

# Liturgical Components of the Christian Initiation Process:

## Gateways and Sources of Grace for Conversion

MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

### MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

Devoted to post-baptismal catechesis, this period is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.



PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

### PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Coinciding with **Lent**, this period consists more in interior reflection than in instruction. It is intended to enlighten the minds and hearts of participants with a deep knowledge of Christ the Savior.

#### Minor Rites in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Penitential Rite (Candidates)
- Scrutinies (Elect)
- Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer
- Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday

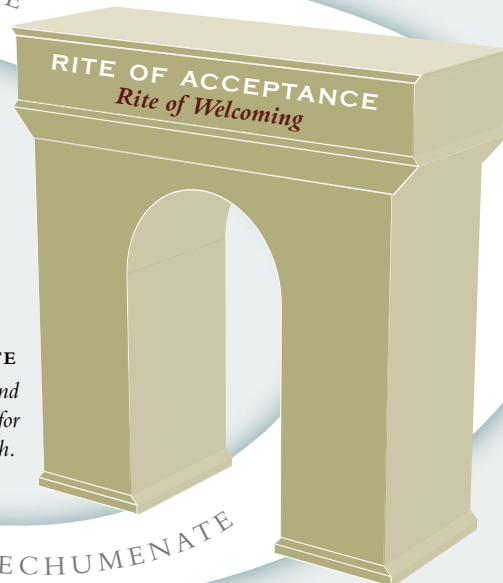
### CATECHUMENATE

This is an extended period for pastoral formation and guidance aimed at training participants in the Christian life; it includes a thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life.

#### Minor Rites in the Period of the Catechumenate

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Minor Exorcisms
- Anointings (Catechumens)
- Blessings

CATECHUMENATE



### PRECATECHUMENATE

This is a time for inquiry and evangelization, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

PRECATECHUMENATE

**Start**

□ CATECHUMENS ■ CANDIDATES □ PERIODS 🏛️ STEPS

# Catechetical Components of the Christian Initiation Process: Illuminating and Securing the Path of Faith

*We teach that which has been taught everywhere in the Church, held by all in the Church, from the very origin of the Church in the teaching of Jesus' apostles.* ~ ST. VINCENT OF LERINS, 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BISHOP

There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith. (CCC 89)

The catechetical components are the truths of the faith, grouped and taught specifically for the purpose of each period:

- ⊗ *Period of the Precatechumenate* ~ The Gospel and answering their questions
- ⊗ *Period of the Catechumenate* ~ The Deposit of Faith
- ⊗ *Period of Purification and Enlightenment* ~ The truths of the faith as they related to spirituality and prayer; mystical doctrines
- ⊗ *Period of Post-baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy* ~ The deeper Christian life, especially as it relates to the sacraments

## TEACH TO AND FROM THE RITES:

Prior to the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming, and continuing through the rest of the process, the teaching is *to* and *from* the Rites. The Church prays what she believes. All of the Rites draw their power from the sacraments of initiation, and from the sacrament of Holy Orders of the bishop, priest, or deacon who administers them. Grace is more and more richly available after each Rite until it is poured out in abundance at the Easter Vigil.

### *Some Practical Suggestions for the Catechumenate*

- ✠ Give each participant a Bible early in the process, and give them tabs for it
- ✠ Ensure that the team witnesses to handling Scripture with respect (no coffee cups on Bibles)
- ✠ Use Scripture to teach prayer – begin with the psalms
- ✠ Never give the impression in teaching sessions that Scripture is an addendum to the catechesis
- ✠ Have team members give a testimony about a favorite verse, or the power of Scripture in their life
- ✠ Use Biblical narratives – a litany of Scriptures that form a story or a theme
- ✠ Use celebrations of the Word as recommended in the guidelines (see RCIA 81-89)







*During this time those inquiring are introduced to the parish through a microcosm of the Church that is the initiation team.*

*Here they meet Christians strong in faith, hope, and charity who widen the "tent pegs" of their hearts and lives to welcome all who would "come and see."*

## The Period of Evangelization & Precatechumenate

*(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 52 and 511)*

**The Gospel message ~ Christ-centered, Trinitarian, ecclesial, personal, and forward-looking (founded in hope):**

- ✦ God is our Creator and in him all things have their existence
- ✦ God gives light to everyone who comes into this world, revealing himself through his works, so that all may learn to give thanks
- ✦ The Father has sent his faithful witness, Jesus Christ, to announce to us what he has seen and heard, the mysteries of Heaven and earth
- ✦ This is eternal life: to know the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent; the Trinity is our destiny and model of perfect love
- ✦ Jesus Christ has made the way for us to take advantage of that plan by his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven
- ✦ The Holy Spirit makes it possible to access the full power and merits won for us by Jesus in the Church, which dispenses them in the sanctifying action of the sacramental life, enabling us to make the mind of Christ our own, to love God and neighbor in holiness
- ✦ The Catholics of this parish family warmly invite you to come and see our life and with us to enter into full communion with Christ

**The primary and most effective means of communicating these truths are:**

- ✦ The witness of the individual living in accordance with the Gospel message
- ✦ The witness of the Christian community as the kingdom of God on earth

**The Catechetical components of this period are:**

- ✦ The Gospel expressed carefully and completely, by means of testimonies and explanation of Scripture
- ✦ Answers given to the most pressing and obvious questions of the inquirers
- ✦ Teachings which adequately prepare them for the first major Rites and content of the process, and the living of a daily Catholic life of believing, hoping, and loving (faith, hope, and charity)
- ✦ The Christian community modeled in the microcosm of the team, and a gradual introduction into works of charity

*In justice, great care must be taken that the most troubling or difficult questions get answered for each inquirer, so that here will be no surprises after the commitment is made in the first Rites.*



# The Rites of Acceptance and Rite of Welcoming

After this first “gateway” is entered, the catechumens and candidates are in a formal relation with the Church. At each catechetical session they may be given anointings, blessings, and/or minor exorcisms (depending on their baptismal status). All catechesis should be done in the context of celebrations of the Word. (see RCIA 81-105)



## The Period of the Catechumenate

*(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 552, 553 and 556 ✠ Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 526, 527 and 528)*

This is the longest period of the Christian initiation process. It is also the most densely catechetical. The principal guidelines for this period are found in RCIA 75 and 78:

A suitable catechesis is provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful (RCIA 75):

- ✠ Planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage
- ✠ Accommodated to the liturgical year
- ✠ Solidly supported by celebrations of the Word

This catechesis leads the catechumens [and candidates] not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts, but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.

The instruction that participants receive during this period should (RCIA 78, see also RCIA, National Statutes 7):

- ⊗ Present Catholic teaching in its entirety
- ⊗ Enlighten faith
- ⊗ Direct the heart toward God
- ⊗ Foster participation in the liturgy
- ⊗ Inspire apostolic activity
- ⊗ Nurture a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ

### **The Catechetical Components of this period are the elements of the Deposit of Faith:**

There is only time to present the “keys” to unlock the basic doctrines of the Deposit of Faith as they are found in Scripture and Tradition. A good guide for these “keys” is the *Credo of the People of God* by Pope Paul VI. As well, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is the “sure norm” for teaching the Deposit of Faith. It should be the constant reference for the catechist. (see CCC 89)

Presuming a complete precatechumenal catechesis, the organization of the truths of the faith can be done along the paradigm for the adult Catholic life:

- ✠ Faith
- ✠ Hope
- ✠ Love



# The Rites of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

This next liturgical “gateway” requires that conversion is already complete and the participants have the intent to receive the sacraments of initiation that Easter. (see RCIA 120) These Rites lead them into solemn preparation during the “retreat time” of Lent. It should be spent in reflection, spiritual reading, prayer, fasting, penance, and acts of charity.



## The Period of Purification & Enlightenment

*(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 573, 580 and 591 ✦ Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 558)*

The focus of the catechesis is now on spiritual preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The themes of repentance and holiness are constant throughout this period. Interior reflection (on God’s love for us, his faithful provision for us, and our need to turn to him fully) should lead to repentance and penance, thanksgiving, and more fervent fraternal charity. The elect and candidates for full communion should turn once again to a study of Christ the Savior, especially the events of the Paschal mystery – Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. (see RCIA 118, 121, 138, 139)

**The Catechetical components of this period include the following:**

- ✧ Meditations and exhortations
- ✧ Spiritual reading of Scripture and the lives of the saints
- ✧ Prayer times such as intercession for the needs of the Church, meditation on the life of Christ in the rosary, recitation of Evening Prayer or Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- ✧ A retreat weekend is especially appropriate during this time (This might be the first opportunity offered for the sacrament of Reconciliation for the candidates for full communion)
- ✧ Participation in the Lenten activities of the parish should certainly be part of this time. With all of the above and explanations of such devotions as the Stations of the Cross there would certainly be continuing education, but not in the same manner as in the previous stages

**The Liturgy and the Community as Means of Insertion in Christ:**

Participants are learning all the time during their experience of the catechumenate, not just in the formal teaching. Attendance at the ceremonies for Holy Week with godparents, sponsors, and team members will be an experience of the liturgy as the prime teacher.

“The unique catechetical value of the liturgy essentially derives from the way in which it contains and makes us familiar with the heart of the Christian religion the mystery of Christ... The liturgy gives what it teaches.” ~ *Johannes Hofinger, S.J., et al, The Good News and Its Proclamation, pp. 53, 56*

Without the teaching and converting aspects of the liturgy and the witness of the community, formal instruction runs the risk of becoming just information, instead of light for the path of faith. (see CCC 89)



# The Preparation Rites and the Sacraments of Initiation

This final “gateway” leads directly to insertion into the mystery of Christ and to full communion with him in his Body, the Church. The elect and the candidates are exposed to the overwhelming beauty and climactic graces of this “holiest of nights.”



## The Period of Post-Baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

*(Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 229, 230, 244 and following)*

The time between Easter and Pentecost is spent in deepening the understanding of and appreciation for the sacramental life. The deepest meaning of discipleship must be examined, including the responsibilities to witness and to bring the light of the Gospel to every corner of the world. The Church intends that the Lectionary readings for the Sundays and the Feast of the Ascension form the basis for the catechesis during this period. The readings from Year A are given below (these readings are recommended for use in Masses with neophytes even during Years B and C, and may be substituted at the discretion of the pastor):

- ✠ 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 2:42–47; Psalm 118; 1 Peter 1:3–9; John 20:19–31
- ✠ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 2:14, 22–33; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:17–21; Luke 24:13–35
- ✠ 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 2:14a, 36–41; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:20b–25; John 10:1–10
- ✠ 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 6:1–7; Psalm 33; 1 Peter 2:4–9; John 14:1–12
- ✠ 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 8:5–8, 14–17; Psalm 66; 1 Peter 3:15–18; John 14:15–20
- ✠ Ascension Thursday ~ Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47; Ephesians 1:17–23; Matthew 28:16–20
- ✠ 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ Acts 1:12–14; Psalm 27; 1 Peter 4:13–16; John 17:1–11a

The distinctive spirit and power of the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community. (RCIA 247)

## Remainder of the Neophyte Year

During the first year as a Catholic, care must be taken to be sure that each neophyte is securely established in the life of the parish. The difficulties of this year can be very great. A Bible study with new friends in the parish, a charitable work to join, and opportunities to contribute special skills to the work of the parish should all be regular aspects of this year. Throughout the year, care should be given to make sure that the neophytes are always specifically invited to parish missions, presentations by visiting speakers, and all such adult formation events.

A monthly neophyte newsletter is a way to continue education. Regular retreat days during the first year give opportunities for further instruction in the faith. Monthly gatherings with the pastor just to “chat” can be very beneficial for answering questions, for identifying misconceptions, and for providing on-going spiritual direction for the group, or for individuals in the group.

**1 Timothy 6:20** ~ “O Timothy, **guard what has been entrusted to you**. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.”

**2 Timothy 1:13, 14** ~ “Follow the **pattern of the sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; **guard the truth that has been entrusted to you** by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.”



# 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?

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

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

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

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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.

## *Giving your Testimony in your Teaching*

***Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for our hope. ~ 1 Peter 3:15***

How has the Church's teaching on . . .

- . . . the Holy Trinity . . . impacted my life?
- . . . the Holy Eucharist
- . . . the providence of the Father
- . . . the redemptive value of our suffering
- . . . the Successor to Peter
- . . . being made in God's image and likeness
- . . . the Incarnation, true God and true man



## *The Catechist Must be a Saint*

***Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. ~ James 3:1***

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ~ Hebrews 12:1-2

## *For Want of a Catechist the People will Perish*

***God desires all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ~ 1 Timothy 2:4***

So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" ~ Acts 8:30-31

***The role of the catechist in making God known:***

- ✕ Be a witness, not just a voice that communicates knowledge, expressly for *these* people
- ✕ Be the bearer of faith, the bearer of hope, and the bearer of love
- ✕ Facilitate change in order to follow Christ and to participate in the life of his family, the Church

***Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ~ 1 Corinthians 11:1***

An adherence to the truths which the Lord in his mercy has revealed . . . cannot remain abstract and unincarnated. ~ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41

- ✧ Be *humble*, so that the power of Christ may dwell in us. "Neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is of any special account. Only God gives the growth." ~ 1 Corinthians 3:7
- ✧ Be *confident* not timid. "My teaching is not my own; it comes from him who sent me." ~ John 7:16
- ✧ Give time to *prayer* and *study*. "Apart from me you can do nothing." ~ John 15:5
- ✧ Trust in *faith* — "Enable your servants to speak your word with all boldness." ~ Acts 4:29
- ✧ Work in *hope* — God wants them more than you ever could. "They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world." ~ John 17:16
- ✧ Speak in *love* — with gentleness and reverence. "Speak the truth in love." ~ Ephesians 4:15

*The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith. ~ Guide for Catechist, 8*



# Catechist's Examination of Conscience

*But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children.  
So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God  
but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

~ 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

Read the above passage from Scripture.

As you encounter and seek to invite souls to join you in discovering the love of God, deeply, prayerfully consider the following questions and statements about your own heart attitude and actions.

When I think about my Catholic faith,  
and my mission as a catechist...

## Remember

You're doing one of the *most important* jobs on earth, and Satan doesn't like you, so expect this all to be rather hard.

Guard and grow *diligently* what has been entrusted to you by almighty God.

People listen to those who *listen* to them.



Do not reject criticism; we are not expected to like it, but there is often *no progress* without it.



For all that you're called to be for others, remember God *delights* in you for your own sake.

Strive as a child; pray as a child.  
God is *so* interested in your details.

Teach as a witness to *joy*.

When I discuss the Catholic faith  
with those who are not Catholic...

## Consider

Do I consider it a *privilege* to be chosen by God as a bearer of his message of mercy and hope for this time, this place, and for these souls?

Do I accept mediocrity in my catechetical work in *any* way at all, even a little bit?

Can I honestly say that I listen *well*?  
Or am I often just waiting to get in my next point?

Do I seek to get to *know* those I share the faith with?

Do I know anything about their lives?  
Do I even know their names?

Do I care about them, or are they more just *objects* to receive what I have to say;  
to be "set straight" by my opening their minds to the truth?

Do I find in my personality a sense of:  
Being easily *angered*? Being easily turned to a *sour* attitude?  
Holding *grudges* after strong disagreements?  
Not *smiling* much when I teach or share the faith?

Am I insecure about not having "all the answers" in a discussion of my faith?  
Does it cause me to *need* to "get it all said"? Does it cause me to *avoid* questions or those who ask questions?

Does my way of discussing faith indicate a *need* to be "proved" right?

Do I pray for myself?  
Do I pray for those I am seeking to catechize, *really*?

Do I see God as a good employer,  
or more as a good *Father*?

Would those who know me *best* describe me as: Gentle?  
Inviting? Easily forgiving? Outwardly joyful about my faith?

# A Pair of Examples of Good Methodology in Teaching Adults

***“To be able to educate others in the faith, catechists should themselves have a deep spiritual life. This is the most important aspect of their personality and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation. The real catechist is a saint” (GCM 22). This is daunting. And yet this is doable — in God. So long as this daunting call drives us to prayer, instead of driving us away in fear, then all things become possible (see Lk 1:37). What we have to give — Who we have to give — is worth surmounting this fear.***

## Using Questions as an Aid to Conversion

Our own verbal teaching, private conversations with those we teach, small group dialogue, as well as times set aside for questions and answers, can all bring out questions, intended or not. Be grateful for questions: it means that someone is interested! Questions asked by participants are always good. It is important though, that catechists not relate to questions passively, much less view them as potential distractions. Good catechists *invite* and *work for* questions.

It's helpful to consider the following questions: When does learning begin? Was there ever a time in your own education when a particular teacher left you feeling lost? The teacher may have expounded on several ideas with great passion, but left you wondering, “What is the point here?” If at some level that question was not satisfied, you may have continued to be present, but you had to force yourself to pay attention, unaided by any internal *need to know*.

If you have had this experience, you discovered that learning does not begin when the teacher simply starts to speak. Rather, it begins when the *learner* fashions a well-framed question in his or her mind, a question of such interest that it demands an answer. When the learner “owns” a question, when it strikes to the core of his or her own curiosity, then the proper dynamic is at work for real engagement. Learning has begun.

To be clear, we are not talking about simple factual questions like, “In what year was the D-Day Battle fought?” Rather, we are talking about broader questions, such as: “What would have happened if the Allies had not prevailed at Normandy? How would it have changed the face of Europe?” While dates are important, these larger questions are more interesting and present a framework that tie together otherwise disparate facts. In turn, they elicit other, more detailed questions.

When participants in adult catechesis feel lost or bored, it is often because they have not considered these larger questions or their underlying importance, or have not been helped to do so. One hallmark of a great catechist is the ability to initiate curiosity with a well-framed question, and guide those being catechized to ask their own questions along the path toward conclusions. This is accomplished through a series of guided questions posed by the catechist to elicit thought, discussion, and conclusions from participants. It demands thoughtful preparation on the part of the catechist, but when well executed, this method gives participants a chance to experience, in the midst of an indifferent culture, that truth is surprisingly *relevant*, and more important, to consider the invitation to conversion at a more *personal* level.

## Using Eye Contact as an Aid to Conversion

Eye contact is one of the *most* crucial skills of a good catechist. It is certainly the case that a solicitation of participants' questions or thoughts, small-group discussion, group dialogue during a teaching, and individual conversations afterward will all give a catechist insight into how a teaching is being received, but for those portions of a teaching in which such means are not used, it is indispensable for a catechist to learn to closely observe participants as truths are unfolded to them.

Very often, unless otherwise trained, most catechists (and speakers in general) will unconsciously begin to make eye contact with only those faces in the room that seem to be responding most positively. During a teaching, the presence of a person with a happy face and a head nodding in apparent agreement will soon attract a catechist's eye contact in *great* disproportion to others in the room. For example, in an RCIA setting, it can even get to the point that if the most positive faces in the room are from RCIA team members, godparents, or sponsors then the catechist will begin to make eye contact *only* with them. Often the result of this unconscious action is that the catechist mentally shifts to teaching *them*, instead of participants, usually evidenced by an increasing use of terminology and phrases that may be meaningless or confusing to non-Catholics.

If a catechist can't make eye contact with *all participants*, then he or she has *no real sense* of how the teaching is being received *in the moment*. What will be missed? A confused look on someone's face (or maybe many faces) that signals a need to stop and clarify or repeat, to slow down, or to back up and come at a point from another direction, or to directly ask the quizzical ones a question. A change in expression that indicates some encouraging level of understanding or recognition. A slight shift in the mouth and slight clouding of the eyes that lets you know emotions have been stirred to the point of tears. A sleepy-eyed look (maybe from a long day, a good meal, or lackluster teaching) that calls you to work harder to engage a particular person, or simply to pause for a coffee or tea break. A questioning look that may benefit from an opportunity to ask one. An angry look that may need pursuing immediately, or perhaps in private after the session. A sudden turning down to write, implying you've perhaps said something of value.

All of these, and other reactions you observe as you teach, point to one of the most important aspects of relationships in your catechetical work: yes, you may be diligently seeking to build relationships with participants in many ways *in addition to* the actual catechesis, but does the importance of knowing *who* you are teaching now extend fully to knowing them *as you* are teaching?



# Adult Faith Formation ~ Catechist Evaluation Form

CATECHIST \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Scale of Evaluation: 1 = needs to be addressed as a weak area,  
2 = needs improvement, 3 = acceptable, 4 = good, 5 = outstanding.**

## Preparation and Proclamation

Teaching was planned and organized; catechist was clearly ready to go \_\_\_\_\_  
Appropriate arrangement of environment and sacred space \_\_\_\_\_  
Suitable opening prayer/Liturgy of the Word/music for this doctrine \_\_\_\_\_  
Delivered a statement of truth to “ring in their ears” \_\_\_\_\_

## Explanation and Application

### Content:

Focused the teaching on how it helped someone get closer to God/Jesus \_\_\_\_\_  
Use of Scripture was well-paced, and with adequate context \_\_\_\_\_  
Used stories in a functional and succinct manner \_\_\_\_\_  
Included some element of personal witness in the teaching \_\_\_\_\_  
Incorporated a knowledge of participants lives’ into the teaching \_\_\_\_\_  
Connected the teaching with real life (what does this mean for them?) \_\_\_\_\_  
Included some reference to the importance of the liturgy/ sacramental life \_\_\_\_\_  
Made reference to previous teachings to create connections \_\_\_\_\_  
Avoided unfamiliar terms/defined essential new terms \_\_\_\_\_  
Clearly was thinking about the participants while teaching \_\_\_\_\_  
Displayed a clear mastery of the subject matter \_\_\_\_\_  
Explanations of doctrine were clear and helpful for non-Catholics \_\_\_\_\_

### Method:

Maintained eye contact with participants on both sides of the room \_\_\_\_\_  
Used hand-motions, expressions, and movement \_\_\_\_\_  
Evidenced independence from written notes where appropriate \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a faith-filled way (these truths are certitudes to me!) \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a hope-filled way (Heaven is real; God is trustworthy!) \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a loving way (good teacher = humble, friendly teacher) \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching given in a respectful way towards other faiths/individuals \_\_\_\_\_

## Celebration

Suitable concluding prayer/music for this doctrine or liturgical calendar \_\_\_\_\_  
Upbeat closing (thanking God; acclaiming his wonderful truth together) \_\_\_\_\_

What most impacted you in a positive way about this teaching?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Overall comments:

Total teaching time: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



*My teaching is not mine,  
but his who sent me.  
~ John 7:16 ~*

### Teaching Tools

Scripture \_\_\_\_\_  
Catechism \_\_\_\_\_  
Own Stories \_\_\_\_\_  
Saint Stories \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Stories \_\_\_\_\_  
Analogies \_\_\_\_\_  
Dialogue \_\_\_\_\_  
Apologetics \_\_\_\_\_  
Humor \_\_\_\_\_  
Art \_\_\_\_\_  
Props \_\_\_\_\_  
Handouts \_\_\_\_\_  
Music \_\_\_\_\_  
Video \_\_\_\_\_  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_  
Board \_\_\_\_\_  
Resources \_\_\_\_\_  
Q &A \_\_\_\_\_  
Exercises \_\_\_\_\_

*The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time  
is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.  
~ Guide for Catechists, Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, para. 8 ~*