



**Rite of Christian
Initiation of Adults**

RCIA Handbook

for the
Diocese of Toledo, Ohio

By Diocesan RCIA Committee

2006



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Initiation of Adults**

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RCIA Handbook

FOR THE DIOCESE OF TOLEDO, OHIO

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded.” Mt 28, 19-20a

From the very beginning, evangelization has been a very important mission of the Church. Jesus mandated his disciples to bring all people to God and to teach them the Good News. Throughout the 2000 years since Jesus began his mission, the Church has upheld this mission to bring the Good News to all people. This is witnessed in the many ministries of the Church.

One ministry that truly embraces this mission is the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, more commonly referred to as the RCIA. In the Gospel we hear, *“ask and you will receive; seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened.”* The people who come to inquire into the Catholic faith have been stirred by the Spirit. In response to the movement of the Spirit in their lives, they ask, seek, and knock. It is the mission of the RCIA to draw them closer to God through the Church, the people of God, the Body of Christ. The task of RCIA is to help inquirers receive the Good News, to experience Christ working in their lives, and to be open to the continuous working of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of this handbook is to help RCIA Directors and team members with this mission and to serve as a companion text to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 1988 edition. This document has been prepared by the Diocesan RCIA Committee and was completed in 2006.

I – INTRODUCTION

This handbook is prepared for the Diocese of Toledo to answer basic questions about the RCIA and to offer some specific recommendations. Before reading this handbook, it is important first to become familiar with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), 1988 edition, and with pertinent sections of the U.S. National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), 2005 edition.

Theology of Sacraments

The sacramental rites have been revised since the Second Vatican Council. These revisions reflect a theology of sacraments that emphasizes a stronger sense of participation. The liturgical renewal is meant in part to focus more on the communal nature of celebrating sacraments. No one is in isolation. The community at worship is always an action of the whole body of Christ, Head and members.

Our lives are shaped by our experiences. The “rhythm that makes us human” is our ability to reflect on our experience and see in it the work of God’s love. Our experiences, though unique, connect us with all others in a common story. One of the catechist’s tasks is to facilitate the connections between the unique story of each person and the story of the whole people of God rooted in the living Person of Jesus Christ. Those connections form the common story that is the background for the celebration of the sacraments. For example, as a person becomes more aware of his or her own experience of sin, he or she should also grow in the knowledge that “all die in Adam,” and that “all are brought to life in Christ.” Thus, the Sacrament of Penance brings about the forgiveness of personal sins; but through the ministry of the Church, we are reconciled not only with God, but also with the Church community.

In the RCIA the catechumens reflect on their experiences of death and resurrection. By sharing their stories in the light of God’s Word and the faith of the Church, each connects with the story of all Christians who have died and risen with Jesus. In the community of those who have passed through death to resurrection, the individual catechumen discovers his or her call to Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist.

The RCIA embraces not only catechumens (the unbaptized), but also candidates (baptized Christians to be received into full Catholic communion as well as uncatechized baptized Catholics seeking to complete their initiation). Out of respect for the reality of Baptism, which once received can never be repeated, “the condition and status of those already baptized should be carefully respected and distinguished” (*RCIA*, Appendix III for the United States, n. 26). “The rite is so arranged that no greater burden than necessary is required for the establishment of communion and unity.” (*RCIA* n. 473) Discernment should take place to see if the RCIA process is the appropriate process.

Philosophy of Adult Learning – Andragogy (adult centered) vs. Pedagogy (child centered)

The Rite of Christian Initiation is designed for adults. Therefore, the methodology must be focused on the adult experience. In his book, Getting Started in Adult Religious Education, James DeBoy reminds us that adults learn best when:

- ◆ they are treated with respect, as self-directing persons
- ◆ the learning situation is related to their past experiences
- ◆ they have helped plan the learning activity
- ◆ they are physically comfortable and can socialize with others as they learn
- ◆ they are with their peers, freely learning in groups
- ◆ there are opportunities for a variety of learning activities
- ◆ a question needs resolving or a task needs completion
- ◆ they see progress
- ◆ they evaluate themselves

Sometimes there is a tendency to move into a child-centered learning model rather than using adult principles. However, as the *NDC* states, the challenge for catechists of adults is “engaging them in dialogue and reflection on the Gospel and the teachings of the Church” (p. 258).

Overview

Much has been written on the various stages of the RCIA, and the reader is encouraged to seek out these resources. This handbook will reference two diagrams. The first is from the RCIA (*Study Edition*, p.16) The second is from the North American Forum on the Catechumenate. Both give a brief overview of the RCIA.

OUTLINE FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

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, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ.

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 ENROLLMENT 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 centered 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

These are the liturgical rites, 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 during 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.

(RCIA, Study Edition, p.16)

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

Period	Name	Aim	Content	Time	Rites
Period of the Precatechumenate	Inquirers	Awakening faith	Time to build trust, to share personal stories, questions; time to proclaim the message of salvation, foster initial conversion, and be introduced into parish life.	Unlimited	No specific rites suggested

Celebration of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Rite of Welcoming Baptized but Uncatechized Adults Who Seek to Complete Their Christian Initiation

Period of the Catechumenate	Catechumens (unbaptized) or Candidates (baptized)	Deepening initial conversion and passing on Catholic tradition	Time to deepen faith/conversion within the living community through: -catechesis based on the Liturgy of the Word -the life of the community -prayer and worship -introduction to the apostolic life	One to a few years	celebration of the word blessings anointing exorcisms anticipatory rites: Presentations of Creed and Lord's Prayer Rite of Sending to Election (USA adaptation)
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Celebration of the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

Period of the Purification and Enlightenment	Elect (unbaptized) and Candidates (baptized)	Eliminate what is weak and sinful; affirm what is holy.	Time for recollection, Lenten retreat, final preparation for the celebration of the initiation sacraments	Lent	Scrutinies Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday
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Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Easter Vigil) and of the Rite of Reception Into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy	Neophytes	Celebration of faith, ministries and missioning	Deepening of sacramental life with emphasis on Gospel, Eucharist and Mission	Paschal Time (Easter to Pentecost) and then until anniversary of initiation (USA Adaptation)	Sunday eucharist with the assembly Gathering (preferably eucharist) with the bishop
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II – MINISTERS

Bishop

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, teaches that the individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches (no. 23). Further, the General Introduction of the *RCIA* states: “Bishops are the chief stewards of the mysteries of God and the leaders of the entire liturgical life in the Church committed to them. This is why they direct the conferring of baptism, which brings to the recipient a share in the kingly priesthood of Christ.” (n. 12)

In keeping with this theology, it is the Diocesan Bishop who normally presides at the annual Rite of Election and the Neophyte Eucharist, although he may delegate another to represent him.

Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Leaders

The *NDC* points out: “Priests share the teaching role of their bishops and are the immediate collaborators with them in the proclamation of the Gospel. The special role in the diocesan catechetical mission that they exercise arises directly from the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which constitutes priests as educators in the faith...the *catechist of catechists*, forming a veritable community of disciples of the Lord.” (p. 221ff).

“Deacons [also are] to serve the people of God in the ministry of the word in communion with the bishop and his *presbyterium*...With proper catechetical training...deacons may serve as especially effective parish and diocesan catechetical leaders.” (p. 223)

In the Diocese of Toledo, Pastoral Leaders are also assigned to “coordinate and administer” the elements of a parish’s life and mission, including oversight of the *RCIA*, in collaboration with a chaplain who is involved in the preparation for all liturgical and sacramental celebrations and the determination of the readiness of any particular candidate for the reception of a sacrament. (*Diocesan Pastoral Policy Handbook*, pp. 76 ff).

Pastors, or Pastoral Leaders in consultation with the chaplains, are responsible for ensuring that adults seeking baptism are guided through the catechumenate, prepared through evangelization and catechesis, and are appropriately accompanied through the various stages of sacramental initiation. The Pastor or Pastoral Leader and chaplain are to be involved with the catechumens throughout the *RCIA* process, including some of the catechesis.

A priest presides at the liturgical rites of the catechumenate. Deacons may preside at the ritual of scrutinies, presentations and other minor rites.

The Parish

The entire parish has responsibility for those it initiates. All in the parish are invited into the ministry of offering prayer, support, and community to the candidates. Parish members are to be invited to become involved in the various ministries of the RCIA as sponsors, catechists, liturgy planners, and hospitality ministers.

RCIA Team/Director

It is recommended that the Pastor or Pastoral Leader designate a Director to work with a Parish RCIA team for the sacramental preparation of adults.

- The RCIA team is to consist of a variety of persons including catechists, hospitality ministers, spiritual companions, liturgy planners, musicians, and sponsors.
- Due to the extent of responsibilities, it is recommended that separate teams be formed to minister during the different periods of the RCIA: pre-catechumenate, catechumenate, and mystagogy.

The responsibility of the RCIA Director involves the following tasks:

- ♦ to coordinate the RCIA process within the parish
- ♦ to identify team members possessing a diversity of gifts and talents
- ♦ to train team members
- ♦ to coordinate the various ministries within the RCIA process
- ♦ to offer guidance and support

The Director may represent the parish at the Rite of Election and Neophyte Eucharist in place of the Pastor or Pastoral Leader.

Catechists

Coordinated by the RCIA team and in collaboration with the pastor/pastoral leader, catechists are selected who possess the following charisms:

- ♦ the ability to witness to the Gospel by their life
- ♦ an openness to grow in faith
- ♦ an awareness of teachings contained in contemporary Church documents
- ♦ an appreciation of the adult learning process
- ♦ an active participation in the liturgical life of the Church
- ♦ the ability to work in collaboration with parish and RCIA team(s)
- ♦ an understanding and appreciation of the RCIA process
- ♦ a deep commitment to the Church and a devoted adherence to what the Church believes and teaches
- ♦ the ability to express themselves with a group, as well as a willingness to listen and learn from others
- ♦ the ability to prepare adequately for RCIA sessions

Sponsors/Godparents

Candidates for the catechumenate are to be accompanied by an RCIA sponsor and eventually by a godparent or godparents at the time of Baptism.

Current English versions of the Code of Canon Law translate “godparent” with the word “sponsor,” thus causing some confusion. The *RCIA* says that a sponsor is one who assists the catechumens during the initial stages of the journey, while a godparent accompanies the catechumen at the celebration of the Rite of Election, at the Baptism, and during the period of post-baptismal catechesis. However, there is nothing to prevent an RCIA sponsor from also serving as a godparent.

Canon 872 speaks in general terms about the responsibilities of godparents; Canon 673 specifies the number of godparents; Canon 874 lists the qualifications for godparents; Canon 892 and 893 do the same in reference to Confirmation.

In addition to the canonical requirements, sponsors/godparents should possess the following qualities:

- ◆ be a devoted and practicing member of the Church
- ◆ possess an ability to be a model of faith for the catechumen
- ◆ have a desire and willingness to be attentive to the needs of the catechumen, to accompany them, and to help and support them through the RCIA process
- ◆ possess an awareness of the mission of the Church in society
- ◆ have a contemporary understanding and appreciation of Church teaching, liturgy, and Scripture
- ◆ possess the availability to be present for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation and during the period of post-baptismal catechesis and mystagogy.

Sponsors must remember that the focus is the journey of the catechumen. If a sponsor has an issue with the Catholic Church, that should be dealt with in a different forum.

An RCIA sponsor may be recruited through the parish bulletin; however, a sponsor should be a person chosen specifically for this role. Not all who volunteer have all the qualities necessary to serve in the role of sponsor. A workshop or training session would help sponsors come to a better understanding of what it is they are being called to do.

III – EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

Definition of Evangelization

“For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: ‘Now I am making the whole of creation new.’ But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change; and if it had to be expressed in one sentence, the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.” (Pope Paul VI, “On Evangelization in the Modern World,” *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 18.)

Goal of this Period

RCIA, n. 37 states that the goal of this period of formation is the evangelization of inquirers, bringing them to faith and initial conversion. The catalyst which leads them to inquire varies from person to person. It may be a marriage situation, or a death of a loved one. It could be as simple as experiencing the example or welcome received from one who is living out the Gospel message. God is always calling the human person to conversion and faith.

During this period, the Church is called to evangelize, as “faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed. . . .” (*RCIA n. 36*) Through evangelization of inquirers, one enters the process of conversion, a turning away from sin and a turning to the Triune God revealed in the Gospel. It is a continual call to share in divine life, to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The goal is to help facilitate this process.

Agenda of this Period

The Rite of Christian Initiation broadly defines the catechesis for this period without specific methods or details. The local community may interpret these guidelines within their current situation. However, the *RCIA Introduction, n. 38* outlines three essential elements: a suitable explanation of the Gospel, spiritual help and attention, and explicit connection with the parish community. Strategies for implementing this include:

- Development of Relationships and Experiences of Trust
- Appreciation of the Value of Questions and Storytelling
- Naming the Experiences
- Pastoral Assessment

The precatechumenate is about questions and stories. Inquirers may first come with questions, exploring this process of conversion, sharing their stories, and what brought them here. Storytelling is a language of self-disclosure. It is through our stories that we come to know each other. As we listen to the stories of the inquirers, the RCIA team shares the stories of the community: those of the parish, of the scriptures, of the saints.

Before an inquirer can ask questions or share stories, however, a relationship must be established and trust must be built. The precatechumenate is therefore also about hospitality, welcoming a person to our community. The focus must be on the inquirer, not on membership. When we have shown genuine concern for the person and his/her journey, trust is established and the inquirer can be more open to the process of conversion.

There is more to our storytelling than telling stories. Our goal during this period is to help the inquirer recognize the stirrings of God within their lives and relationships. Stories are those places where we can come to meet and know God. The inquirers begin to name God in their experiences. We also give the inquirers the opportunity to explore their lives within a new frame of reference: the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Assessment/Discernment

Pastoral assessment is an early step in the discernment process. It is a review of experiences and particular needs in order best to respond to them. It is not a test, nor a prerequisite list of qualities that are acceptable before entering into the initiation process. Each inquirer comes for a different reason and with different needs. Pastoral assessment aids the community of faith in how best to respond to the individual.

Discernment is a prayerful process by which an individual discerns the movement of the Spirit in his/her life and recognizes areas that need further development. Discernment is ongoing, beginning with the first contact with an inquirer and continuing throughout the initiation process.

An initial interview is important for pastoral assessment. It is recommended that someone from the RCIA team who is experienced in the RCIA in the parish and who is a good communicator serve as an interviewer.

<p>This interview may surface potential issues which may need further attention. Examples include a life situation such as an invalid marriage or other difficulty. Those conducting the interviews may need to recommend further action on the part of the inquirer. If an annulment is needed, the inquirer should be sent to a priest or an advocate.</p>
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Although discernment may begin with a one-on-one interview, it is the inquirer with the team who discerns readiness to move to the Catechumenate stage with the Rite of Acceptance. An inquirer, with the guidance of the team, reflects on personal evidence of an elemental faith, initial conversion, and the intention to embrace the Christian way of life.

On-going Precatechumenate Opportunities

Conversion does not occur according to a schedule. Individuals come at various times throughout the year seeking answers to questions stirred up in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, it is recommended that precatechumenates be on-going. People need to be met where they are when they come and not be delayed weeks or months because of team schedules. Each RCIA team must find a process that works for them. The important thing is to get the inquirer “connected” as soon as possible.

One example of an on-going process from a parish in California involves a two-hour session held twice a month at a church meeting room. With a scheduled time and place, an inquirer is invited to be involved right away. The RCIA team uses the readings for the upcoming Sunday as a guide for their sessions. This provides a plan, yet does not limit involvement of someone new.

An on-going precatechumenate necessitates the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance more than once a year. It is recommended that entry into the catechumenate be offered three or four times a year. The dates should be pre-scheduled so inquirers can set their own pace during this first period and not feel rushed into a decision.

When setting dates for the Rite of Acceptance, it is helpful to look at the readings for the day to see if they are appropriate for the celebration.

Appropriate Sundays for Year A would be the Baptism of the Lord; 5th Sunday of Easter; 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time; 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

IV – THE CATECHUMENATE

The following sentence sums up the spirit of the Catechumenal period:

“The Catechumenate is 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*, Part I, n. 75). This sentence sums up the spirit of the Catechumenal period:

The Catechumenate lasts a minimum of one full year, but may last up to three years, depending on the individual’s faith journey. Refer to *RCIA*, no. 76.

Rite of Acceptance

“Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates [i.e., inquirers] who have completed the period of the precatechumenate declare their intention to the Church; and the Church, in turn, carrying out her apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become her members...” (*RCIA*, Part I, n. 41).

Each parish will adjust the manner of celebrating the rites to fit the environment and the spirit of the congregation.

“The presiding celebrant is a priest or a deacon” (n. 45).

Whatever the celebration’s form, the congregation should assume its rightful role and duty to be a welcoming community. The Rite of Acceptance also affords a number of musical settings for its prayers and acclamations. Careful planning with the musicians and choir will assist the celebration.

- Some parishes begin with the congregation gathered outside the church and then all process into the church.
- Some parishes have the candidates in the church aisles so parishioners can see at least one candidate.
- Some parishes invite the whole congregation to join in the singing.

The heart of the Rite of Acceptance is the acceptance of Christ and the desire to live the Christian way of life. The sign of Christ is the cross. Clearly then, the signing with the cross is a very important symbol of the deeper reality of the acceptance of the cross in the life of the catechumen.

Refer to *RCIA*, nos. 41-47, 54-57, 64.

- Some parishes have chosen to give the candidate a cross to wear.
- Other parishes have invited the candidate to embrace a large (life size) cross, perhaps the same one used on Good Friday.

Whatever form is used, the heart of the rite is acceptance of the life of the cross, not acceptance of a piece of jewelry.

The same practice and care must be used with presentation of the Book of the Gospels. It is not merely about a book, but Jesus, the Eternal and Living Word of God. His words are to be pondered and lived.

Refer to *RCIA*, no. 64.

- Some parishes ask the catechumens to kiss the Book of the Gospels.
- Other parishes simply ask them to lay their hands on it instead of presenting them a Bible.

Initial Catechesis

“A suitable catechesis is provided...planned to be gradual and complete in coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word. This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate” *RCIA n. 75.1*.

“The aim of catechetical activity is to encourage a living, explicit, and fruitful profession of faith. Initiatory catechesis should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart towards God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of ChristIt is “a basic and essential formation, centered on what constitutes the nucleus of Christian experience, the most fundamental certainties of the faith and the most essential evangelical values” *NDC*, p. 58.

The goal of Christian Initiation is conversion and spiritual formation solidly based on the Gospel message. Initiatory catechesis is not just about information, but about identity and practice. It is not meant to make “Catholics” without first forming them into disciples.

▪ CATECHESIS

The catechumens enter a journey of conversion with a living community who mentors them in discipleship. This is most often accomplished through a connection with the liturgical prayer of the community which can be a powerful means of providing formation. In this model the Lectionary becomes the primary tool, and there are many helpful resources for engaging in a lectionary-based catechesis.¹ (cf. p. 37 Endnotes)

At the same time, however, conversion and formation even at the initiatory stage, are not meant to exclude “Catholic teaching in its entirety,” and “an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts,” to use the words of the *NDC* and the *RCIA* respectively. Catechumens should be introduced to a comprehensive overview of all that the Church believes and teaches. Indispensable to this effort are resources such as the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, as well as the full edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“A thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life, aided by approved catechetical texts, is to be provided during the period of the catechumenate” (*RCIA*, Appendix III for the United States, n. 7).

The *NDC*, pages 118-126, sets forth the essentials of catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation in general, and for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist individually.

The Catechumenal Period also includes weekend Eucharistic Liturgy dismissal. After the homily the catechumens and catechists are dismissed to further break open the scriptural readings and homily. The dismissal of catechumens is strongly recommended since a catechumen cannot fully participate in the liturgical celebration. Dismissal allows the catechumen to break open that which was shared with the community at the table of the Word. (Refer to *RCIA nos. 75.1, 78*)

- Some parishes will have their catechetical sessions during a weekday evening.
- Other parishes will have their catechetical sessions following the period of dismissal with the sponsors in attendance.

Parishes need to continue the development of catechetical methods appropriate for adult learning. Catechists should not only continue to study and grow in understanding ways to use the lectionary, catechisms, and other resources for catechesis, but also be open to opportunities to engage in storytelling, utilizing small group and/or large group discussions; incorporate technology such as power point, DVD, video/audio clips etc. to

promote learning and understanding. *A list of resources to aid in liturgical catechesis is available in the appendix.*

Catechists should attend workshops and stay updated in literature written for the initiation process. The Diocese of Toledo provides resources and networking for training catechists.

- **AN AUTHENTIC FOLLOWING OF CHRIST (Conversion)**

“The catechumens 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 practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self-renunciation.” *RCIA*, n. 75.2.

“It is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life...which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith, in such a manner that the entire person, at his/her deepest levels, feels enriched by the word of God.” (*NDC*, p. 58)

- **PARTICIPATION IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH (Liturgical Formation)**

Catechumens and candidates celebrate the Liturgy of the Word with dismissal on a weekly basis as well as on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. They should also be exposed to different forms of prayer, both formal and informal, as well as the Liturgy of the Hours, devotions, and songs, to name a few.

The team should be attentive to the need to ritualize various events in the lives of the catechumens and sponsors. Celebrations of the Word of God can be used when the catechetical session does not follow the liturgy.

Refer to *RCIA n. 80*

Celebrations of the Word of God (*RCIA nos. 81-89*)

Minor exorcisms (*RCIA nos. 90-94*)

Blessings of catechumens (*RCIA nos. 95-97*)

Anointing of catechumens (*RCIA nos. 98-103*)

Presentations (optional) (*RCIA nos. 104-105*)

Sending for Election (optional) (*RCIA nos. 106*)

Refer to RCIA nos. 75.2, 75.3

Parishes should offer at least one retreat before the Rite of Election celebration. The retreat might include discernment for the Rite of Election; reflection on various themes present in the Catechumenal Period; or reflection on the whole initiation process. The retreat experience is very important for the catechumens, sponsors and team. (See Pastoral Policy Handbook, “The Sanctifying Function of the Church,” A7h: “A retreat opportunity for catechumens is to be provided before the Rite of Election celebration and/or before Holy Week.”)

▪ **APOSTOLIC ACTIVITY**

Catechumens and candidates should be embracing the apostolic nature of the Catholic Church and thus engage in acts of service, bear witness to the faith, and love their neighbor.

Refer to RCIA n. 75.4

Opportunities should include both church and community.
Examples:

- Funeral Luncheon Committee
- Blood Drive Volunteer
- Nursing Home Visitation

Discernment of Readiness

“Before the rite of election is celebrated, 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” RCIA n. 120.

If forming disciples is the focus, then readiness is seen not solely in terms of knowledge but in terms of a transformation of life, something that is not so easily evaluated. It is important that catechumens develop a relationship with the RCIA team, their sponsors, mentors, and even a spiritual director during the catechumenate, so that they themselves and those responsible for their preparation may better discern their readiness. This involves input from the catechumen with the priests, deacons, catechists, sponsors, godparents and the entire community in prayerful discernment determining movement into the third stage of the process, Purification and Enlightenment. Refer to RCIA nos. 76, 77; 107; 119-121.

V---PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The period of Purification and Enlightenment is a time to conclude the emphasis on catechesis and enter a period of intense prayer, conversion and spiritual recollection "in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery." (*RCIA*, n. 138)

Normally, this period coincides with Lent and begins with the Rite of Election. The entire community, along with the elect and candidates, is called to transformation; throughout the forty days of Lent, all are expected to focus on baptismal spirituality and the significance of the sacraments of initiation. The elect and candidates join the assembly in practicing the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, almsgiving and penance. This is both a period of purification, recognizing our sinfulness; and of enlightenment, recognizing our call to be open to the light that comes from baptism.

The catechumens and candidates enter this period after discerning their readiness. "Before the rite of election is celebrated, 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" (*RCIA n. 120*). Priests, catechists, deacons, godparents and possibly other catechumens are involved in the discernment process. Relying on their input, "the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation." (*RCIA n. 119*)

Those who are not ready to enter Purification and Enlightenment continue in the Catechumenate. Because their focus differs from that of the elect, they continue in a separate group. They do not participate in the rituals of the Scrutinies or Presentations. They should continue to be dismissed each Sunday.
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Rite of Sending and Rite of Election

Minor Rite: Rite of Sending

The Rite of Sending offers the parish community the opportunity to express approval of the catechumens and to send them forth to the celebration of election while being assured of the parish's care and support. The rite occurs at the conclusion of the Catechumenate Period but never takes place in the parish where the Rite of Election takes place.

(Refer to *RCIA nos. 106-110*; see *RCIA nos. 111-117* for the rite)

The Rite of Sending takes place after the homily at "the parish church at a suitable time prior to the rite of election." (*RCIA n. 108*)

Godparents, chosen by the catechumens before the Rite of Election with the approval of the pastor and the local community, may write their name in the Book of the Elect along with the catechumens. (*RCIA n. 123*)

When there are candidates as well as catechumens, the alternate rite, “Parish Celebration for Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop,” found in the Appendix of the Rite, is used. Those already baptized (candidates) do not inscribe their names in the Book of the Elect during this rite.

Major Rite: Rite of Election

The Rite of Election is the second step in Christian initiation and usually coincides with the opening of Lent. This liturgical rite closes the period of the catechumenate. The Rite of Election is a celebration of God's call of the elect, as well as the person's acceptance of God's call. "This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts." (*RCIA n. 119*) The bishop, or his representative, presides at this celebration. It marks the beginning of the Purification and Enlightenment Period for catechumens, who will now be called "the elect." Those already baptized participate in a "Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates," and continue to be called candidates. (Refer to *RCIA nos. 118-128*; see *RCIA nos. 129-137*)

Scrutinies and Presentations

The rituals of the Scrutinies and the Presentations are central to this period of Purification and Enlightenment. The Scrutinies take place on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent and correlate with the Cycle A Gospel readings, which are to be substituted whenever the Scrutinies are celebrated. "The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal, all that is weak, defective or sinful in the hearts of the elect: to bring out, then strengthen 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." (*RCIA n. 141*)

The Presentation of the Creed takes place during the week following the celebration of the first Scrutiny. The elect, who will publicly recite the Creed on the day of their baptism, are entrusted with this prayer that expresses "the heart of the Church's faith and prayer." (*RCIA n. 147*) The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer normally takes place during the week following the third Scrutiny, unless this will be done during the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

The rite book states that the Presentations “should preferably be celebrated in the presence of a community of the faithful, within a Mass.” (*RCIA n. 157*) using the appointed Masses and/or readings in the liturgical books. The key here is that the Presentations be celebrated with a community; therefore, another option would be to celebrate the Presentations during the Liturgy of the Hours.

While the Scrutinies focus on the elect, candidates may participate in a Penitential Rite (*RCIA nos. 459-472*) on the second Sunday of Lent or on a Lenten weekday, and in the Presentations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer if they are uncatechized adults. Whether they were baptized in the Catholic Church or in another ecclesial community with a valid Trinitarian baptism, their baptism sets them apart from the elect. Candidates join the community in reflecting on the enlightenment that comes from baptism, and keeps the elect in prayer as the unbaptized journey toward the Easter sacraments.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, for which the candidates need to be well catechized, is to be carried out at an appropriate time prior to entering into full communion and/or completing their initiation. As part of the formation of candidates, they should be encouraged in the frequent celebration of this sacrament. (*RCIA*, Appendix III, n. 27, 36) The elect, who will be made clean in the waters of Baptism at the Easter Vigil, are to be well catechized to celebrate Reconciliation frequently following their Baptism as an important part of ongoing conversion and Christian life.

Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday

The elect, if it is possible, participate in their final preparation 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." (*RCIA n. 185*) If it has not been presented earlier, the Lord's Prayer is now presented, the Creed is recited, and the ephpheta rite may be celebrated. The rite of choosing a baptismal name may also be celebrated, or an explanation given of the meaning of the elect's name.

The elect and candidates do not rehearse what will take place at the Easter Vigil; godparents and sponsors should be familiar with the rituals so the candidates and the elect can immerse themselves in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

VI – EASTER SACRAMENTS

It is recommended that the elect and the candidates be present during the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week, which begins with Palm Sunday. Participation in these celebrations will help the elect/candidates put the celebration of the Easter sacraments in proper context and understand more fully the rich symbolism of the Easter Vigil.

Because there is only one celebration on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, it is recommended that the elect themselves facilitate the dismissal catechesis for these celebrations.

Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil consists of four parts: 1) Service of Light; 2) Liturgy of the Word; 3) Baptism and Confirmation; 4) Liturgy of the Eucharist.

- The **Service of Light** is held in the dark, preferably after sunset. The Easter fire is lit. Candles are to be provided to everyone, except those about to be baptized. The elect should be situated near the action of the service.
- The **Liturgy of the Word** shares the stories of the people of God as it unfolds salvation history.
- The **Liturgy of Baptism and Confirmation** “has as its high point the baptismal washing and the invocation of the Holy Trinity.” (*RCIA n. 209*) “In accord with the ancient practice followed by the Roman liturgy, adults are not to be baptized without receiving confirmation immediately.” (*RCIA n. 215*)
- The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** is the culminating point in the neophytes’ Christian initiation. “For the first time and with full right” the neophytes take part in the Eucharistic celebration. (*RCIA n. 217*)

Celebration of Baptism and Confirmation

It is recommended that the RCIA team collaborate with the liturgist and musicians for this celebration.

- **Presentation of the Candidates** – An assisting deacon or other minister calls the candidates forward, and their godparents present them. (If there is a procession to the font, a minister leads with the Easter candle.)
- **Invitation to Prayer** – The celebrant invites the assembly to join in prayer for the elect.
- **Litany of the Saints** – The litany should be sung. Patron saints of the parish and the elect may be added to the litany.
- **Blessing of the Water** – The prayer over the water is prayed or sung by the celebrant. A sung acclamation may be used at appropriate pauses within the blessing or at the end of the blessing.
- **Profession of Faith** – This includes the Renunciation of Sin and the Profession of Faith. These are to be made by the elect only.

- **Baptism** – “The celebrant baptizes each candidate either by immersion...or by the pouring of water....” (*RCIA n. 226*) A brief acclamation may be sung after each baptism.

- The baptismal rite prefers immersion. In some communities those being baptized stand in a pool of water about two feet deep while the priest or deacon pours a substantial amount of water over the their heads. While the newly baptized go to prepare themselves after immersion, the community could sing a litany.
- If the practice of simply pouring water over the head is used, an ample amount of water should be poured.

- **Clothing with a White Garment** – The newly baptized are presented with a white garment as a reminder that they are now clothed in Christ.

- Those who are immersed may be presented with a white robe as they come out of the water, or the godparents may take the robes to them as they prepare for their return to the worship area.
- The garment should not be in the form of a stole. A stole is a symbol of Holy Orders and is worn by bishops, priests, and deacons only.

- **Presentation of a Lighted Candle** – A godparent of each of the newly baptized goes to the celebrant, lights a candle from the Easter candle, and then presents it to the newly baptized.

- If there is a combined rite that includes the elect and the candidates, the following additions are made at this time:
- Profession by the Candidates (*RCIA n. 585*)
 - Act of Reception (*RCIA n. 586*)

- **Confirmation** – The celebration of Confirmation follows the outline given in the RCIA. (See *RCIA n. 231-235*) It consists of an invitation, laying on of hands, and the anointing with Chrism.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The newly baptized and confirmed may present the bread and wine during the presentation of the gifts. Note that some of the Eucharistic Prayers for use at Easter provide special mention of the newly baptized. The newly baptized and confirmed, along with the community, receive the Eucharist under the forms of bread and wine.

- Community recognition may be given after the celebrant prays the closing prayer. Applause is not appropriate after the celebration of Confirmation, since this distorts the full sequence of the sacraments. It is best to show recognition only after reception of all the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- The neophytes and godparents may process out with the celebrant and stand near the exits of the worship area to receive the congratulations of the faithful. A reception may be held.

VII – POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

Goal of the Period

“This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing works of charity.” Mystagogy is a time for celebrating and experiencing the transformational power of the sacraments they have received.” (RCIA n. 244-245)

Duration

Mystagogy is an on-going process for all Christians as they grow in their love and knowledge of the Lord. The formal period of Mystagogy for the neophytes consists of the seven weeks of Easter. This formal period of reflection and prayer continues until the Solemnity of Pentecost at the end of the Easter season. However, for the United States at least monthly gatherings are envisioned for neophytes for a full year following their Baptism. (RCIA Appendix III, no. 24)

Content of Mystagogy

The Sunday liturgies of the Easter Season are the focal point of mystagogy. This is reinforced by RCIA Appendix III, no. 22 for the United States, which says that the neophytes should begin the period of mystagogy by participating in the principal Sunday Eucharist of the community throughout the Easter season.... They should do this as a body in company with their godparents and those who have assisted in their Christian formation.” Since mystagogy is directed to the good of the whole community, priority is given to the common assembly rather than special meetings for neophytes alone. (RCIA n. 247)

The Easter Sunday liturgies are the place of formation during the period of mystagogy. Those who prepare and preside at the liturgy should, therefore, be attentive to this fact. The Lectionary texts for the Easter Sundays, especially those of Cycle A, lend themselves to the mystagogical experience.

It is the task of the homilist in particular to bring out the meaning of the texts, connecting them to the experience of the neophytes and all the assembled faithful. “Because the Sunday Masses of the Easter season are Masses for the neophytes, the homilist should take the needs of the newly initiated into consideration in the process of preparation. Each Sunday the Scripture readings proclaim an important message for the neophytes and for the whole community about the implications of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. These passages keep our attention focused on the abiding presence of Christ in the Christian community today, on our call to live as transformed people, and on the mission entrusted to the community of believers by the risen Lord. These themes apply to every member of the Church, but in a special way to the neophytes. The homilist might draw on stories from their lives to give flesh to the proclamation of God’s word during the Easter season.” (McMahon, *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, p.194)

The Scriptures lead to celebration of the Eucharist, which in turn leads to mission. As the neophytes reflect on the mysteries and become more integrated into the community, they feel a further call to works of charity. They are called to live out what they celebrate, as members of the Body of Christ. Parishes must be careful, however, that this time does not become a recruitment season. The neophyte is growing in living the ways of Christ. Opportunities for service may exist in and outside the parish. The neophyte, however, is not merely a “fresh name” for every parish committee.

The richness of this initiatory catechesis should serve to inspire other forms of catechesis. <i>NDC</i> , p. 58.

Neophyte Mass

Lumen Gentium teaches that “the individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches.” (n. 23) The General Introduction to the *RCIA* states: “Bishops are the chief stewards of the mysteries of God and the leaders of the entire liturgical life in the Church committed to them. This is why they direct the conferring of baptism, which brings to the recipient a share in the kingly priesthood of Christ. (n. 12) In keeping with his role, the bishop meets with the recently baptized at least once in the year and presides at a celebration of the eucharist with them.” (n. 251)

The Diocese of Toledo provides this opportunity each year on one of the Sundays of the Easter Season. All the newly initiated, along with their godparents, family, and friends, are invited to celebrate Mass with the Bishop at the Cathedral. Information and materials for the Neophyte Mass are sent to parishes after the Rite of Election.

VIII – CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE REACHED CATECHETICAL AGE

In his book *The RCIA: Transforming the Church*, Thomas H. Morris says that knowing “the dynamics and structure of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults” as a whole is an important criterion for any adaptations (p. 61). This principle inspires the lengthy section of the *RCIA* Rite entitled “Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age.” (n. 252-330) This section includes principles and directives, as well as adapted texts for children.

In this section the initiation of children follows the same format as that for the initiation of adults. It should be read in light of the “usual form” and applied accordingly. It is important not to work with the rite’s adaptation for children without seeing this adaptation in its whole context as patterned on the adult rite.

“Since children who have reached the age of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (Canon 852, n. 1), their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens.” (*RCIA* Appendix III, no. 18, for the United States)

RCIA, n. 252 states for whom the rite is intended:

- children not baptized as infants
- children who have attained the use of reason (*Can. 852.1; 891*) and are of catechetical age
- children presented by their parents/guardians, or who present themselves with parental permission
- children capable of nurturing and receiving a personal faith
- children who recognize an obligation in conscience
- children dependent on their parents/guardians and influenced by their companions

RCIA n. 253 states “The Christian initiation of these children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need.” (Refer to the Diocesan Policy Manual for any adaptations that may be present).

RCIA n. 254 outlines the importance of community. “The children’s progress in the formation they receive depends on the help and example of their companions and on the influence of their parents.” Just as initiation of adult catechumens takes place within the community of faithful (see *RCIA* n. 4), so too must the children’s. Children must have companions in their faith journey. These companions may include other children preparing for initiation, or peers who are preparing for confirmation and eucharist (in which case, however, the condition and status of catechumens should not be compromised or confused). It is to be hoped that children receive as much help and example as possible from the parents whose permission is required for the children to be initiated and to live the Christian life. Parents wield the greatest influence on children; therefore, the support of parents or guardians in nurturing conversion and faith is vital.

RCIA n. 255 calls for the rituals leading up to the Easter Vigil to be celebrated by “a group of several children who are in this same situation.” Although this does not preclude joining the children with adult catechumens for the celebration of the rites, it does suggest an advantage to celebrating with just children. In *RCIA n. 257* we read, “It is generally preferable not to have the whole parish community present, but simply represented.” Although the community is important, the adaptation recognizes that children may feel intimidated by a large group.

RCIA n. 256 raises the questions of when the sacraments of initiation should take place and of the readiness of the child to celebrate initiation. As with adults, “it is preferable that, if possible, the final period of preparation...coincide with Lent and that the...celebration of the sacraments of initiation take place at the Easter Vigil.” Readiness for initiation is not easily definable. In *RCIA n. 253* we read: “The process of initiation thus must be adapted both to their spiritual progress, that is, to the children’s growth in faith, and to the catechetical instruction they receive. Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years, if need be, before they receive the sacraments.”

The following outline refers to paragraphs in the *RCIA* rite that apply to the initiation of children of catechetical age (as prepared by Nancy C. Hardy for the Institute on the Christian Initiation of Children at St. Norbert College, De Pere, WI).

PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

n. 36 The period of evangelization or precatechumenate is of great importance and should not be omitted.

Faithfully and constantly the living Triune God is proclaimed; and Jesus – who is the way, the truth and the life – fulfills all their spiritual expectations.

n. 42 There must be evidence of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives to enter into a relationship with God in Christ.

FIRST STAGE: ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

n. 260 Celebrated with an active, but small, congregation to include parents or guardians.

n. 261 The Rite of Acceptance is not normally celebrated at the Eucharist.

The celebration takes place in the church or a place that can help children experience a warm welcome.

PERIOD OF CATECHUMENATE

n. 75 The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance in four ways:

1. Through catechesis that is gradual, accommodated to the liturgical year, supported by celebrations of the Word, and complete in coverage.

In the Diocese of Toledo only those catechetical materials are to be used which have been declared by the U.S. Bishops to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

2. By the example and support of sponsors, godparents and the entire Christian community, they become familiar with the Christian way of life.
3. By means of liturgical rites which purify and strengthen them with God's blessing.
4. By working with others in the Church's apostolic life to spread the Gospel and build up the Church.

RITE OF ENROLLMENT OR ENROLLMENT OF NAMES

n. 277 Coincides with the beginning of Lent. Marks the beginning of the final preparation for sacraments of initiation.

n. 278 On the basis of testimony of parents, godparents and catechists, the Church judges their state of readiness; makes its "election."

n. 279 The election of children can take place with older catechumens.

n. 280 This rite is celebrated within Mass, after the homily, on the first Sunday of Lent.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

n. 138 Coincides with Lent.

n. 139 More intense spiritual preparation and interior reflection intended to purify and enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ.

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

n. 304 Preferably takes place at the Easter Vigil.

n. 305 The children receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and holy Eucharist.

n. 307 All children are to be accompanied by godparent/s.

PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

n. 330 A period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy should be provided to assist the young neophytes and their companions who have completed their Christian initiation.

Adapt the guidelines given for adults in paragraphs *n. 244-251*.

IX – RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Essential Texts:

- * Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. 1990 edition, various publishers.
- * General Directory for Catechesis, 1997 edition, USCC.
- * National Directory for Catechesis, 2005 edition, USCCB.
- * The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource. Liturgical Training Publications, Chicago, IL., 1996.

Additional Resources:

- Birmingham, Mary. Year Round Catechumenate. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 2002.
- Birmingham, Mary. Word and Worship Workbook A. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1999.
- Birmingham, Mary. Word and Worship Workbook B. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1999.
- * Birmingham, Mary. Word and Worship Workbook C. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1999.
- Camille, Alice L. God's Word is Alive! Entering the Sunday Readings. Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT, 2000.
- Chilson, Richard. Catholic Christianity: A Guide to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1987.
- Chriszt, Dennis, C.P.P.S. Creating An Effective Mystagogy. Resource Publications, Inc., San Jose, CA, 2001.
- Donghi, Antonio. Actions and Words: Symbolic Language and the Liturgy. The Liturgical Press, 1997.
- Duggan, Bob, et al. Foundations in Faith: Resources for Christian Living. Allen, TX, 1998.
- * Dunning, James. Echoing God's Word. The North American Forum on the Catechumenate, Arlington, VA, 1993.
- * Hughes, Kathleen. Saying Amen: Mystagogy of Sacrament. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1999.

- Hynes, Mary Ellen. Companion to the Calendar. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1993.
- * Kenny, John J. Now That You Are Catholic. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1986.
- * Klein, Rev. Peter. The Catholic Source Book. Brown-Roa, Dubuque, Iowa, 2000.
- McBride, Alfred, O.Praem. The Story of the Church. St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH, 1996.
- Merrit, Sydney Ann. Guided Meditations for Adult Catechumens. Resource Publications, Inc., San Jose, CA, 1999. (Out of Print)
- Mick, Lawrence E. RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiating Assembly. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1989.
- Morris, Thomas H. The RCIA: Transforming the Church – A Resource for Pastoral Implementation. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1997.
- Morris, Thomas H. Walking Together in Faith: A Workbook for Sponsors of Christian Initiation. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1992.
- North American Forum on the Catechumenate. Forum Essays. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1994.
- Ramshaw, Gail. Words Around the Font, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1994.
- * Redemptorist Pastoral Publication. Handbook for Today's Catholic. Liguori Press, Liguori, MO, 1994.
- * United States Catholic Conference. Journey to the Fullness of Life. USCC, Washington, D.C., 2000.
- Wilde, James A., Ed. Finding and Forming Sponsors and Godparents. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1988.
- Wilde, James A., Ed. Commentaries on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1988.
- Yarnold, Edward, S.J. The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1994.
- * Available through the Diocesan Media Resource Library. Call 419-244-6711 ext. 618 to order.

Recommended Resources from North American Forum on the Catechumenate :
(Programs and resources for working with children.)

*Senseman, Rita Burns. A Child's Journey: The Christian Initiation of Children

This comprehensive book examines the special issues of initiation of children and offers solid, practical approaches.

Coffey, Kathy. Children and Christian Initiation Series

Leader Guide – This new revised edition includes the best age-appropriate ways to implement the process with children ages 7-14. This resource contains everything you need to explore the meaning of symbols and ritual gestures to prepare the child before the rites and reflect upon their meaning afterwards.

Parent and Sponsor Guide – Includes all that a parent or sponsor needs to accompany a child to full sacramental initiation.

Journals for Children and Youth – Lively, colorful pages invite children and youth to record their thoughts and drawings as they participate in the process of initiation.

*Brown, Kathy and Sokol, Frank C. editors. Issues in the Christian Initiation of Children: Catechesis and Liturgy

This book will enlighten your policy-making and help you prepare effective celebration of rites with children.

De Villers, Sylvia. Lectionary-Based Catechesis for Children: A Catechist's Guide

This resource discusses the most criticized problems of lectionary-based catechesis by connecting it to a traditional curriculum that honors children's individual stages.

*Tufano, Victoria M. editor. Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children

Gathers seventeen recommended articles on how children are initiated into the Catholic Church.

Whitty, Gerard, Mercer, Jeanette and Wells, Elaine. Preparing to Celebrate with Children

This book is a primer of principles and ideas for celebrating with children.

*Pottebaum, Gerard A. To Walk with a Child: Homiletics for Children (A Guide)

This book helps one to develop a methodology to draw children into the scriptures and prayerfully to reflect on their lives in light of God's word.

*McBrien, Philip J. Children's Catechumenate

This book, written especially for catechists, provides critical background on all initiation rites and their application to children. You will be able to prepare children for each rite and help them unpack the experience afterward, as well as draw parents into the process.

* Available through the Diocesan Media Resource Library. Call 419-244-6711 ext. 618 to order.

Other Available Resources:

Long, Rev. Thomas L. and Filippi M.R.E., Emily F. Children's Catechumenate
Director's Guide
Catechist Manual; Primary Level, Intermediate Level, Upper Level

Merritt, Sydney Ann. Guided Meditations for Child Catechumens
Forty different meditations organized around the initiation rites or significant points during the catechumenal process. These powerful meditations will help you to prepare children for the various rites and to unpack the experience afterward.

Videos:

"This is the Night"
Liturgy Training Publications, 1992.

"Liturgies of the Triduum: Holy Thursday"
"Liturgies of the Triduum: Good Friday"
"Liturgies of the Triduum: Easter Vigil"
Liturgy Training Publications, 1999.

"Why We Go To Mass: Liturgy & Our Lives"
Loyala Press, 2002.

"An Invitation to New Life"
Paulist Press, 1989.

"Persons, Places, & Practices in the Catholic Church"
Liguori Publications.

Websites :

www.naforum.org
www.catholic.org

X – GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Candidate	One already baptized in another ecclesial community who 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 unbaptized person who is preparing for full Christian initiation through the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
Catechumenate	Second period of the order of Christian initiation involving an integral and systematic catechesis and intense preparation in word, worship, community life, and apostolic works.
Easter Vigil	The most exalted of all liturgical solemnities of the year, at which the sacraments of initiation are most appropriately conferred.
Elect	The name given to catechumens who, at the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent, have been “chosen by God” for the sacraments of initiation.
Inquirers	Those “inquiring” about the Christian faith at the precatechumenate level.
Mystagogy	Final period of the order of Christian initiation involving post-baptismal catechesis and a deepening experience of the church’s life.
Neophyte	One who has been fully initiated into the Christian faith at the Easter Vigil by the reception of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. The term comes from the Greek word meaning “new plant,” as in a new sprout on a limb or branch.
Precatechumenate	The first period of the order of Christian initiation involving the initial proclamation of the gospel and the initial call to conversion to Christ made to those who are inquiring into the Christian faith.
Presentations	During the period of purification and enlightenment, the elect are presented with the texts of the Creed and of the Lord’s Prayer at special rites.
Purification and Enlightenment	The third period of the order of Christian initiation, usually coinciding with Lent, which involves an intense preparation by prayer and study for the reception of the sacraments of initiation at Easter.

Rites of...

Acceptance: The rite by which unbaptized inquirers declare their desire to be catechumens, and the church accepts their declaration.

Welcome: The rite by which inquirers who are already baptized become candidates for the completion of Christian initiation in the Catholic Church.

Election: Presided over by the Bishop, the rite by which catechumens enter the period of purification and enlightenment.

Call to Continuing Conversion: Often celebrated in tandem with Election, the rite by which candidates enter their final preparation for the completion of Christian initiation.

Scrutiny: Three rites of exorcism for the elect during Lent.

Sacraments of Initiation: The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

XI – ADDENDUM – DIOCESAN RCIA COMMITTEE HISTORY & STRUCTUREⁱⁱ

It has been more than forty years since Epiphany 1972 when the Latin text of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was promulgated by the Sacred Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship. Two years later the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the provisional English text. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was certainly one of the most far-reaching of the liturgical documents to come from the Second Vatican Council. It did not replace an existing rite, and there was no mandatory date given for the implementation of the Rite in the United States. This was left to the discretion of each bishop in his diocese.

During the seventies, the Church struggled to find ways of implementing the many changes that came from Rome due to Vatican II. With no mandatory date of implementation, the RCIA was moved backstage as the focus centered on more pressing liturgical reforms. However, once these changes began to take root, Bishop James Hoffman, then bishop of the Diocese of Toledo, made the RCIA one of his top liturgical priorities and helped to spearhead the cooperative effort to implement the RCIA. Throughout his tenure, Bishop Hoffman emphasized that implementation of the RCIA throughout the diocese was not optional.

Prompted by a resolution from the Priests' Senate, along with many inquiries to the chancery about the RCIA, the Liturgical Commission was asked to step up its efforts toward education and implementation of the restored catechumenate. In the spring of 1981 a group of persons representing various departments met with Fr. Kenneth Morman to aid in the planning of the Neophyte Mass for that year. These people continued to meet and eventually formed into the "RCIA Study Group." This group included representatives of the Liturgical Commission, the Priests' Senate, the Religious Education Department, the Office of Continuing Education for Priests, and delegates from three parishes who already implemented the RCIA. To get a better balance between theoreticians and practitioners, more parishes were contacted and asked to send delegates or alternates.

By September of 1981, twenty-five people committed themselves to meet monthly for one year with the following goals: (1) to study the rite; (2) to make recommendations regarding the bishop's involvement in RCIA; (3) to make RCIA presentations in each deanery of the diocese in order to surface questions and to receive input; and (4) at the request of Bishop Hoffman, to arrange for an RCIA workshop in the diocese in the summer of 1982. The Study Group later added the task of drawing up diocesan guidelines, including various parish catechumenal models.

Progress was made on all these goals, culminating in "Beginnings," an RCIA Institute held at Bluffton College on August 15-20, 1982. This Institute was conducted by a team from the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, led by Fr. James Dunning. One hundred fifty-seven people participated at the "Beginnings" Institute, including ninety-two from the Diocese of Toledo. After the Institute, the Study Group solicited suggestions from the participants on directions for the future of the group and how it could serve the parishes of the diocese.

In September of 1982 the study had been completed. The Study Group met to evaluate its work and redefine itself and its mission. The result of this was the “Diocesan RCIA Committee.” The group took on new members, drawing upon the participants of the Institute. The committee, which met monthly, consisted of one contact person from each of the eleven deaneries, two representatives designated from the Catechetical Department, and two representatives from the Liturgical Commission, along with whoever the committee determined. The maximum membership was set at twenty-five. One main criterion was that these people were actively involved at the grassroots level. Members were to serve three years, renewable indefinitely at three-year intervals.

Taking into consideration the goals of the group and the input from the Institute participants, the committee addressed itself to the following tasks:

- The proper implementation of the Rite of Election and the Neophyte Mass
- A regular column in the quarterly newsletter, *The Chronicler*
- A draft of diocesan guidelines to be submitted to the bishop giving definitive diocesan policies which would specify the official introduction of the rubrics of the rite
- A compilation of diocesan models already in use by parishes involved in the RCIA
- Offerings of short-term workshops in deaneries on specific topics and long-term workshops offered once a year to the whole diocese

In response to these tasks, three years after the first Institute, the committee invited the North American Forum back to our diocese to present the “Beginnings and Beyond” Institute. The institute was again held at Bluffton College, and once again the diocese was well represented.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was canonically approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in plenary assembly on November 11, 1986, and was subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See by decree of the Office of Divine Worship on February 9, 1987. Use of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults became mandatory in the dioceses of the United States of America on September 1, 1988. With the final draft of the rite and its mandatory implementation in place, the diocesan committee offered four workshops throughout the diocese during the winter of 1989 to assist parishes in understanding the theology and spirituality of the rites as well as their proper implementation within the liturgy.

To help in furthering the implementation and understanding of the RCIA throughout the Diocese of Toledo, the committee has continued to solicit the help of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate. On July 23-25, 1990, the Forum presented a “Ministries Conference” at the University of Toledo. On June 22-24, 1995, the Forum offered “Beginnings: A Mini Institute” at the University of Findlay. On September 25-28, 2002, the committee again enlisted the expertise of the Forum to present an institute for parish RCIA teams well established in the process. Offered at Lakeside, OH, “Furthering the Initiation Experience” helped expand the possibilities contained in the Rite.

The Diocese of Toledo issued the *Pastoral Policy Handbook* (commonly known as the “Blue Book”) in October 2001. Among other policies this handbook contains policies and procedures

pertaining to the RCIA and supportive of the information contained in this *RCIA Handbook*. This information is found in the section entitled “The Sanctifying Function of the Church.”

In 2006, the Diocesan RCIA Committee still continues to offer workshops, facilitates annually the Rite of Election (celebrated at two sites) and the Neophyte Mass at the Cathedral, while assisting parishes throughout the diocese in the implementation of the RCIA. The committee meets monthly, and its membership includes persons from a variety of parish RCIA teams, representatives from the Liturgical Commission, and others who have expertise in the process.

Diocesan RCIA Committee – Chairpersons

- Fr. Paul Kwiatkowski (1982-1985)
- Sr. Virginia Welsh, OSF/T (1985-1988)
- Fr. James Brown (1989-1990)
- Jane Ridenour, Bowling Green, St. Thomas More (1991)
- Betty Kelly, Toledo, Our Lady of Lourdes (1992-1993)
- Pam Meseroll, Toledo, Corpus Christi University Parish (1994)
- Patricia Bernard, Toledo, St. John the Baptist (1995-1996)
- Mary Stuart, Toledo, St. Joan of Arc (1997-1998)
- Sr. Georgette Zalewska, RSM, Director of the Office of Worship, Diocese of Toledo (1999-2001)
- Geri Leibfarth, Findlay, St. Michael (2002-present)

The history of the implementation of the RCIA in the Toledo diocese has been a process of formation, of conversion, of welcoming, and of walking the journey one step at a time, building on each step taken. It has seen the blending of theory and practice, parishes and departments, and grassroots input with broad-base consultation. A great philosopher once said that to forget our past is to remain a child. We build on our past, growing as we continue the process. The goal of the RCIA committee has been and will continue to be that of education and implementation. The committee will continue to grow in its own understanding of the rite so that it may continue to help others grow in that understanding, then use that knowledge to implement the rite.

XII - ENDNOTES

ⁱ Lectionary-based catechesis involves: Textual Interpretation, Celebration of the Word, Faith Sharing, Life Experience, Catholic Tradition, Ritual and Prayer, Servanthood, and Spiritual and Communal Formation. The Word that is proclaimed each week serves as the catalyst for catechesis. Both Scriptural and Liturgical exegesis is applied; the catechumens share their story based on the Word and connect their lived experience with the common story of the Gospel; Catholic teaching (dogmas and precepts) is presented; and the catechumens are awakened to and challenged to a sense of prayer, mission and community.

ⁱⁱ This section on the Diocesan RCIA Committee History and Structure is a revision of an adaptation from an article written by Fr. Paul Kwiatkowski for *The Chronicler*, Vol. IX, No. 2, Winter, 1982. More recent information has been added to reflect that which has occurred since the writing of Fr. Kwiatkowski's article and the subsequent adaptation.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Bibliography of resources

Required texts:

Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1988.

Additional Resources:

Birmingham, Mary. Year Round Catechumenate. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 2002.

Birmingham, Mary. Word and Worship Workbook A. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1999.

Birmingham, Mary. Word and Worship Workbook B Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1999.

Birmingham, Mary. Word and Worship Workbook C. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1999.

Camille, Alice L. God's Word is Alive! Entering the Sunday Readings. Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT, 2000.

Chilson, Richard. Catholic Christianity: A Guide to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1987.

Chriszt, Dennis, C.P.P.S. Creating An Effective Mystagogy. Resource Publications, Inc., San Jose, CA, 2001.

Donghi, Antonio. Actions and Words: Symbolic Language and the Liturgy. The Liturgical Press, 1997.

Duggan, Bob, et al. Foundations in Faith: Resources for Christian Living. Allen, TX, 1998.

Dunning, James. Echoing God's Word. The North American Forum on the Catechumenate, Arlington, VA, 1993.

Hughes, Kathleen. Saying Amen: Mystagogy of Sacrament. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1999.

Hynes, Mary Ellen. Companion to the Calendar. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1993.

Kenny, John J. Now That You Are Catholic. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1986.

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- McBride, Alfred, O.Praem. The Story of the Church. St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH, 1996.
- Merrit, Sydney Ann. Guided Meditations for Adult Catechumens. Resource Publications, Inc., San Jose, CA, 1999. (Out of Print)
- Mick, Lawrence E. RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiating Assembly. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1989.
- Morris, Thomas H. The RCIA: Transforming the Church – A Resource for Pastoral Implementation. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1997.
- Morris, Thomas H. Walking Together in Faith: A Workbook for Sponsors of Christian Initiation. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1992.
- North American Forum on the Catechumenate. Forum Essays. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1994.
- Ramshaw, Gail Words Around the Font, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1994.
- Redemptorist Pastoral Publication. Handbook for Today's Catholic. Liguori Press, Liguori, MO, 1994.
- United States Catholic Conference. Journey to the Fullness of Life. USCC, Washington, D.C., 2000.
- Wilde, James A., Ed. Finding and Forming Sponsors and Godparents. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1988.
- Wilde, James A., Ed. Commentaries on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1988.
- Yarnold, Edward, S.J. The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1994.

Recommended resources from North American Forum on the Catechumenate (Programs and resources for working with children.)

A Child's Journey: The Christian Initiation of Children

Rita Burns Senseman

This comprehensive book examines the special issues of initiation of children and offers solid, practical approaches.

Children and Christian Initiation Series

Kathy Coffey

***Leader Guide** – This new revised edition includes the best age-appropriate ways to implement the process with children ages 7-14. This resource contains everything you need to explore the meaning of symbols and ritual gestures to prepare the child before the rites and reflect upon their meaning afterwards.*

***Parent and Sponsor Guide** – Includes all that a parent or sponsor needs to accompany a child to full sacramental initiation.*

***Journals for Children and Youth** – Lively, colorful pages invite children and youth to record their thoughts and drawings as they participate in the process of initiation.*

Issues in the Christian Initiation of Children: Catechesis and Liturgy

Kathy Brown and Frank C. Sokol, editors

This book will enlighten your policy-making and help you prepare effective celebration of rites with children.

Lectionary-Based Catechesis for Children: A Catechist's Guide

Sylvia De Villers

This resource discusses the most criticized problems of lectionary-based catechesis by connecting it to a traditional curriculum that honors children's individual stages.

Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children

Victoria M. Tufano, editor

Gathers seventeen recommended articles on how children are initiated into the Catholic Church.

Preparing to Celebrate with Children

Gerard Whitty, Jeanette Mercer, and Elaine Wells

This book is a primer of principles and ideas for celebrating with children.

To Walk with a Child: Homiletics for Children (A Guide)

Gerard A. Pottebaum

This book helps one to develop a methodology to draw children into the scriptures and prayerfully to reflect on their lives in light of God's word.

Children's Catechumenate

Philip J. McBrien

This book, written especially for catechists, provides critical background on all initiation rites and their application to children. You will be able to prepare children for each rite and help them unpack the experience afterward, as well as draw parents into the process.

Other available resources

Children's Catechumenate

Rev. Thomas L. Long and Emily F. Filippi M.R.E.

Director's Guide

Catechist Manual
Primary Level
Intermediate Level
Upper Level

Guided Meditations for Child Catechumens

Sydney Ann Merritt

40 different meditations organized around the initiation rites or significant points during the catechumenal process. These powerful meditations will help you to prepare children for the various rites and to unpack the experience afterward.

Videos

“This is the Night”

Liturgy Training Publications, 1992.

“Liturgies of the Triduum: Holy Thursday”

“Liturgies of the Triduum: Good Friday”

“Liturgies of the Triduum: Easter Vigil”

Liturgy Training Publications, 1999.

“Why We Go To Mass: Liturgy & Our Lives”

Loyola Press, 2002.

“An Invitation to New Life”

Paulist Press, 1989.

“Persons, Places, & Practices in the Catholic Church”

Liguori Publications.

Websites

www.naforum.org

www.catholic.org