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Using the *Leader's Manual*

THE ASSOCIATION for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) exists to foster the full implementation of the Christian initiation process. This *Leader's Manual* is one of ACM's ON THE JOURNEY series of books intended to be used for the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) promulgated by the Church in the years following the Second Vatican Council. This *Manual* is designed to be a practical help and a comprehensive guide for those in RCIA leadership, both clergy and laity. Together with its two main companions in the ON THE JOURNEY series—the *RCIA Catechist's Manual* and the *RCIA Participant's Book*—this *Leader's Manual* should enable a parish to successfully implement the liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral aspects of the Christian initiation process, in light of the guidelines given by the Church in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (called in this text the “RCIA ritual book” or the “ritual book” and cited as “RCIA,” followed

by a number referring to the particular paragraph in the ritual book). The user of this *Manual* should have a copy of the ritual book close at hand in order to read the paragraphs referenced throughout this *Manual*. Although this *Manual* may be used as a reference tool, it is intended to provide an RCIA leader with a much more systematic and thorough understanding of the catechumenal process if read in chapter order.

THE PURPOSE OF SECTION ONE: MAIN TEXT

The chapters in this *Manual's* main section provide the RCIA leader, the person responsible for directing and coordinating the Christian initiation process

for adults in the parish (the pastor, or another priest of the parish, a deacon, or a paid or volunteer layperson delegated this task by the pastor) with a clear and thorough explanation of its practicalities. The remaining chapters of the Introduction establish the foundation for understanding the necessity of each of the aspects of the RCIA process: liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral. This foundational material is followed by an in-depth and pragmatic set of chapters explaining each of these aspects, oriented to the needs of the leader. This *Manual*


is intended to be used as a companion volume to ACM's *Catechist's Manual*, and for this reason there are fewer chapters on the catechetical aspect of the process, since the *Catechist's Manual* effectively completes the discussion of the catechetical aspect. The main section of this *Manual* concludes with a portrait of a new Catholic as a means to maintain focus on the evangelical goal of the entire endeavor.

The RCIA leader

should not peruse this *Manual* and become discouraged because his or her parish Christian initiation process seems to fall short of the Church's expectations. The RCIA ritual book was promulgated by the Church as a guide for parish catechumenates that normally takes years to develop to the point of full implementation. This *Manual* is intended to flesh out the ritual book and give the RCIA leader a complete understanding of how to develop the process in an orderly way, based on known goals.

In addition to serving as a guide to the leader, the *Manual* can be a tool for training other individuals, perhaps mostly lay volunteers, in the multitude of roles that are necessary





to fulfill what the Church envisioned in promulgating the ritual book. This *Manual* can also serve as a tool to allow the leader to delegate significant tasks, especially in the areas of training and coordination of specific elements of the RCIA process. The Association for Catechumenal Ministry prepared this *Manual*, therefore, to take its place with the essential books that every RCIA leader needs: the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (the ritual book), and the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

The main text often refers to the “RCIA leader.” The Association for Catechumenal Ministry does not assume by use of this phrase who this individual is within the parish. The leader could be the pastor, another priest of the parish, a deacon of the parish, a religious brother or sister, or a paid or volunteer lay person. Many parishes have co-leaders; it is not uncommon for a deacon and his wife, or a lay married couple, to be co-leaders. In the few instances where the *Manual* reads, for example, “the pastor and the RCIA leader,” the purpose is to emphasize the pastor’s overall responsibility. It is not intended to suggest that the pastor might not himself be the RCIA leader.

Because this *Manual* is designed for use by parishes, the RCIA leader is reminded to take cognizance of the paragraphs in the ritual book that pertain specifically to the bishop’s role in the Christian initiation process. These include: GI 12-14; RCIA 32-33 (conferences of bishops), RCIA 34.1, 125, 207, and 251; and, in the United States, NS 5, 11, 12, 13, 23, and 29. Each diocese will handle these differently, and the pastor and RCIA leader should obtain and follow the diocesan guidelines for Christian initiation.

THE PURPOSE OF SECTION TWO: APPENDICES

The entire section of appendices of this *Manual* is copyable, to allow for unlimited printing or for modification to a parish’s needs. The appendices contain all forms that would normally be used for participants, as well as other useful forms to assist RCIA leaders in recruiting and working with team members, godparents, and sponsors. These forms


are designed to be appropriate for international use. In addition, the appendices provide a wealth of text and ideas for many different components of the RCIA process, such as letters, advertising, bulletin items, prayers, liturgy reminders, and retreat suggestions. These are things that facilitate the full implementation of the catechumenal process, but would ordinarily take an RCIA leader a great amount of time to develop. Any of the material in these seven appendices may be modified in whatever way a parish RCIA leader deems appropriate.

The original purchaser (parish, local parochial institution, or individual) has permission to use and reproduce the forms, sample letters, and other items in the seven appendices of this *Leader’s Manual*, without charge and without further permission, subject to the following terms and conditions:

- ❖ Items in the appendices can be modified by the purchaser for local use, and do not have to be kept intact as created by the publisher.
- ❖ All handouts or text resulting from use of the appendices are to be offered free of charge by the original purchaser. Materials in this *Manual* cannot be duplicated to be sold.

THE RCIA OVERVIEW CHART

The foldout Overview Chart found in the front pocket of this *Manual* looks daunting at first, but the idea is to provide a picture of the whole process, from start to finish. Many parishes have found this chart valuable for training their RCIA teams. Across the top are the names of each of the periods of the RCIA process and the status of the participants, as well as terms used to identify them at any given stage. Notice that no time frames are specified except for the period of purification and enlightenment, which normally coincides with Lent, and the neophyte year, normally extending from one Easter to the next. All of the references quoted in the chart are taken from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA ritual book); as with all ecclesiastical documents, the numbering refers to paragraphs, not pages. Down the side, the journey of each possible type of participant is tracked (unbaptized in green, baptized uncatechized in red, and baptized catechized but not



Catholic in blue), as well as the responsibilities of the Church in each period of the catechumenal process. The dark bars denote the major liturgical gateways of the process, and continue to use the color scheme, with the combining of red and blue to make purple in the case of baptized participants, since both of these categories of people can go through the same gateway Rites. Each period is divided into the three aspects: liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral. This has been done to make information in the guidelines of the ritual book more accessible, and to undo some of the confusion that arises when using it. When reading through this *Manual*, the Overview Chart should be kept open to aid in grasping the larger context of the particular subject at hand.

THE TABS FOR THE RCIA RITUAL BOOK

Implementation of the Christian initiation process necessitates the extensive use of the RCIA ritual book by both clergy and laity. The ritual book is one of the Church's most complex liturgical publications. The tabs included in the front pocket of the *Leader's Manual* have been created to allow significantly-greater ease in navigating this most fundamental of texts. The tabs are designed to work with English-language versions of the book that are published in the United States. U.S. editions of the RCIA ritual book include certain appendices that are not found in all English-language editions. In most cases for non-U.S. editions, the tabs for the Combined Rites and the National Statutes will not be applicable, although all other tabs will be used.

SERVING THE WORK OF CONVERSION

As a final note to set the tone for the rest of this Manual, it is important to place this work in proper relation to its goal: helping the RCIA leader to be at the service of the Holy Spirit's work of conversion. The catechumenal process seeks to impart an understanding of the Catholic faith in such a way as to transform the life of the catechumen or candidate, not only resulting in a change of status with respect to the Church, but also a change of status with respect to God. The process is intended to be life-changing. Although conversion, seen as a progressive

process, involves various stages of change, simply stated, it involves a turning *from* something and a turning *towards* something else, that is, towards Jesus Christ (see GDC 53). Whatever an inquirer's original reason for coming to RCIA, it is a good one; it is the reason God has used. However, by the end of the Christian initiation process, this original motivation must have been cultivated, encouraged, and purified so that an inquirer can come to the conviction that he or she cannot imagine living the rest of his or her life outside of the Church.

A fully-implemented catechumenal process, making available the liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral aspects that the Church knows will bear fruit, is at the heart of the Church's mission to evangelize, to teach, and to sanctify. It calls forth a significant and consistent effort from the clergy and laity directly involved, and an evangelical attitude within the welcoming parish community. If undertaken, the personal investment implied in this *Leader's Manual* places the RCIA leader in communion with all those down through the centuries whose sacrifice to prepare a Godly welcome for those as yet unknown allows them to echo the words of St. Paul: "*For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you ... and for all who have not seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col 2:1-3).

Personal Focus: The Signs and Stages of Conversion

MANY CATHOLICS are not necessarily sure what it would look like for an adult to go through a conversion experience. In an RCIA context, team members need to have a firm grasp of the nature of adult conversion, so that they may recognize its signs through the stages of the RCIA process, and thereby most fully assist in the Holy Spirit's transforming work in each participant's soul.

God calls all Christians to continual conversion and transformation in every aspect of their lives. St. Paul described this expectation thus:

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his Resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.... forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.... Only let us hold true to what we have attained (Phil 3:8-14, 16).

This transformation can only be achieved by

the grace of God, faith in Christ, and a recognition that ongoing conversion is costly and requires suffering, but yields the great reward of "gaining Christ."

There is tremendous fruit around the world from Protestant denominations that give people an opportunity to accept Christ. However, the modern Protestant idea of people going to meetings, raising their hands, giving their lives to the Lord, and considering themselves saved, is a relatively new concept in the history of Christianity. Being "born again" or "being saved" or "converting" or "coming to the Lord" is not a moment in time but a process, a decision of the heart that is followed by a process of growing into full maturity into Christ, a process that, while having a specific starting point, cannot occur in a moment of time. The Church's process of Christian initiation is intended to nurture and support individuals' entry into the mystery of Christ from its beginning until completion of the first year after they have received the sacraments of initiation and become members of his Church.

WHAT IS CONVERSION?

Today, unfettered license, pleasure, sensuality, and materialism are promoted and praised in a popular culture from which all sense of sin has disappeared. Advertisers pander to people's sense of entitlement by telling them "you're worth it" or "you deserve it." Yet many people are





increasingly disillusioned with what the world calls “freedom.” There is dissatisfaction with the greatest dreams the world can offer. People long for something more: they want to know the meaning and purpose of life. This longing may be accompanied by pain, confusion, or despair, and ignorance of what the object of their longing might be. They are aching and weak, in need of understanding for what or, better, *for whom* they long.

Conversion cannot be initiated as a simple act of a darkened intellect, a weakened will, and a disordered set of desires that are the joint inheritance of all humans from Adam and Eve, for “conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God” (CCC 1432). It involves a *response* to God’s call to turn *from* something coupled with his prompting to turn *towards* something else.

People who begin the process of “turning from” step out of mere material comfort as an act of hope that there must be “something better.” Long ago, a seeker who had spent over twenty years in confusion and sexual license exclaimed, when he found the desire of his heart, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (St. Augustine, *Confessions* 1, 1, 1). When people turn towards the “something better” for which they long, they are actually turning towards a *Person*: “The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ” (GDC 53, citing AG 13a). Conversion thus is intimately connected with the act of coming to faith (see GDC 53–57), which “is a gift from God [that] can only be born in the intimacy of man’s heart as a fruit of that ‘grace [which] moves and assists him’ and as a completely free response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and turns it towards God” (GDC 55, citing DV 5 and referring to CCC 153).

Hearing the “Good News” of Jesus Christ proclaimed, or seeing it lived out through the life of a committed disciple, may inspire an individual to experience an initial faith in Jesus. Such an individual may come to the Catholic Church asking, “Will you help me find what I’m looking for?”

The sequence of the four periods and three major liturgical gateways of the Christian initiation process is arranged to motivate an individual’s increasing conversion to Jesus Christ. Because this life of ongoing conversion and journeying towards perfection is the life every Christian is called to live, the Christian initiation process

must be thoroughly steeped in this understanding. The RCIA ritual book provides a considerable amount of guidance about how participants will progress through the Christian initiation process, how to know what signs to look for at each stage, and how to aid the participants in the conversion of their minds and hearts.

THE PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND THE PRECATECHUMENATE (SEE RCIA 6.1, 7.1)


Inquirers begin the Christian initiation process for various reasons. An inquirer may have become engaged to a young lady who is Catholic, or may already be married to a Catholic and want unity in the family. Some may have discovered in the Church’s worship and liturgy a pull they can’t explain. Others may have their interest piqued because a Catholic acquaintance answered some questions. Still others may have seen a movie that portrayed Christ or the Church in a way that called to them. Some may have enrolled their children in a Catholic school to escape poor public schools, and their children begin to desire to become Catholic. Others may go to Mass with a Catholic spouse and are edified by the friendship extended to them by the parish clergy and members. A person baptized as a Catholic in infancy but never raised as a Catholic may finally decide to learn about the faith they were never taught. Another might simply be invited by a friend or neighbor to “come and see.”

Whatever their initial reason for approaching the door of the Church, it is a valid one because it is the reason God has used to draw them to his Church. The objective of the precatechumenate is not solely that individuals enter into a relationship with the Church. For unbaptized individuals, the precatechumenate is the time when they enter into a relationship with Jesus that will come to fulfillment by receiving the sacraments of initiation. For uncatechized baptized individuals, it is a time to recognize and deepen their Baptismal commitment to Jesus in preparation for reception into full communion with the Church.

First Faith

The first sign of conversion that should appear in the inquirer is not yet true faith or religious conviction. However, showing “interest in the Gospel” (GDC 56a), which might manifest itself as a disposition towards belief,





a search, or an interest in the Catholic Church is already evidence of the Holy Spirit working in a person's heart.

Entrance into the precatechumenate is like St. Peter and St. Andrew, St. James and St. John, taking their first steps out of their boats and walking up the road with Jesus when he said, “Follow me” (Mt 4:18-22). For some inquirers, first faith comes early in the process. Most often, however, the growth of faith and the conversion process for inquirers is slow as it was in the lives of the apostles, even though “they left every thing” (Lk 5:11) when Jesus extended his initial invitation to follow him.

The evangelizing activity of the precatechumenate—the acts of welcoming, witness, proclamation of the Gospel, and prayer, along with the resolution of questions—gives inquirers every opportunity to cooperate with God's grace and respond with “faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin, and be drawn into the mystery of God's love” (RCIA 37). First faith and commitment to Jesus, then, is the awakening, re-awakening, or strengthening of the belief that not only is Jesus Christ “the” Lord and Savior, but that he is “my” Lord and Savior.

In some cases, this first stage in the conversion process leads to an awareness of brokenness and sin. God's grace draws an individual to repent of his or her sin and to desire to deal with his or her sin problem which has separated him or her from the Father. Inquirers need to sense being called “away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love” (RCIA 37; emphasis added). Jesus' account of the forgiving father in the parable of the Prodigal Son gives us a glimpse of our loving and merciful Father in Heaven (see Lk 15:11-32). The father is the first to see the repentant son, and he goes running towards his child. So too, does our Heavenly Father wait for us to turn towards him. Inquirers often need to learn to repent, to forgive others, to access the mercy that God makes available: to see the reality of who God is and to turn, or turn back, to the Father.

The RCIA (or precatechumenate) team should not be in a hurry to dig up the ground to see if the seed has started to sprout. Their attitude should be filled with patience, understanding, and love as the Gospel message is proclaimed. Jesus will send the graces of the Holy Spirit, who will give the gift of an initial faith and begin to deepen an initial conversion, at just the right time.

Unbaptized inquirers have access only to the superabundance of actual graces—that is, the Holy Spirit's direct actions on the soul (see CCC 2000)—as do baptized inquirers whose grave sins have driven sanctifying grace from their souls (see CCC 1861). Baptized inquirers in a state of grace can also nourish and strengthen, under the guidance of the Church in the Christian initiation process, the theological virtue of faith infused in them at Baptism and thus advance in faith with the help of sanctifying as well as actual grace (see CCC 1266).

Evaluating Inquirers' Progress

Relatively early in the precatechumenate, inquirers should be paired with sponsors, companions on the inquirers' journey towards the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming. The ritual book requires that sponsors be “persons who have known and assisted the candidates [that is, inquirers] and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention (RCIA 10; RCIA 404 also requires sponsors for baptized inquirers, with the same responsibilities). Sponsors have a solemn responsibility to rapidly develop a close relationship with inquirers so that they can provide needed assistance and be able to attest to the inquirers' progress in these three areas (see Chapter 19 of this *Manual*, “Godparents and Sponsors” regarding the selection and training of sponsors). (The role of the RCIA team in fostering conversion is also discussed in Chapter 18, “The RCIA Team.”)

The RCIA leader might ask inquirers to complete the “Adult Inquirer Information Form” (see Appendix I of this *Manual*; a “Sample Inquirer Information Cover Letter” is also provided) and use completion and return of this form as the trigger to assign a sponsor. This is workable only up to a point, since people vary in their attentiveness to completing what might seem to be a routine form. If the leader realizes, or is told by a member of the team, that the inquirer has shown interest in becoming a Catholic, the leader should assign a sponsor as quickly as possible (while tactfully reminding inquirers to complete and return the form).

Another option would be for the leader to fill out the form with the inquirer in the context of an initial “get to know you” meeting. This ensures that all questions on the form have been understood and adequately answered, and affords the RCIA leader an



opportunity to ask follow-up questions in a private setting. This usually results in the leader gaining a better feel for someone earlier in the process.

Moral Character of Inquirers. Some inquirers, even those never baptized, may already be living a life of virtue through response to their consciences and cultivation of the human virtues (the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude) and the virtues that flow from these. Some may have habits of vice that they should begin to undo while in the precatechumenate. And others may be experiencing the burden of a sinful past or present life. While in the precatechumenate, inquirers must eventually recognize that becoming a Christian means turning to Christ and away from all that is incompatible with his life and teaching. They must be clear that they want to become followers of Christ and not simply believers in precepts. Evidence of this change of heart includes an understanding, perhaps for the first time in their lives, of sin and its effects. This should lead to a manifest desire to live a more righteous life and the beginning of repentance for past and present sins. At this stage, some inquirers might undertake a significant change of life or reconcile with someone in their lives.

Faith of Inquirers. Faith grows on the basis of a reliance not only on the truthfulness of the Gospel that is being proclaimed, but also on the truthfulness of the catechist and others on the RCIA team who are transmitting the Good News (see CCC 177). During the precatechumenate, the inquirer is presented with the evidence of the truthfulness of what is being taught. Christ's miracles—especially his Resurrection, as St. Paul exclaims: “*if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain*” (1 Cor 15:14), the spread of the Church into every corner of the globe, her holiness and the unchanging nature of her teaching, the glory of the saints and the miracles vouchsafed to them, are all guarantors that what the Church teaches through the parish clergy, the catechist, and the Christian witness of the RCIA team are worthy of an assent of faith (see CCC 156), “a trustful abandonment to God and a loving assent to all that he has revealed to us” (GDC 54), a complete submission of “intellect and . . . will to God who reveals” (DV 5, citing the First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Catholic Faith*, ch. 2). It should become noticeable that inquirers have developed a desire to know God's

Word and to know God more, especially the Person and mission of Christ. Other evidence of change includes beginning to pray and becoming interested in matters about the Church. In the case of baptized inquirers, “the faith infused at Baptism must grow in them and take deep root” (RCIA 401).


Intention of Inquirers. Inquirers should be encouraged to look into their hearts to see how God has spoken to them and how they have responded. The desire for Baptism should begin to be apparent and come to maturity in unbaptized inquirers (see RCIA 37), and the desire to complete their initiation, or to enter into the full communion of the Church, should similarly have grown in baptized inquirers (see RCIA 418). *This desire should not be presumed*, and inquirers should frequently be reminded that the decision to be baptized or to become members of the Church is an entirely free decision on their part. They should be given every possible assistance, including prayers such as exorcisms and blessings by the pastor (see RCIA 40), the experience of Christian witness drawing inquirers into a relationship of *communio*, and “opportunities [to] meet families and other groups of Christians” (RCIA 38) so that “with a purified and clearer intention [inquirers] may cooperate with God's grace” (RCIA 38).

As the precatechumenate progresses, the pastor, parish clergy, RCIA leader and team, and sponsors enter into a process of discernment about the inquirers' decision to seek Baptism, complete the sacraments of initiation, or to enter the Church. Evaluating inquirers' motives and progress takes place as those involved with the Christian initiation process talk with inquirers, get to know them, and hear about their struggles and victories. Since entrance into the catechumenate begins a formal relationship with the Church, this discernment must be done with the utmost seriousness (see RCIA 41). The celebration of the Rite of Acceptance should not take place “until the candidates [that is, inquirers], according to their own dispositions and situation, have had sufficient time to conceive an initial faith and to show the first signs of conversion” (RCIA 18.1).

Determining When Inquirers are Ready to Go Through the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming

Inquirers are ready to go through the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming when conversion of heart has become “a firm option . . . for faith [which] must be a con-





sidered and mature one” and “adherence to Christ and the will to walk in his footsteps” is evident (GDC 56b).

“Before the Rite is celebrated. . . , sufficient and necessary time, as required in each case, should be set aside to evaluate and, if necessary, purify the inquirer’s motives and dispositions” (RCIA 43). The final responsibility to judge “the outward indications of such dispositions” rests with the pastor, aided by other parish clergy, sponsors, and catechists (RCIA 43). The ritual book is silent about the pastor delegating this responsibility to the RCIA leader if this person is not the pastor, and this must be therefore left up to the judgment of each individual pastor. An interview form for helping to determine whether inquirers are ready for the Rites can be found in Appendix I of this *Manual*, entitled “Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming.”

The dispositions of inquirers must be sincere, sufficient, and freely entered upon. Evidence of a *sincere* disposition include conversion of heart, even if it is not yet complete (see RCIA 6.1), the beginning of repentance for sins, of a life of prayer and interest in spiritual things (see RCIA 42). Evidence of a *sufficient* disposition include having received basic catechesis in the faith and “the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root” (RCIA 42) and that they are ready “to accept the teachings of the Gospel” (RCIA 52). In addition, inquirers demonstrate “adherence to Christ and the will to walk in his footsteps” (GDC 56b), that is, to commit their “lives daily to [Christ’s] care, so that [they] may come to believe in him with all [their] heart[s]” (RCIA 52) and will begin “to know God and to love [their] neighbor” (RCIA 52). Finally, inquirers must exhibit an understanding of what the Church is (see RCIA 42) from whom they ask for faith (see RCIA 51). Finally, evidence of a disposition *freely entered upon* begins with inquirers having seen and experienced the witness of committed and faithful Catholics in the person of the pastor or another parish priest, members of the RCIA team, and the parish community (see RCIA 42). Unbaptized inquirers should know that, when asked during the Rite of Acceptance, “Are you prepared to begin this journey today under the guidance of Christ?” (RCIA 52), their positive answer must be freely given. Baptized inquirers should know that they will be asked to “join with us in a life of prayer and service” or to “declare

before this community the reasons why [they] desire to enter more fully in the life of the Church” (RCIA 419).

Those inquirers who have met these tests are considered to “have completed the period of the pre-catechumenate [and are ready to] declare their intention to the Church” (RCIA 41; see also RCIA 411). They have made their decision to enter the “household of Christ” (RCIA 47). To be ready for the sacraments of initiation, they need to know more, and need further conversion of heart; but they know enough and have experienced a conversion that allows them to be able to make this momentous decision. If the signs of readiness for the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming are not fully present, the foundation to build on in the catechumenate will not be strong, and inquirers should not be pressured or permitted to go through the Rite.

When inquirers celebrate the Rite of Acceptance or Rite of Welcoming, God “showers his grace on them” (RCIA 41). The grace that comes from this celebration and the loving support of the parish clergy, sponsors, the RCIA team, and the parish community becomes a source of strength and encouragement as the catechumens and candidates walk the path of conversion to full acceptance of Jesus as Lord and to full sacramental initiation.

THE PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE (SEE RCIA 7.2)

In the catechumenate period, the “newly converted sets out on a spiritual journey” (RCIA 75.2), eager “to take part in celebrations of the Word of God and to receive blessings and other sacramentals” (RCIA 47). The ritual book provides a considerable number of guidelines for this period of the Christian initiation process, the purpose of which is to fully form catechumens into individuals ready for the sacraments of initiation (guidelines for candidates tend to refer back to those for catechumens; this discussion is to be understood as referring to both unbaptized and uncatechized baptized candidates). While the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming declare the inquirers’ decision to enter the Church (or complete their initiation), the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion which conclude the period of the catechumenate herald the participants’ readiness for this tremendous, life-changing event to occur in the very short term.



Guidelines for What Should Be Done

This *Leader's Manual* addresses at length the liturgical and catechetical formation of participants during the catechumenate period, and the means by which this is done, in PART II: THE LITURGICAL ASPECT OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION and in PART III: THE CATECHETICAL ASPECT OF CHRISTIAN FORMATION, as well as in ACM's companion *Catechist's Manual*. The discussion in this subsection focuses, therefore, on pastoral formation, while the following subsection treats what the pastor should be looking for as participants progress through the period of the catechumenate.

The principal tasks of pastoring fall to the pastor and other parish clergy if they are regularly involved in the Christian initiation process. If no member of the parish clergy can devote time to regular participation in RCIA, pastoring falls to members of the RCIA team and to godparents and sponsors (see below for when godparents are chosen). Chapters 18 and 20, respectively "The RCIA Team" and "Using Small Groups in the Catechumenal Process," and Chapter 19, "Godparents and Sponsors," discuss the ways that these lay pastoral roles are carried out. The RCIA leader's most important task is to appropriately train and form every lay member of the RCIA team, whatever his or her responsibilities are in RCIA, so that the leader maintains consistency in the team's pastoral interactions with participants. In small parishes, the RCIA leader by necessity takes upon himself or herself a larger role in pastoring, especially of participants with particularly difficult problems. In the case of a lay RCIA leader, close collaboration with the pastor and other parish clergy is essential.

In general, participants should be prayed for, offered example and witness; given love, support, and guidance; and sustained in time of trouble (see RCIA 4, 11, 75.2, 75.4, 403). This is done so that the participants—

- ✦ "become familiar with the Christian way of life" (RCIA 75.2).
- ✦ learn "how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life" (RCIA 11) and "learn to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self-renunciation" (RCIA 75.2).
- ✦ "learn to turn more readily to God in prayer" and "to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds" (RCIA 75.2).

- ✦ "learn to bear witness to the faith" (RCIA 75.2).
- ✦ "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" (RCIA 75.4).
- ✦ "in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ" (RCIA 75.2).
- ✦ "learn to deepen an inner adherence to the Church" (RCIA 477) (this is specific to baptized candidates).

At some point during the catechumenate, the participants choose godparents (note that godparents of baptized candidates are called "sponsors" throughout the ritual book). This choice should take place far enough in advance of the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion that they will be able, when called upon, to publicly attest to the participants' readiness (see RCIA 11, 112, 131, 440, 452).


Evaluating Participants' Progress

Although participants have experienced an initial conversion of heart and desire Baptism (if catechumens) or to complete the sacraments of initiation (if candidates), "under the movement of Divine grace... [conversion] involves a progressive change of outlook and morals [which] should be manifested in its social implications and effected gradually during the period of the catechumenate" (AG 13). Going through the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming is the beginning of what may, for some, be a long journey before they are ready to receive the sacraments of initiation (see RCIA 76).

The ritual book requires that, "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 120). The ritual book does not have a similarly specific guideline for candidates, but it requires that "[t]hrough the experience of worship, daily life, and service in the community the candidates [have] deepen[ed] their appreciation of the Church's tradition and universal character" (RCIA 435). The remainder of this subsection is devoted to looking at each one of these requirements, although not in the order just presented.

Sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching. The period of the catechumenate is characterized by catechesis





designed to fully transmit the doctrines of the faith, and by liturgical celebrations that further instill what they have heard about the Christian moral life, forgiveness, sin and penitence, the obligations of Christians in the family, the workplace, and the wider world, how to pray and how to worship (see RCIA 82).

A spirit of faith. The “first faith” that had been aroused in the precatechumenate has led catechumens, and those candidates who began the RCIA process with little or no faith, to step over the threshold of the Church’s door and make their “first acceptance of the Gospel” (titles of RCIA 52, 511) or “declaration of intent” (titles of RCIA 419, 512). They are now “in” but not yet “of” the Church.

Pope John Paul II wrote about “accept[ing] by faith the Person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and [giving] him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart” (CT 20). Over the period of the catechumenate, catechumens and candidates develop an attachment to the One whose love led to his saving death on the cross for the sake of all sinners. Their faith can be characterized as “a desire to know [Christ] more profoundly and to identify with him” through an “abandonment of self” (GDC 56c). Catechesis has led them “to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate” (RCIA 75.1). Having progressed thus far, they are ready to make a profession of faith.

Conversion of mind. St. Paul implored the Roman Christian community to “not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). The Church does not settle for the “warm fuzzies” of good intentions or formless attachment to Christ, or the conversion of mind as a matter of cold intellect. Participants experience a growing thirst for knowledge, not of secular knowledge for its own sake, but knowledge of God and all that he has created, and for seeking him through study and in prayer. Their intellects are remolded so that they seize the truths on which they can then act.

Evidence of conversion of mind is manifested most clearly in growth in love and humility. The participant “comes to experience himself as loved by God, and dis-

covers joy in truth and in righteousness—a joy in God which becomes his essential happiness: “*Whom do I have in Heaven but you? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides you*” (DCE 9, citing Ps 73:25). Participants’ conversations with others should begin to be less about the things of this world and more about their attachment to Christ, which should begin to have the character of ardent love. At the same time, the participant humbly acknowledges his or her nothingness before God and experiences a dying to self and selfish interests. This abandonment to God’s will at all costs becomes not a loss of self, but a surrender to “love beyond all telling” (*Roman Missal*, Preface for Advent II). This love prompts the person to recognize, with the same humility, his or her high dignity before God.

Conversion in actions, a spirit of charity, and service in the community. As the intellect informs it of truth, the will’s desire to do good increases. Participants’ appropriation of the faith of the Church leads to “profound transformation of mind and heart [and] causes the believer to live that conversion” in all areas of his or her life (GDC 55, quoting EN 23). They look at their lives in a new way, progressively recognizing habits of sin, attaining detachment from all that is worthless and sinful in their lives, and emptying themselves of all that the world would make of them. They begin to desire to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to become his disciples, eventually becoming ready to think, hope, and live as Jesus did (see GDC 53).

Turning from habits of sin is the element of conversion that is the most difficult for an RCIA leader to readily discern. A witness given by a team member may cause a participant to ask a question about what has been said. A participant might ask about the sacrament of Reconciliation as he or she begins to desire to be freed from habitual sin, and an astute team member, godparent, or sponsor follows up on the question to find out whether it has led to soul-searching. A participant will share attempts he or she is making to turn from sin in one-on-one settings with a team member, a godparent or sponsor, the leader, or a priest or deacon. As participants progress through the catechumenate period, their godparents or sponsors should gently and tactfully seek to learn how they are progressing in their efforts to turn away from behaviors that have led



them to guilt and remorse. When participants show outward indications that virtues like faith, reverence, patience, hope, temperance, purity, charity, and peace are developing, conversion is happening. However, it must be kept in mind that unbaptized participants, and baptized participants in a state of mortal sin, can receive only actual graces to help them in their conversion. It should not be expected that an aversion to sin sufficient to approach the sacraments will be completely manifest during the catechumenate period.

Participants' spirit of charity should become more evident as the catechumenate period progresses. There should be evidence of a "progressive change of outlook and conduct [which] should become manifest by means of its social consequences" (RCIA 75.2). Their behavior at catechetical sessions might be more marked by small acts of charity and service; they may begin "pitching in" on the RCIA team's setup and cleanup chores. They might eagerly agree to a request for help from an RCIA team member serving in another parish apostolate, or a call from the pastor to parishioners for some significant service such as charitable food and toy collections, helping with post-winter cleanup of the parish property, baking for the local soup kitchen or volunteering at the local crisis pregnancy center, joining in a March for Life, taking an elderly neighbor shopping or to a doctor's office. Much depends, at this stage, upon the team making opportunities for charity and service known to participants (see GDC 86). Appendix VII of this *Manual* contains a multitude of suggestions for ways to invite participants to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Appreciation of the Church's tradition and universal character. Since the beginning of the catechumenate period, catechumens and candidates have been participating in Sunday Mass (catechumens in the Liturgy of the Word, candidates in the entire Mass). They have also participated in Liturgies of the Word celebrated specifically for them, especially at catechetical sessions. Their entire catechesis has been transmitted by Mother Church and "the faith of the whole people of God echoes in its message throughout the course of history" (GDC 105), so that all who approach the Church may know that, "She bears in herself and administers the totality of the means of salvation. She is sent out to all peoples. She speaks to all men. She encompasses all times" (CCC 868; see also

GDC 86, 106). Their awareness and appreciation of this should become more noticeable by such signs as love of liturgy and of the Mass, and an interest in the lives of the saints and in Church history, and ready belief in the entire Deposit of Faith (for she is the Church of God, not a "church of the Book").


Difficulties. When Jesus was an infant, the aged prophet Simeon had told his mother that he would be "a sign that is spoken against" (Lk 2:34), and Jesus himself told his disciples that he had not "come to give peace on earth... but rather division; for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Lk 12:51-53). Difficulty is normal as conversion deepens, and those drawing closer to the Lord *should* experience divisions, separations, conflict, or tension in the process (see RCIA 75.2). A participant may question his or her life goals, motivations, or priorities; or may experience conflicts with family and friends, ethical questions about his or her job, or other issues. Participants who do *not* seem to be challenged by the Gospel, that is, there are no problems at all in a particular participant's life as a result of hearing the Gospel proclaimed and seeking to live it out, should be carefully questioned as to whether they have truly heard the Gospel message and taken it to heart.

Participants might also discover that they are ridiculed or discriminated against because of their new-found faith, and discover the truth of St. Paul's statement that "indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tm 3:12). One of the clearest signs of a significant conversion is a participant standing up for something because of his or her new-found faith.

Determining When Inquirers are Ready to Go Through the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion

Catechumens and candidates go through the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion when "the bishop, priests, deacons, catechists, godparents, and the entire community, in accord with their respective responsibilities and in their own way, ... after considering the matter carefully, arrive at a judg-





ment about the catechumens' [and, by extension, the candidates'] state of formation and progress" (RCIA 121; see also RCIA 122). In practical terms, the judgment of the bishop is delegated to the pastor who, if not closely engaged in the Christian initiation process, will delegate this discernment to the RCIA leader, team, godparents, and sponsors. However, the RCIA leader should ensure that proper weight is given to any information the pastor (and other parish clergy not part of the RCIA team) possesses that is relevant to the discernment process of a catechumen or candidate. The RCIA team in general stands in for the community. The ritual book encourages participation by catechumens (and, by extension, candidates) but does not describe how the judgment of "suitableness" will be made, except to caution that there should be no "semblance of mere formality" in the Rite (RCIA 122). The approach of the First Sunday of Lent is not a reason to conclude that any specific catechumen or candidate is ready for the Rite.

During the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion, catechumens' godparents and candidates' sponsors are asked to affirm that these individuals have listened to the proclamation of the Gospel (see RCIA 131, 453, 556), sought to follow Jesus' commands (see RCIA 131, 452) or developed a deeper understanding of their own Baptism and its effects (see RCIA 453, 556), and become part of the fellowship of the parish and joined with its members in prayer (see RCIA 131, 453, 556). Godparents and sponsors must have sufficient knowledge that they can make these affirmations in good conscience.

The ritual book specifies an objective and a subjective criterion for determining readiness, that is, "having nearly completed the catechumenate" and "having progressed in faith" (RCIA 6.2). Another subjective criterion is specified: whether or not catechumens (and, by extension, candidates) "have the dispositions that make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation" (RCIA 119). Finally, the catechumens and candidates "[w]ith deliberate will and enlightened faith... must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church" (RCIA 120). Discernment of a firm intention and mature disposition completes the process by which

"the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement towards the sacraments of initiation," a step "called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts" (RCIA 119).

Judgment of readiness, then, combines completion of basic catechesis, and judgments about faith, fitness for the sacraments of initiation, and intention. The subsection above outlines specific aspects of the experience of conversion that can be evaluated. An interview form for helping to determine readiness can be found in Appendix I of this *Manual*, entitled "Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Election or the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion."

THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT (SEE RCIA 6.2, 7.3)

The intercessions (Prayers of the Faithful) the celebrant prays concerning the elect and the candidates during the Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion express a desire that the elect and candidates would experience conversion through self-denial and self-gift, works of holiness, gratitude, reading of God's Word, finding joy and intimacy in daily prayer, owning up to faults and striving to correct them, dedicating daily work as an offering to God, making some act in each day of Lent an offering to God, being courageous in avoiding sin, and growing in love and virtue (see RCIA 134A-B).

The liturgies which are celebrated in this period—Scrutinies (for the elect), a Penitential Rite (for baptized candidates), and Presentations (for the elect and candidates who had not received much, or any, catechesis before entering the Christian initiation process)—"should complete the conversion of the elect [and, by extension, the candidates] and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all" (RCIA 141; see also RCIA 139, 369, 470B). They should be "resolve[d] to renounce error and hold fast to God... [with] the intention... to enter into a new covenant with Jesus Christ" (see RCIA 211).

Many of the intercessions for the elect in the Scrutinies speak to what should be taking place in their hearts and minds in simple and direct words: that they



may “review their lives before Christ and acknowledge their sins,” “sincerely reject everything in their lives that is displeasing and contrary to Christ,” and “long with all their hearts for the living water that brings eternal life” (RCIA 153A–B); that “preferring the folly of the Cross to the wisdom of the world, they may glory in God alone” (RCIA 167A); that “they may always thank God, who has chosen to rescue them from their ignorance of eternal life and to set them on the way of salvation,” and “liberated by repentance from the shackles of sin they may become like Christ by Baptism, dead to sin and alive forever in God’s sight” (RCIA 174A–B; see also GDC 97). The Penitential Rite for the candidates is similarly simple and direct: that they “may grow to love and seek virtue and holiness of life,” “may renounce self and put others first,” and “may share with others the joy they have found in their faith” (RCIA 469).

The elect and candidates are encouraged to spiritually prepare for the sacraments of initiation during Lent through interior reflection, examinations of conscience, acts of penance, and a deepening knowledge of their Savior (see RCIA 139). They “ponder the Word of God in their hearts and savor its meaning more fully day by day” and “humbly confess themselves to be sinners” (RCIA 153A). By meditating on Christ’s passion and death, they discover “the greatness of God’s love” and their “heart[s] are] shaken by the horror and weight of sin” (CCC 1432; see RCIA 174A).

As Holy Week approaches, when Jesus submitted his will completely to the Father, the elects’ and candidates’ hearts, realizing their sinfulness and guilt, should swell with a desire to please God, as Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God’s will increasingly coincide: God’s will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I

am to myself. Then self-abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy (DCE 17).

Their longing for the sacraments of initiation intensifies, and as they celebrate the great and terrible events recounted in the Gospels of Jesus’ passion and death, and approach the hour of the Easter Vigil, their prayer should be that of the Psalmist: “*O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, / my soul thirsts for thee; / my flesh faints for thee, / as in a dry and weary land where no water is. / So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary, / beholding thy power and glory. / Because thy steadfast love is better than life, / my lips will praise thee. / So I will bless thee as long as I live; / I will lift up my hands and call on thy name*” (Ps 63:1–4).

CONCLUSION

The sacraments of initiation are the climax, but not the end, of the process of conversion. Holiness is not acquired overnight. Scripture often uses the imagery of marriage to describe God’s relationship with his people. By the Easter Vigil, their love of God should take on a passionately nuptial character. Christ is the Bridegroom: “*Behold, he comes, . . . My beloved is mine and I am his*” (Song 2:8, 16). The sacraments of initiation, then, are the new Catholics’ wedding ceremony with the Bridegroom, with the Eucharist being their first experience of the “one-flesh” union with Christ.

But no marriage is made on a single day, and if one were to describe one’s wedding day as “the happiest day of my life,” it would suggest that the years that followed failed to measure up to the promise of that glorious day when vows were exchanged. The grandeur and exhilaration of the Easter Vigil, when the new Catholics for the first time “taste the joy that God gives without measure” (RCIA 75.2), must not be “the happiest day of my life” as a Catholic. Rather, it should be the beginning of a life of intimacy with God and self-gift to others that becomes ever more complete—a life, in short, of greater and greater holiness (see GDC 56d). Within the context of this expectation, the final chapter of this *Manual*, “Portrait of a New Catholic,” describes and discusses the period of mystagogy, the neophyte year, and beyond.





Adult Inquirer Information Form

Information on this form is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission.

Today's Date: _____

Name: First: _____ Middle: _____ Last: _____

Maiden Name (if applicable): _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Place of Birth: _____
(include **locality** (town, city, county, etc.), **region** (state, province, territory, etc.), and **country**)

Name of Father: _____

Name of Mother: _____

I. CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Mailing Address: _____

Phone: (Daytime) _____ (Evening/Weekend) _____

Cell/Mobile Phone: _____ Occupation: _____

Email: (Home) _____ (Other) _____

II. RELIGIOUS HISTORY

1. What, if any, is your present religious affiliation? _____

2. Have you ever been baptized? Yes No I am not sure

If you answered "Yes" to Question 2, please provide the following information:

(a) In what denomination were you baptized? _____

(b) Date or your approximate age when you were baptized: _____

(c) Baptismal name (if different from current name): _____

(d) Place of Baptism (name of church/denomination): _____

(e) Address, if known: _____

(f) Location, if known: _____

(include **locality** (town, city, county, etc.), **region** (state, province, territory, etc.), and **country**)

3. If you were baptized as a Catholic, check those sacraments you have already received:

Penance (Confession) Eucharist (First Communion) Confirmation

III. CURRENT MARITAL STATUS

Check the appropriate statement(s) below and provide any information requested beneath each statement.

1. I have never been married.

2. I am engaged to be married.

(a) Your Fiancé(e)'s Name: _____

(b) Your Fiancé(e)'s Current Religious Affiliation (if any): _____

(c) For you: This is my first marriage. I have been married before.

(d) For your fiancé(e): This is his/her first marriage. My fiancé(e) has been married before.

3. I am married.

(a) Your Spouse's Name: _____

(b) Your Spouse's Current Religious Affiliation (if any): _____

(c) For you: This is my first marriage. I have been married before.

(d) For your spouse: This is my spouse's first marriage. My spouse has been married before.

(e) Date of Marriage: _____

(f) Place of Marriage: _____

(include **locality** (town, city, county, etc.), **region** (state, province, territory, etc.), and **country**)

(g) Officiating Authority of Marriage: _____

(civil government, non-Christian minister, Christian minister, Catholic cleric)

4. I am married, but separated from my spouse.

5. I am divorced and I have not remarried.

6. I am a widow/widower and have not remarried since my spouse's death.

IV. FAMILY INFORMATION

List the name(s) of any children or other dependents (e.g., Daughter—Jane; Stepson—John).

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____

V. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What or who has led you to want to know more about the Catholic Faith?

2. Please describe the types of religious education you have received, as a child and as an adult.

3. What contact have you had with the Catholic Church to date?

4. What are some of the questions or concerns you have about the Catholic Church?

5. At this point in time, which of the following statements best describes your present feelings and thoughts about the possibility of joining the Catholic Church? (please circle one)

- A. I need much more information about the Catholic Church before I would consider joining.
- B. I am considering joining, but I am still unsure about it.
- C. I am fairly sure that I would like to join, but I still need some time to study and pray about it.
- D. I am fairly sure that I want to join the Catholic Church.

Sample text that could be used in communicating with RCIA participants at various stages of the process:

Sample personal letter to encourage a person who has inconsistent attendance:

Dear [name],

This brief letter is to encourage you to continue the effort and time that it takes to come to the RCIA sessions. For some reason, known only to God, he has shown a special care for you that prompted you to come to RCIA to learn more about him and what he wants you to do with the rest of your life. This is God who is acting in your life. I humbly encourage you to reflect seriously on what he is asking of you—it is your happiness and peace that is at stake. [*For those with children:* Your little ones also are dependent upon you to lead them lovingly to God.] My team and I consider it a privilege to in any way be of help to you in this regard.

Be assured that all of the RCIA team members are interested in you personally and will be praying lovingly that you freely choose to join us as you are able. Many busy things in our lives keep us from what is most important for our souls. We all struggle with this.

Please know that you are also in my daily prayers. I hope to see you on [day of RCIA sessions]. Thank you for the time you have spent with us thus far.

Sincerely in Christ,

[RCIA leader's name and title]

Sample personal letter to encourage a person who can't currently attend sessions (but sincerely wants to receive some kind of regular catechesis in anticipation of rejoining the group soon):

Dear [name],

We miss you! Enclosed, as promised, are some handouts for the sessions up to and including [day and date that handouts cover]. Also enclosed is a CD [or tape] recording of the teaching that was given last week.

I encourage you to read the handouts at whatever pace is comfortable for you. I will send you further handouts next week. Obviously, this is not the best way to carry out your formation in the Catholic faith, but I am hopeful that a change in your situation will allow you to return to attending the sessions. I have people praying for this to work out so you can join us. We have a wonderful group of people and, as always, great desserts which you just can't keep missing out on!

As you read the handouts, please let me know about questions that you have. You already have a Bible, but I also thought I'd mention that the references at the bottom of most of the handouts to "CCC" are to paragraph numbers in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism* is an official book of the Church containing a summary of Catholic beliefs and practices. If you would like, I would be glad to provide you with a copy [or perhaps the new compendium of the *Catechism*].

God's blessing on you. Know that you are in my prayers. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely in Christ,

[RCIA leader's name and title]

Sample personal letter to encourage a person to attend upcoming retreats for the Rites (if your parish has retreats at these times):

Dear [name],

As we approach our first opportunity to spend a longer period of time reflecting, praying, and learning together (what Catholics call a "retreat"), this letter is to give you some details about the two upcoming RCIA retreats. For both retreats, [what meals are to be offered] are provided for you. As with all RCIA events, they are free. The retreats are to be held at [location(s)].

Retreat #1: Our retreat that precedes the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming will occur on [day(s) and date(s)] from [timeframe]. In addition to some precious quiet time and an opportunity to pray and discern, we will be offering teachings on [retreat catechesis].

As we have mentioned to you in previous RCIA sessions, the Rite of Acceptance (for those not baptized) and the Rite of Welcoming (for those who are baptized) may be offered whenever a participant is ready. These Rites will be offered during this cycle for the first time on [day and date] at [Mass time and location]. This is why there is a retreat on the day before this first opportunity to go through these Rites. Although simple and fairly brief, these Rites mean much. If you choose to go through the Rite appropriate to your baptismal status, it is the first formal and public step that you will take towards becoming a Catholic. For the Church's part, going through the Rite means that the Church desires to place you formally under the protection of her graces to the degree that she can. For your part, it means that you commit to begin to practice the Catholic faith to the degree possible at this stage, short of being able to receive the Eucharist and participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Thus, it is an important step.

Retreat #2: The retreat for the Rites of Election (for those not baptized) and the Call to Continuing Conversion (for those who are baptized) will occur on [day(s) and date(s)] from [timeframe]. Again, in addition to silent personal reflection, prayer time, and discussion, we will be offering teachings on [retreat catechesis].

The Rites of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion, offered once a year, as your calendar indicates, occur on [day and date] at [time and location]. It is the time when our shepherd, the bishop of our diocese, calls those entering the Catholic Church to the sacraments for the Easter to come. This Rite marks a person's readiness for the Easter sacraments, and expresses the Church's decision and desire to welcome you into the fullness of the Catholic faith. It is a moving ceremony with hundreds of others from parishes throughout the diocese making the same commitment.

Prior to each of these retreats and Rites I will be contacting you to schedule a time when you and I can meet individually. I will then explain more about these Rites, and we can discuss any questions, thoughts, and concerns you have as you decide whether to take these steps. I strongly urge you to come to both retreats whether or not you decide it is time for you to go through the Rites described above. The catechesis given, the liturgies experienced, and the opportunity for prayerful discernment will prove to be of great value to you and your decisions about the Catholic Church.

Be assured that all of the RCIA team members are interested in you personally and will be praying for you to hear clearly whatever it is that God wants you to do. Please know, as well, that you are in my daily prayers. I look forward to seeing you at the next session.

Sincerely in Christ,

[RCIA leader's name and title]

Sample personal letter to encourage a person to continue attending after a break (for example, Christmas or New Year):

Dear [name],

Happy New Year! This brief letter is just a reminder that we will resume RCIA sessions this coming [day and date].

I look forward to seeing you in this New Year and to continuing our fellowship in learning more deeply the truth, beauty, and goodness of the Lord.

Please know that you are in my daily prayers—I have sincerely missed seeing you these past two weeks. I hope your Christmas was a blessed time. I'll see you on [day].

Sincerely in Christ,

[RCIA leader's name and title]

Sample personal letter to explain the concept of "Reflection on the Word" to a catechumen:

Dear [name],

From now on through [approximate date when Reflection on the Word will cease to be offered], you, and those RCIA participants who have gone through the Rite of Acceptance at our parish, are being offered a special means to deepen your understanding and love of the sacred Word of God. This will take place during the second part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and is Mother Church's way of feeding you more richly with the Word of God since you cannot yet be fed by partaking of the Holy Eucharist.

At each Mass, after you and all of the community present have listened to God's Word in the readings from Scripture, and to the homily that completes the Liturgy of the Word, the priest celebrating the Mass will invite you and the other catechumens present to come forward for a blessing. Through this blessing, our parish assures you of our loving support and prayers. After this blessing, you and the other participants will be dismissed and, accompanied by one or more RCIA team members, you will go out from the Mass to [location]. There you will engage in Reflection on the Word for about 15 to 30 minutes, the length of time of the remainder of the Mass.

A team member will act as group leader by suggesting starting points for discussion, but this is specifically an opportunity for you and your fellow participants to share your reflections on the Scripture readings and the homily with each other. This is a time for you to focus on God's presence, and for raising up those attitudes and gifts within you that are good, helping to deepen your relationship with God. It is also a time to discover how the Word of God reveals feelings, lifestyles, and sins that are contrary to developing a relationship with God.

As you listen to each other, whether the sharing is joyful or painful, listen on a deeper level to how God is working in each situation and each person. Do not merely hear, but also be open to the challenge of God's holy Word. Allow the power of God to effect changes within you, bringing about your closeness to God and to one another. This time together should also call each of you to a greater desire for the apostolic service that flows from the Gospel. When the Word of God is truly planted in a human heart, then that disciple will discover a growing desire to serve others in Christian charity, especially those in need.

If you would like to just listen and not share, that is fine. Listening is a beautiful gift to give one another. We want this to be a very grace-filled time for you, and a wonderful opportunity to bond with your fellow participants and your godparent [sponsor].

Because "Reflection on the Word" is a relatively brief time, you may feel that you need more time to discuss a particular reading. If so, a listening ear is always available to you—I or any team member is always happy to discuss anything further with you. Please keep in mind that personal sharing within the group is confidential. Only the person who has shared the information is free to share it with anyone else.

You may wish to bring your Bible with you, so you can look up the readings or other issues that may come up. This is a very blessed period for all of us as we continue to be formed in the Catholic faith and formed into a more loving community focused on the Word of God. We give thanks for you and the gift you are to the RCIA and to our whole community here at this parish.

Sincerely in Christ,

[RCIA leader's name and title]

A walk through the RCIA process in the parish bulletin:

Here are ideas for bulletin announcements that raise the awareness among parishioners of the ministry of Christian initiation going on in the parish as it unfolds through the periods and rites of the process. Depending on what is intended, one or more questions or answers might appear in the parish bulletin at appropriate times.

How does our parish attract inquirers each year who consider becoming Catholic?

The short answer is you! When any parish has many inquirers year after year, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit as parish members open their hearts to welcome others. Members of a welcoming and evangelizing community take seriously their call to share the Divine message of salvation. It happens in parish families, in the workplace, in gatherings with friends and neighbors, and in daily contacts. Give thanks to God as he continuously strengthens each of us who seek to do his will in offering a gentle, humble, and clear welcome to the Catholic faith. *“Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”* (Mark 16:15)

What is RCIA?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the process established for the universal Church for individuals to become Catholic and receive the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. This initiation process also involves a parish community experiencing a renewal in faith as it prepares and welcomes new members into the Church. The Rite speaks of conversion as a “spiritual journey.” Centered on fostering a deep relationship with Jesus and the Church he founded, this journey takes place through distinct stages over a period of time suitable to bring about a thorough catechesis, significant experience of the parish community, and commitment to the liturgical and moral life of the Catholic faithful. The RCIA process is a restoration of the ancient catechumenate, arising within the first three centuries following the era of the apostles. It was the early Church’s way of Christianizing the pagan Roman Empire. The Second Vatican Council called for the restoration and use of this venerable and powerful method of initiation for the worldwide Church.

Has someone in your life shared his/her love of Scripture with you? Would you like to share that love and gift with another?

Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners, Bibles are given to every adult and child in our RCIA process as a gift from our parish community. Our parish RCIA process is in need of donations for Bibles to give to our adults and children inquiring to be one with us. Bibles donated for those in the RCIA process are given to participants at a special time during our weekly gatherings. The cost is \$15. Please make checks payable to our parish and indicate at the bottom that it is for an RCIA Bible. Thank you. *“Keep this book of the law on your lips. Recite it by day and by night, that you may observe carefully all that is written in it; then you will successfully attain your goal.”* (Joshua 1:8)

Who is RCIA for?

1. Persons in need of Baptism.
2. Persons baptized in another Christian tradition who desire to become Catholic.
3. Persons baptized Catholic in need of First Communion and/or Confirmation.

How did a person become Catholic before RCIA?

At most parishes, the person was given individual instruction by the parish priest, or someone delegated by him.

Why the change?

There were a number of limitations to private instruction. The priest was the only member of the Catholic community with whom the inquirer had contact, apart from any supporting family and friends. Private instruction did not ensure that the inquirer had a lived experience of the Catholic faith, or was exposed to authentic Christian charity as lived in a parish community.

How long is the RCIA process?

The time varies, but is rarely shorter than six months or longer than three years. The Church greatly respects the time each person needs for conversion and decision. The RCIA text gives guides for discerning this on a case-by-case basis.

What is happening next Sunday at Mass for those ready to move forward in our parish's RCIA process?

The initial inquiry (precatechumenate) period for our parish's group of inquirers will be moving into the second stage, with our first opportunity for unbaptized inquirers to go through the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, and baptized inquirers to go through the Rite of Welcoming next Sunday. The first phase of the journey of initiation has been a time for seekers to hear the mystery of Christ proclaimed. The inquirers have consciously and freely sought the living God and entered the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. We ask you to please pray for the inquirers as they continue their conversion journey and for our RCIA process as we assist them in moving toward a closer relationship with God. Your prayers are critical to the success of our program. We will continue to keep you informed of the initiation process and progress of those considering joining the Church. We invite you to take an active role in welcoming our soon-to-be catechumens and candidates, and to be models of faith and Christian charity for them.

What is the RCIA Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens?

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is for inquirers in the RCIA process who are preparing for their Baptism. They are now ready to publicly declare their intention to continue their journey towards becoming Catholics. At this Rite, they are asked to more fully embrace the Gospel message with the help of God, and are also signed with the Cross to show that they now belong to Christ, the Shepherd of souls. In this Rite, the parish community has the opportunity to more fully participate in and pray for those in the RCIA process. At Sunday Mass, some of the inquirers who are considering joining the Catholic Church are going through the Rite of Acceptance. This Rite places these catechumens in a formal relationship with the universal Church. By Church law, the Pope and all bishops are to pray for those who have gone through this Rite. We encourage all parishioners to pray for these souls as well, as they continue in the initiation process over the coming months, and to reach out to them as fellow members of the Household of Christ.

What is the RCIA Rite of Welcoming?

The Rite of Welcoming is for inquirers who have been previously baptized and are ready to publicly declare their intention to continue their journey toward full communion with the Catholic Church. At this Rite, they are asked if they are ready to listen to the apostles' instruction, gather with the worshipping community in prayer, and join that community in the love and service of others. They are signed with the Cross to show that they belong to Christ.

Why is the parish community important at the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, and when will these Rites be celebrated?

Members of the parish community should affirm that they are ready to help and support the RCIA candidates seeking to follow Christ. The Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming are celebrated at a time designated by the parish, and can be offered multiple times, depending upon when a given inquirer is ready to move forward.

What was the ceremony celebrated last Sunday at Mass?

Last Sunday we celebrated two Rites of initiation for inquirers in the RCIA process: the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (for those preparing for their Baptism) and the Rite of Welcoming (for those already baptized in another Christian tradition who are seeking full communion with the Catholic Church). The following catechumens celebrated the Rite of Acceptance:

[names]

The following candidates celebrated the Rite of Welcoming:

[names]

A very special thanks to all who helped in any way with the celebration. Please continue to pray for our catechumens and candidates as they now enter into a period of deeper formation in the RCIA process.

Why are some RCIA participants dismissed in the middle of the Mass?

This Sunday, at one or more of the morning Masses, those adults preparing to be baptized into the Catholic Church will be dismissed at the end of the Liturgy of the Word. This will continue each Sunday until Easter when, at the Easter Vigil, those who are ready will join us at the Table of the Eucharist for the first time. The parish is not sending them out because they are somehow “unworthy” to stay for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Though they cannot yet come to the table of the Eucharist, Mother Church still has an obligation to feed those who have entered into a relationship with her through the Rite of Acceptance which was celebrated recently. God’s Word is their only food during this period. Instead, the participants depart from the Mass with their godparents and sponsors (if available), and one or more RCIA team members, to discuss the Mass readings for that Sunday and to experience more fully the impact of the Scriptures in their lives. This time is known as “Reflection on the Word.” *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the one who belongs to God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

What is the RCIA Rite of Sending?

Across the entire world, Catholic bishops on this first Sunday of Lent will welcome those sent by the parish to gather together with their godparents and sponsors in what is known as the Rite of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion. The Rite of Sending, ordinarily held earlier on the same day, offers the parish community an opportunity to acknowledge the spiritual progress the catechumens and candidates have made, express approval of their election or recognition, and send them forth to our bishop with assurance of the parish’s care and support. To send a catechumen or candidate to the bishop means that a parish has discerned that the person is ready to enter the Catholic Church. In Sacred Scripture, the Book of Revelation makes reference to a “Book of Life,” in which are written the names of those who have chosen to follow the Lord Jesus and be baptized. Those who are already baptized, as Catholics or in other denominations, had our names written in the Book of Life at our Baptism. In this Rite, those preparing for Baptism are invited to come forward and sign a book, which we call the “Book of the Elect,” as a sign of their desire to be numbered among the chosen of God.

What is the RCIA Rite of Election?

This Rite marks a key moment. For the catechumens, this Rite signifies that they have been called by Christ and attests to the reality that only those mystically claimed by Christ will enter Heaven. St. John writes, *“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”* (Rev 20:15). Throughout the RCIA process, catechumens should have become increasingly involved with the parish community. The community, with godparents representing the parish, will wholeheartedly acclaim the participants’ readiness. It is appropriate for the bishop to recognize them because he is the sign of unity of the particular Church, and it is the parish community’s responsibility to bring those in RCIA into the fullness of the life of the Church. The godparents give public testimony about the catechumens. The godparents’ role is very significant; they represent the community and are asked during this Rite to make serious statements about the catechumens. The decision of an RCIA participant to go through this Rite means that the judgment and decision-making (of both the catechumen and the parish) about whether to enter the Catholic Church has ended. From this point forward, they are no longer catechumens but are called the “elect.” They have been chosen to enter into the final period of preparation for initiation, and called by the bishop, their shepherd, to the holy mysteries to be celebrated that Easter.

What is the RCIA Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion?

For all who have been baptized, the reality of being chosen and claimed by Christ took place at their Baptism. This is true for the baptized candidates as well. Therefore the Rite of Election is inappropriate for them; they are already among the elect in Christ. Instead, the candidates are “called to continuing conversion,” and thus their intention to be fully initiated and share in the Eucharist is recognized. This Rite also takes place before the bishop, normally as part of the same liturgical event as the Rite of Election for those who are unbaptized. With their sponsors standing in support of them, the candidates are addressed by the bishop: “Hear the Lord’s call to conversion and be faithful to your baptismal covenant.” (RCIA 454) Together with the elect, the candidates are thereby moved by this Rite into a period of intense spiritual preparation.

What does Lent have to do with those becoming Catholic?

In Lent, RCIA participants move into the final period of preparation for the sacraments. They have been nourished by the graces of various liturgical Rites throughout the RCIA process, which have helped them to embrace God's call. In Lent, God pours purifying and enlightening graces upon them, through the spiritual preparation they receive in RCIA sessions, the special Rites that mark the Sundays of Lent, and the prayers offered for them by the faithful.

How should the RCIA process encourage all Catholics to enter into Lent more deeply?

The Church, in the RCIA process, calls this proximate time immediately preceding initiation the period of "Purification and Enlightenment" for those in the RCIA process. That is what Lent is meant to be for all of us, who are already receiving the graces poured out through the sacraments of the Church. The Church calls us to reflect on our own baptismal graces, through prayer, penance, and almsgiving. We are also called to pray for those who are approaching the Easter sacraments of initiation. We are called to examine our lives through increased prayer and penitential practice; identify sins that keep us from becoming holy; purify ourselves through the sacrament of Reconciliation; and express our gratitude to God through the love of the poor by giving from our material and spiritual bounty. Throughout Lent we enter into the Passion of Jesus Christ. We turn our hearts and minds in prayer to our own Way of the Cross, we call our own wounds by name, and we give them to the Divine Healer. When we behold the empty tomb at Easter we can be filled with joy, believing with complete certainty that those chains that bind us have been broken, and that life, not death is our birthright.

How can every Catholic make Lent a time of "purification and enlightenment"?

We can attend weekday Mass. We can reflect on the Creed, taking each statement of belief and asking ourselves if we do believe, and what it means in our everyday lives. We can go to adoration and to Confession. We can attend our parish penance service. We can pray the Stations of the Cross, pray the Liturgy of the Hours, pray the rosary. We must pray, every day. We can fast from food, TV, foul language, gossip, and the list goes on and on. We can give alms, in a genuinely sacrificial manner, to the poor. As Catholics we know all of these things. It is not a lack of "things to do" that have many of us scratching our heads on Holy Thursday wondering why Lent was really not any different for us than any other forty days throughout the year. What we lack is a conversion of the heart. We don't have to seek far to hear God speak to us. The Church in her wisdom provides us in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass what our hearts yearn to hear. In the Lenten liturgies the Church prays what she believes and teaches, and in word and sacrament the Lord directs us toward his Divine heart.

What is the Penitential Rite?

For those baptized Christians seeking to enter full communion with the Catholic Church, this Rite helps them to prepare for the healing sacrament of Reconciliation. Normally occurring on the 2nd Sunday of Lent after the homily, this Rite calls the candidates to a deeper repentance and a total abandonment to the mercy of the Father who sent his only Son to die for our sins. Our prayer for these candidates, and for ourselves, is that the presence among us of Jesus who is the sum of the Law and the Prophets will transfigure all our lives with his redeeming grace, bringing us to conversion—a genuine desire to be holy as he is holy.

What are the Scrutinies?

These Rites are celebrated to help deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (RCIA 141). The Rites of Scrutiny are meant to uncover, and then heal, all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the elects' hearts and to bring out through repentance all that is upright, strong, and good. Three Scrutinies are celebrated in the parish community on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent, after the homily. The Scripture readings for the Scrutinies ordinarily come from Cycle A of the Lectionary: the Gospel story of the Samaritan woman at the well for the 1st Scrutiny, the Gospel story of the healing of the man born blind for the 2nd Scrutiny, and the Gospel story of the raising of Lazarus for the 3rd Scrutiny. The celebrations of the Scrutinies also remind the whole parish community of the need to reflect on their own sins and the need for God's help.

How might the Scrutinies of the RCIA process help the parish as a whole?

On the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent we participate in the Scrutinies. The universal Church hears the stories of the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus. These readings were chosen to be the driving force of prayerful introspection, surrender, and conversion. They offer powerful images of surrender, sin, conversion, faith, and healing. In our faith journey with those seeking Baptism, we must stir our souls, as if they were dying campfires, to expose any parts of ourselves that have not been purified by the burning love of the Holy Spirit. We are challenged with the Samaritan woman at the well when we thirst for the Lord, who knows what we need and provides it; we beg, with the man born blind, to see Jesus, who is the light and gives us sight; and finally we lie with Lazarus within the tomb of oblivion and death, built with the stones of our own sins, until Jesus reaches out his hand and pulls us from the pit. Take this gift of the Church and use this group of readings as Lenten reflections. The Scripture readings for each Scrutiny are listed below. Read them slowly, asking the Lord to give you the grace to hear what is being said to you. Share these readings with your children or your spouse.

1st Scrutiny

(3rd Sunday of Lent)

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalm 95:1-2,6-9

Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42

2nd Scrutiny

(4th Sunday of Lent)

1 Samuel 16:1b,6-7,10-13a

Psalm 23:1-6

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

3rd Scrutiny

(5th Sunday of Lent)

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalm 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-7

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

(Note: the readings for the Scrutiny are always taken from Cycle A, regardless of the current cycle of readings being used. Each parish has the option of using these readings for all Masses, or only for the Masses where the elect are present.)

What is the Presentation of the Creed for those in the RCIA process, and when does it occur?

This Rite, which can be done at Mass or during an RCIA session, entrusts the words of the Creed to those seeking to enter the Catholic Church. Nearly seventeen centuries old, the Creed is recited by the faithful at every Mass, and summarizes what we believe as Catholics. For those coming into the Church this Easter, this Rite symbolizes that our parish community is passing on and sharing the beliefs of our Catholic faith with them, so that those about to join our Catholic family embrace and treasure these venerable words as we do.

What is the Presentation of the Lord's Prayer for those in the RCIA process, and when does it occur?

This Rite, which can be done at Mass or during an RCIA session, entrusts to those seeking to enter the Catholic Church the precious words of our Lord on prayer. This prayer of hope is to Catholics a summary of the entire Christian life, and a model of that relationship of trust that we are invited to enter as children of our Heavenly Father. For those coming into the Church this Easter, this Rite symbolizes the passing down of our heritage of prayer, learned at the feet of the Savior, and nurtured in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that is the Church.

Who will join our parish family this Easter?

Those who will enter through the sacraments into our Catholic faith at the Easter Vigil are: [names]. The RCIA catechists and team offer our thanks to all those present for the Masses for the past four Sundays, and our parish community as a whole, who prayed for and with our candidates during the RCIA Penitential Rite, and our elect during the RCIA Scrutinies. Please continue to pray for our elect and candidates as they enter their final week of preparation for the sacraments of initiation.

What is next for those who entered the Catholic Church this Easter?

We have reached the 4th period of the RCIA process, which is the neophyte year. All who were baptized and received into full communion are called neophytes in this period, until the anniversary of their initiation next Easter. The final period of regular weekly formation extends through the Easter season, the seven weeks from Easter to Pentecost. This post-baptismal catechesis is called mystagogy. It is a time for deepening the Christian experience, especially in appreciation for the sacramental life, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the Catholic community. The neophytes now share with Christ, and his Body in the parish community, the intimate communion of the Eucharist. Now they have access to all the means of sanctification. We as a parish community pledge to help them grow and mature in the Christian life and to develop a genuine Catholic world view. Please pray for all those who God has called us to join us as we continue on our pilgrimage to our Father in Heaven.

A walk through the calendar year in the parish bulletin:

Here are ideas for bulletin announcements that raise the awareness of Christian initiation and invite parishioners or inquirers to take a step in contacting a priest, or other parish staff, about Christian initiation (RCIA) throughout the year.

January

As we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, let us recall our own Baptism. We have all received the call to go and baptize all nations. Pray for those who are considering if they too are ready to renounce Satan and all his works and empty promises. If there is someone you think would like to explore what Baptism in the Catholic faith means, ask him or her to contact...

February

Come and see. Are you searching for a Church to call your own? Do you struggle with questions about life, death, suffering, hope, forgiveness, love, God? Sessions exploring these and other issues in relation to our Catholic faith are being held. Ask about inquiry meetings by contacting...

March (Lent)

Help bring to the Light those who no longer want to walk in darkness. Invite those who have never been baptized or who have been baptized in a non-Catholic Christian tradition, as well as adult Catholics who have not been confirmed, to the inquiry sessions. For more information, contact...

April (Easter Season)

Many people have said that what drew them to the Catholic Church was the Eucharist. As we reflect on recognizing Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread, think for a moment whether there is someone you could invite to Mass and to explore what else the Catholic faith might hold for them. For information, contact...

May

As our Blessed Mother brings us to her Son Jesus, it is our task also to bring others to the Lord. Is there someone you can invite to explore the Catholic faith—someone unbaptized, or baptized in a non-Catholic Christian tradition? Perhaps you know a Catholic adult interested in being confirmed. Please contact...

June

The great Solemnity of Pentecost marks the great gift of the Holy Spirit to those God the Father calls to be his own. Perhaps you can think of someone who longs to have a closer relationship with our Heavenly Father. Can you plant the seeds of hope as you speak of our Father's loving care, and his everlasting promises fulfilled in the sending of his Son, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Ask about the RCIA inquiry sessions for those who are not baptized, are of other faiths, or are adult Catholics who were not confirmed by contacting...

July

With the gift of Jesus' Precious Blood on the Cross and in the Eucharist, let us reflect on the freedom given to us through our Baptism into him—to be heirs of the promise and liberated from sin. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the way by which persons become “citizens of the Kingdom” through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Inquiry sessions are ongoing. For more information, please contact...

August

In celebrating this month of Our Lady's final journey to God in her glorious Assumption, let us ask her motherly intercession to draw souls to the Sacred Heart of her Son. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a journey too—of conversion to God and what he intends for us. RCIA is the process by which persons who were never baptized, or were baptized in another Christian tradition, become members of the Church, a people on pilgrimage to our Heavenly Father. Please contact...

September

Life has many storms—distressful relationships, jobs, poor health; situations where we feel our powerlessness. If you know someone unbaptized or baptized in a non-Catholic Christian tradition, who is searching for strength and understanding to weather such squalls, invite them to seek the perspective the Catholic Church offers. Please contact...

October

Our lives sometimes go through seasons of change; of closeness to God and distance from him. Yet God the Father's love is steadfast and ever-present to those who seek with a sincere heart, no matter what sins or situations have caused separation. If you have thought about becoming Catholic and beginning a new "season" in your life, contact...

November

As we celebrate All Saints Day, and recall those "living witnesses" of the joy and peace that living the Catholic life can bring, let us ask for the saints' intercession for those who are thinking about finding out more about the Church. If someone you know wants to know more about the Church, contact...

December

The preparations for Christmas include buying or making gifts for those whom we love. You can give no better gift than the gift that God has given to us: his Son, Jesus. Invite someone who is not Catholic to attend Mass with you at Christmas. For information about the RCIA, contact...