgy Training Publications) Catechumeneon website is a 'collection of training and print resources focused on Christian initiation and designed to assist parishes with understanding and implementing the vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The naming of this initiative is inspired by an ancient Greek word used to describe the meeting place for catechumens; it is a place for prayer, study, and formation. Rooted in the vision of the rite, *Catechumeneon* resources and training opportunities provide catechists and other initiation ministers the formation and tools they need to journey with catechumens as they approach the waters of rebirth.'

Catechumeneon offers a series of excellent free virtual events, at times accessible to UK users.

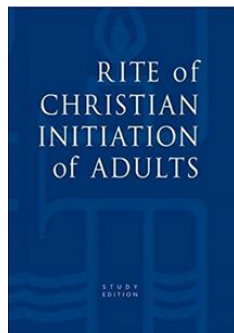
LTP also has a series of short videos on many topics including a series on various elements of the RCIA process. They can be accessed here: <https://vimeopro.com/ltp/ltp-videos>, sign in to Vimeo required.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR CATECHUMENAL MINISTRY (ACM): <https://acmrcia.org/>

ACM 'seeks to foster the full implementation of the Order of Christian Initiation by providing a communications, resources, and education network for diocesan and parish personnel involved in the work of the catechumenate. The Association's resources and work reflect its focus on the complementarity and indispensability of the various components (liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral) of a comprehensive Christian initiation process.'

Published Resources – by no means an exhaustive list

Where no website is given these books are out of print but used copies are available from online booksellers (e.g. Amazon, Abe Books, Eden). For many published resources publishers or Google Books offer a 'Look Inside'. Where resources are directly available from UK booksellers the UK website is given. McCrimmons are the UK distributor for Liturgy Training Publications.

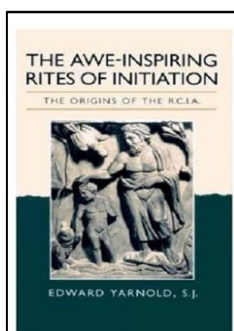
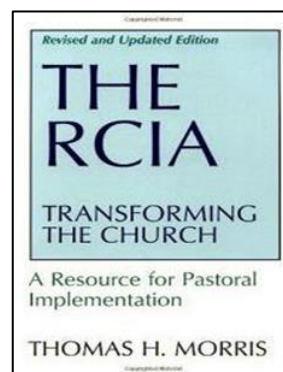


THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

This is an essential for all RCIA catechists. There are a number of versions of the Rite but a useful copy is: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – A Study Book. As the new Order of Christian Initiation of Adults is in preparation versions of the Rite are currently out of print but used copies are available from various online booksellers.

THE RCIA –TRANSFORMING THE CHURCH

Thomas H. Morris, Paulist Press, 1997



THE AWE-INSPIRING RITES OF INITIATION – THE ORIGINS OF THE RCIA

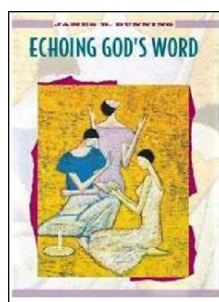
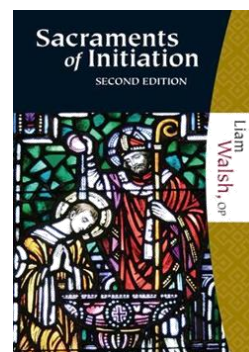
– Edward Yarnold, S.J. Publ. LTP 1994

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION, SECOND EDITION: A THEOLOGY OF LIFE, WORD, AND RITE

Liam Walsh O.P.

Liturgy Training Publications, U.S., 2011

<https://ltp.org/products/details/HSI2/sacraments-of-initiation-second-edition>



ECHOING GOD'S WORD: FORMATION FOR CATECHISTS & HOMILISTS IN A CATECHUMENAL CHURCH

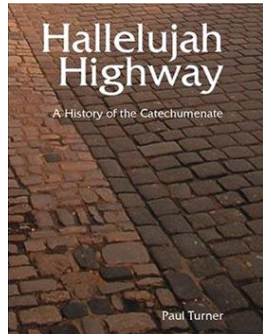
James Dunning

Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1993.

THE RITES OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION: THEIR EVOLUTION AND INTERPRETATION -

Maxwell E. Johnson

Published by Pueblo Publishing Co ,U.S.; Rev Ed edition 2000



THE HALLELUJAH HIGHWAY: A HISTORY OF THE CATECHUMENATE

Paul Turner

Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 2000.

<https://www.ltp.org/products/details/HWY>

CELEBRATING THE RITES OF ADULT INITIATION: PASTORAL REFLECTIONS,

edited by Victoria M. Tufano

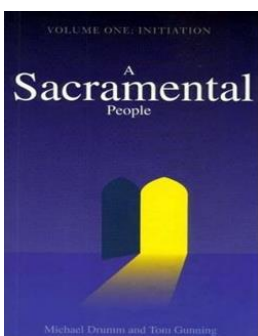
Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1986



A SACRAMENTAL PEOPLE: INITIATION VOL. 1,

Michael Drumm and Tom Gunning

Published by Columbia Press, Dublin, 1999

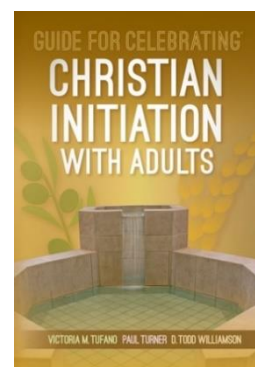


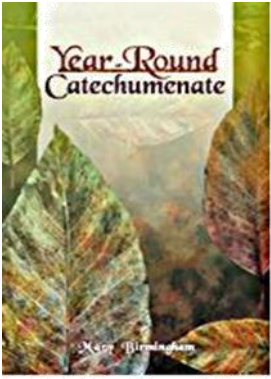
GUIDE FOR CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN INITIATION WITH ADULTS

By Victoria M. Tufano, Paul Turner , D Todd Williamson

Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago 2016

<https://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/ltp-liturgy-training-publications/guide-for-celebrating-christian-initiation-with-adults/>





YEAR-ROUND CATECHUMENATE

Mary Birmingham

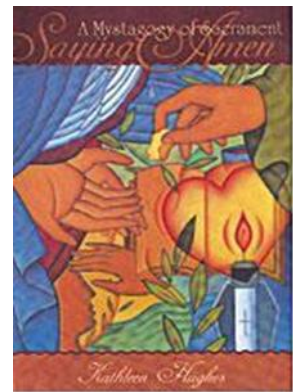
Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 2002

<https://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/books/year-round-catechumenate/>

SAYING AMEN – A MYSTAGOGY OF SACRAMENT

Kathleen Hughes Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 2007

<https://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/books/saying-amen-a-mystagogy-of-sacrament/#1736>



Celebrating Initiation
A Guide for Priests



Paul Turner

CELEBRATING INITIATION: A GUIDE FOR PRIESTS

Paul Turner

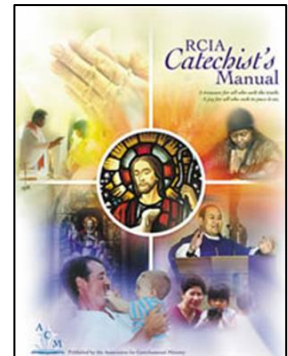
Published by World Library Publications, Illinois, 2008

<https://wlpria.com/shop/celebrating-initiation-a-guide-for-priests-paul-turner/>

RCIA CATECHISTS' MANUAL Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Barbara A. Morgan and William J. Keimig, Editors

ALSO available: RCIA Leader's Manual, RCIA Participant's Book and CD-ROM, RCIA Godparent & Sponsor Handbook

<https://acmrcia.org/resources/>



FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH COMPLETE SET OF RCIA RESOURCES

Bob Duggan, Carol Gura, et al

Director's Guide & Leader's Guides: Precatechumenate, Catechumenate (Years A, B & C), Purification & Enlightenment, Mystagogy, Sponsors

Published by Resources for Christian Living, Allen, Texas, 1998

<https://rclbenziger.com/foundations-in-faith>



EVANGELIUM PRESENTER'S GUIDE & PARTICIPANT'S BOOK, - (Second Edition)

Fr. Michael Holden and Fr. Andrew Pinsent

Published by the Catholic Truth Society, London 2010

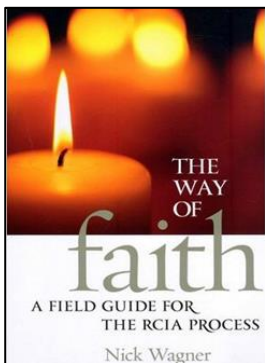
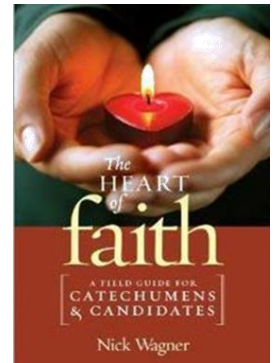
<https://www.ctsbooks.org/product/evangelium-presenters-guide/>

THE HEART OF FAITH, A FIELD GUIDE FOR CATECHUMENS & CANDIDATES

Nick Wagner

Published by Twenty-Third Publications (2010)

<https://teamrcia.com/store/heartoffaith/>



THE WAY OF FAITH: A FIELD GUIDE TO THE RCIA PROCESS

Nick Wagner

Published by Twenty-Third Publications, New London, CT, 2008

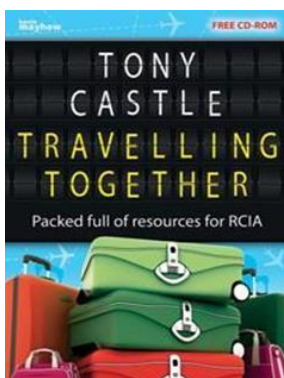
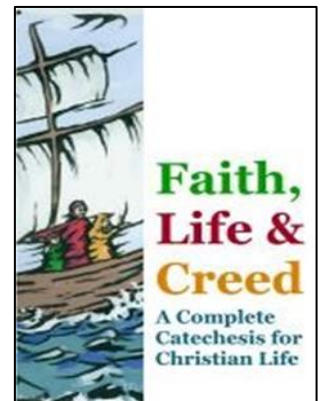
<https://teamrcia.com/store/wayoffaith/>

FAITH, LIFE, & CREED: A COMPLETE CATECHESIS FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Mary Birmingham

Published by Twenty-third Publications, New London, CT, 2011

<https://teamrcia.com/resources/faith-life-creed/>



TRAVELLING TOGETHER: PACKED FULL OF RESOURCES FOR RCIA

Tony Castle

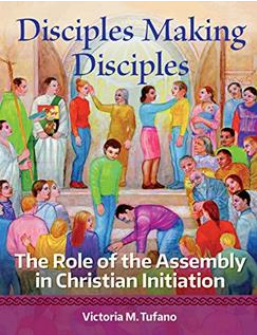
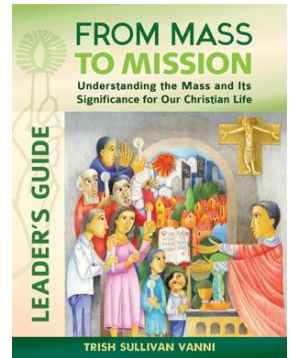
Published by Kevin Mayhew, Stowmarket, Suffolk, 2011

<https://www.kevinmayhew.com/products/travelling-together-1501270>

FROM MASS TO MISSION: UNDERSTANDING THE MASS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE – a series by Trish Sullivan Vanni

Published by Liturgy Training Publications Chicago 2016

<https://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/ltp-liturgy-training-publications/from-mass-to-mission-leaders-guide-adults/>



DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES: THE ROLE OF THE ASSEMBLY IN CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Victoria M. Tufano

Published by Liturgy Training Publications Chicago 2018

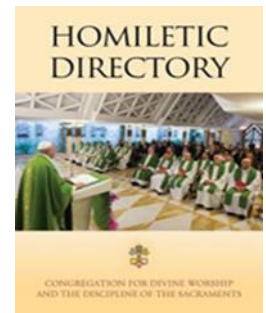
<https://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/church/disciples-making-disciples-print-and-digital-resource-for-forming-the-assembly/parentref-17280.html>

HOMILETIC DIRECTORY- Congregation for Divine Worship & the Discipline of the Sacraments

Published by CTS 2015

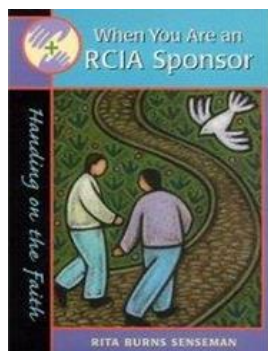
In Appendix 1 references are given to the Catechism according to various doctrinal themes in the readings for each of the Sundays and Feasts of the three-year cycle. Available to download at

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20140629_direttorio-omiletico_en.html



SPONSORS & GODPARENTS

Resources such as Foundations In Faith and Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) above include booklets for sponsors in their series



WHEN YOU ARE AN RCIA SPONSOR: HANDING ON THE FAITH SERIES

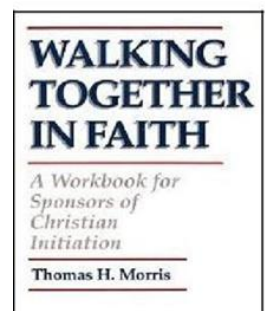
Rita Burns Senseman

Published by St Anthony Messenger Press, CN, OH, 2001

WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH: A WORKBOOK FOR SPONSORS –

Thomas H. Morris

Published by Paulist Press International, U.S., 1992



A useful resource produced in our Diocese by Fr Stephen Wang

SYCAMORE

<https://sycamore.fm/>

Written, Presented and Produced by Fr Stephen Wang

Filmed by Higham & Co.

'Sycamore' is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. It is free to use (with the option to make donations), adapted for use with online/remote groups and to either stream or download the videos.

- **Sycamore is first of all a stand-alone enquiry course and a tool for "primary evangelisation"**. It seeks to share what is at the heart of the Christian faith with those who have not heard it before or with those whose understanding of Christianity is very limited. It creates a space for honest and open discussion about faith and about life in general. It helps people, if they wish, to respond to what they have heard by taking the first steps of faith.
- **But Sycamore can also form part of a wider programme of faith formation, catechesis or sacramental preparation.** It starts with the basics of Christian faith and then goes deeper into the Creed, the Church, Christian living, prayer, and the sacraments.

Sycamore & Sacramental Preparation

In itself, Sycamore doesn't claim to be a comprehensive presentation of the faith, but offers guidance as to how it can be used as tool as part of sacramental preparation.



In its suggested '**Sacramental Pathways**', the films can be used in an RCIA setting for anything from a short enquiry period to a full 2 year process. There are support materials for those who are using the films as part of RCIA and other areas of sacramental preparation. Follow this link for '**Sacramental Pathways**':

<https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/c-sacramental-pathways/>

Sycamore is now currently offered in 11 languages

Further information

For more information about Sycamore please visit the website at <https://www.sycamore.fm/> The twenty films can be found there, including how to enable subtitles currently available in 11 languages. There is a wealth of information and guidance as to how the films can be used and how the content can be supplemented with YouCat.

RCIA Glossary of terms

Advent

The beginning of season the new Liturgical Year. Four weeks before Christmas that focuses on a twofold theme: preparing for the Second Coming of Christ and preparing for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Acceptance into the Catechumenate may take place on the First Sunday of Advent.

Adult

An adult of legal age, or a child who has attained the use of reason and is of catechetical age. Catechetical age is defined as “in or around 7 years of age” (Canon 97:2)

Candidate (Enquirer)

- 1) Any person in the period of the pre-Catechumenate.
- 2) One who is baptised as a Catholic but did not receive further catechetical formation, nor the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.
- 3) One who is already baptised in another Christian faith and has not received a suitable catechesis and who now is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of full reception, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed, and receive the Eucharist.

Catechumen

An unbaptised adult who has been accepted into the Order of Catechumens through the Rite of Acceptance.

Catechumenate

- 1) The entire initiation process is sometimes called the Catechumenal process, in reference to “one in instruction” Galatians 6.
- 2) The second period of the Catechumenal Process in which, after the Rite of Acceptance, Catechumens enter into an extended period of time and are given a suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life.

Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

The Third step in the Catechumenal process is the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist). Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God...lead by the Holy Spirit...and share in the Eucharistic sacrifice. This most normally coincides, by ancient tradition, with the Easter Vigil.

Children

There is a form of the RCIA which is adapted for children. That is, those children not baptised as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age. The age of reason is defined by Canon Law as in or around the age of 7 (CIC 97:2).

Cycle A, B, C

The three year cycle of liturgical readings: A Cycle – Gospel of Matthew; B Cycle – Gospel of Mark; C Cycle - Gospel of Luke. All three cycles incorporate the Gospel of John.

Easter Season

A period of seven weeks beginning with Easter Sunday and ending with the feast of Pentecost. An expected time of Post-Baptismal Catechesis/Mystagogy.

Elect

The name given to Catechumens who after completing an apprenticeship in the Christian life, celebrate the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent signifying their being chosen for initiation at the Easter celebration.

Evangelisation

- 1) “The carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of the human race” (EN 18)
- 2) The lifelong process of conversion to Jesus Christ (GDC 47)
- 3) The first period of Evangelisation and Pre-Catechumenate, which seeks to introduce Candidates to Christ, by: a) faithfully and constantly proclaiming the living God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all, b) a suitable explanation of the Gospel, c) an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

Godparents

Those who are selected by the Catechumen to accompany them on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. They must be fully initiated members of the Catholic faith and should be able to perform the responsibilities as outlined in the Rite.

Enquirers

Those who participate in the pre-Catechumenate. They are "inquiring" into Christianity in the Catholic Tradition.

Lectionary

The book used in liturgical celebrations that contains all the scripture readings of the Liturgical Year.

Lent

A six-week period extending from Ash Wednesday to sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a retreat time in preparation for the Easter Triduum. For the "Elect" who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter Vigil, and the Candidates who are preparing to receive full initiation during the Easter Season, this season correlates with the period of Purification & Enlightenment.

Liturgical Year

The seasons and cycles of the Christian year that follows the life of Christ. It is the instrument and means for leading God's people along the way to the Lord. The readings introduce and invite us into the Paschal Mystery.

Minor Rites

Rites during the Period of the Catechumenate which include exorcisms, blessings, and anointings.

Mystagogy / Post Baptismal Catechesis

The final period of the Catechumenal process which, the newly baptised, "neophytes", and the newly initiated 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 works of Charity. The immediate period of mystagogy is from Easter to Pentecost; however it is recommended to extend the period of mystagogy for one year.

Neophyte

One who is initiated at the Easter Vigil. The term comes from the Greek word meaning "newly planted".

Ninety Days

Occasionally used to mean the combination of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, and the Period of Mystagogy which corresponds with Lent (40 days) and the Easter Season (50 days).

Ordinary Time

The cycle within the Liturgical Year that is outside the liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent & Easter). The readings during this time follow the ministry of Jesus, His teachings and miracles. This time provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of God's gift to us in Christ, our attitudes, our prayer life, and our service to others.

Pre-Catechumenate & Evangelisation

The first period of the Catechumenal process is evangelisation, which seeks to introduce Candidates to Christ, by: a) faithfully and constantly proclaiming the living God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all, b) a suitable explanation of the Gospel, c) an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

Presentation of Creed / Presentation of Our Father

During the period of purification and enlightenment, the elect are presented with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer through special Rites that usually coincide with the Scrutinies.

Purification and Enlightenment

The third period of the Catechumenal process, normally coinciding with Lent, followed by the Rite of Election, which seeks to introduce the Elect, and Candidates to a period of intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction. It is the final period of preparation before reception of the Sacraments of Initiation.

RCIA

Acronym for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

English title of *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum* (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) The latest English translation edition was published in 1987.

Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

The First Step in the Catechumenal process, in which the unbaptised are officially accepted into the Order of Catechumens. It is of the utmost importance that assembling publicly for the first time, the Candidates who have completed the period of the Pre-Catechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn accepts them.

Rite of Welcome

Optional rite welcoming those Candidates who were previously baptised but uncatechised to begin their preparation. The Church acknowledges that such Candidates are already part of the community by Baptism, and now surrounds them with special care and support. A combined Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Rite of Welcoming baptised but previously uncatechised adults is provided for in the RCIA, however care must be taken to maintain distinction between the Catechumens and the baptised Candidates.

Rite of Sending

An optional rite by which the parish community sends the Catechumens to the Rite of Election, and Candidates for recognition by the Bishop, and Call to Continuing Conversion.

Rite of Election

The Second Step in the Catechumenal process. Presided over by the Bishop, the rite inaugurates the completion of the Period of the Catechumenate and the final period of preparation before initiation at the next Easter Vigil.

Call to Continuing Conversion

An optional rite for Candidates who have completed an extended period of preparation and now seek to be received into, or fully initiated into the Church at Easter.

Rite of Recognition

The rite by which the local Bishop receives Candidates for recognition & calls them to continuing conversion. Celebrated in the Diocese at the same time as the Rite of Election.

Rite of Scrutiny

Three special Rites for the Elect during the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent. Solemnly celebrated on Sundays and are reinforced by an exorcism, these are Rites for self-searching and repentance and above all have a spiritual purpose. Presentations of the Creed and Lord's prayer may coincide with the scrutinies.

Rite, Penitential

Celebration for Candidates, similar to the scrutinies.

Sponsor

1) The term used to refer to the person who accompanies any Candidate seeking admission as a Catechumen. They assist the Candidates, stand as witness to their moral character and present them at the Rite of Acceptance. They may also be chosen as a Godparent by the Catechumen.

2) The term for a fully initiated Catholic who will journey with a Candidate (baptised but previously uncatechised adult) through their preparation and be present at their full initiation into the Church.

The Triduum

The three days of the celebration of Easter this begins with sundown on Holy Thursday evening and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. It includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday.

RCIA 2024 Dates reminder and Contacts:

THE RITE OF ELECTION 2024

Saturday 17th February, 2024, Westminster Cathedral at 2.30p.m. for all deaneries.

**Submit: Application for Admission into Full Communion
with the Catholic Church**

Please return this form by **26th January 2024**

To: **Warren Brown**
Agency for Evangelisation
Vaughan House
46 Francis Street
London
SW1P 1QN

Submit: Rite of Election Attendance Form

Please return this form by **26th January 2024**

To: **Warren Brown**
Agency for Evangelisation
Vaughan House
46 Francis Street
London
SW1P 1QN

THE MASS FOR NEW CATHOLICS 2023

Westminster Cathedral at 6:00 p.m. Saturday 11th May 2024

Further Assistance

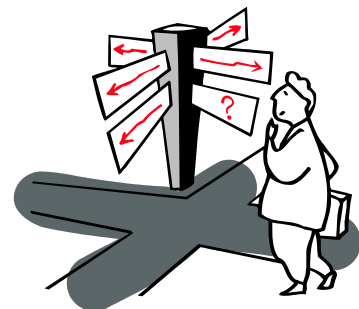
For specific advice and training for the RCIA please contact the Catechesis Advisers

Louise Walton (Catechesis Coordinator) 020 7931 6090

louisewalton@rcdow.org.uk

Anna Dupelycz (Catechesis Adviser) 020 7798 9026

annadupelycz@rcdow.org.uk



Formation for Parish Teams

While this document sets out to be a useful summary guide to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* it is not meant to replace suitable formation and training for clergy and catechists. **The Catechesis Support Team will arrange for this formation on request at parish or deanery level.**

Contact the Agency for Evangelisation, Vaughan House, 46 Francis Street, London SW1P 1QN

Tel: 020 7798 9152 website: <https://rcdow.org.uk/evangelisation/>