

Liturgical Components of the Christian Initiation Process:

Gateways and Sources of Grace for Conversion

MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

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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.

RITE OF ELECTION
Call to Continuing Conversion

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

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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 (Catechumens)
- 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

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE
Rite of Welcoming

PRECATECHUMENATE

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

PRECATECHUMENATE

Start

□ CATECHUMENS

■ CANDIDATES

□ PERIODS

▮ STEPS

Sample agenda for an initial team meeting:

General introductions of team members.
Why RCIA? Why an RCIA team?
The RCIA schedule.

Qualifications of a team member:

- ✱ Be converted to Christ and his Church
- ✱ Docile to the Church's mission
- ✱ Punctual and flexible
- ✱ Desiring to continue your own formation
- ✱ Openness to new relationships
- ✱ Openness to questions
- ✱ Openness of your life as a witness of faith
- ✱ Prudent and able to keep confidentiality

Nature of the RCIA sessions:

- No commitment, no cost for the participants
- No participation required — each person must never feel manipulated, must be free to decide to come
- Spouse is welcome to come with the participant; we can provide babysitting
- Catechesis gradually introduces things Christian and things distinctively Catholic, including Catholic practices, navigating the Bible, Catholic teachings, living an adult Christian life
- If desired, we will try to find a Catholic from a participant's own faith background to talk with
- Any participant can always make an appointment to see our pastor, another priest, or the RCIA leader
- There will be a discernment process and interviews prior to each of the major Rites
- Questions from participants are never unwelcome, offensive, or too frequent
- Verbal questions should come only from participants, not team or sponsors (written ones are welcome from all)
- All participants will receive Bibles (and Catechisms if they request)
- Role of food and refreshments
- Role of handouts given at each session
- Role of the RCIA library of printed, video, and audio materials for participants
- Role of testimonies to be given by each team member
- Role and conduct of small groups
- Role of godparents and sponsors
- Critical importance of prayer
- Each team member must obtain a faithful intercessor who will agree to pray regularly for your work on the team

Jobs for the team (each person may occupy more than one of these roles):

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ✱ Catechist | ✱ Hospitality and Food | ✱ Music |
| ✱ Intercessor Coordinator | ✱ Library | ✱ Liturgy Coordinator |
| ✱ Sponsor Coordinator | ✱ Small Group Facilitator | ✱ Retreat Coordinator |
| ✱ Set-Up/Break-Down | ✱ Reflection on the Word Facilitator | |

Who are potential inquirers that might come if asked?

What the first session needs to be like.

Prayer for those we seek to serve...

Most holy Mother of God, Immaculate Virgin, we beseech you, for the sake of Christ, our Lord, your Son, offer your loving prayers before the throne of God for all those wandering children of yours who are outside the full communion of His one true Church.

Obtain for them, most tender Mother, the grace to see the love of God, the desire to understand the truth of the Catholic faith, and the strength to courageously embrace the gospel.

May the good influence of Catholic instruction, the pious example of the team, godparents, sponsors, and members of our parish, the prudent words of Catholic friends, the zeal of priests and religious, gently and sweetly invite them to come to their Father's home and to the unity of the fold of Christ.

Protect and watch over them in your kindness while they stray in exile and darkness. Obtain for them many effective graces. Be merciful and aid them, holy Mother, now in their time of desolation and need, so that you may have joy hereafter in welcoming to your family in Heaven these souls which have been redeemed by the passion and death of your most holy Son, Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Agenda for future team meetings:

- The items for discussion will be different at each meeting depending on the stage of the RCIA process and current needs
- Team members will report on the progress of participants
- Discussion of ways to better help various participants, or ways to address pastoral issues that have arisen
- Specific team members give updates concerning their respective roles
- Reminder about upcoming liturgical events or other calendar matters



Catechesis in the Precatechumenate: Delivering the Gospel

From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love. The whole period of the precatechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek Baptism may mature. (RCIA 37)

THE ELEMENTS OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE ARE:

- ✦ A suitable proclamation of the Gospel (see Mark 1:15)
- ✦ The truth of the message of the Gospel communicated by testimonies and explanation of Scripture (see RCIA 38)
- ✦ Answers given to questions of the inquirers in the form of apologetics (see RCIA 38)
- ✦ Teaching that adequately prepares inquirers for the first major Rites (see RCIA 42)
- ✦ A time of first faith, continuing conversion, and desire for the sacraments (see RCIA 42, 43)
- ✦ Christian community lived out with the team, and in the context of a welcoming parish (see RCIA 38, 45)

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?



- ⊕ The Good News about God and his wonderful works
- ⊕ The Good News about his love and his plan for us
- ⊕ It must be:
 - ✦ TRINITARIAN: He, who 'was sent by the Father' and 'anointed by the Spirit', is Lord, Messiah, and Savior, and the Son of God and Son of Mary (GDC 99-100)
 - ✦ CHRIST-CENTERED: Through the saving action of his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven (the Paschal mystery), he has made a way for us to take advantage of the Father's plan for our salvation (John 14:6; GDC 98)
 - ✦ ECCLESIAL: While on earth, he went about doing good and preaching the Kingdom of God, which he perpetuated in a visible Church (Ephesians 3:10; see CCC 760)
 - ✦ PERSONAL: The Holy Spirit has made it possible for us to access in the Church the full power and merits won for us by Jesus, which dispenses them in the sanctifying action of the sacramental life (see GDC 43, 117)
 - ✦ FORWARD-LOOKING: He ascended to the Father to prepare a place for his people who have been freed from sin and taken into the family of God (John 14:1-7)
 - ✦ HEAVEN-FOCUSED: His family will endure the judgment that is to come and will enjoy his 'steadfast love that endures forever' in the Heavenly banquet; the Father's plan for our salvation is for us to "become partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Peter 1:3-4)
 - ✦ EXPERIENCED IN THIS COMMUNITY: 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 and participate in the Father's plan (GDC 102, 256)

ELEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------|
| ⊕ Revelation | ⊕ Salvation | ⊕ The Church as necessary for salvation | ⊕ Jesus |
| ⊕ Our Sin Problem | ⊕ Scripture | ⊕ The Christian life: believing, hoping, loving | |

What Shall we do in Inquiry/ Precatechumenate Gatherings?

Continually hook everything to the Story of the wonderful works of God and his plan for us.

Help inquirers understand how to navigate the Bible.

Soak each session in Scripture in order to guide and to apply Revelation to real life.

Sing hymn which can be learned easily and which express a seeking for God.

Teach prayer and model it. Pray individually with inquirers. Pray as a group using different prayer forms.

- ✠ Intercessions
- ✠ Psalms
- ✠ Basic Catholic prayers
- ✠ Spontaneous prayer

Give personal testimony to God's love, his faithfulness and his family, the Church.

- ✠ Catechists/clergy/team/godparents/sponsors
- ✠ Neophytes/other parishioners

Show how we can know that God exists.

- ✠ Through reason alone man can know **that** God exists.
- ✠ From Revelation however, man can know **who** God is.

Introduce inquirers to Jesus using Scriptural images which reveal different aspects about him.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| ✠ Jesus the Good Shepherd | ✠ Jesus the Son of God |
| ✠ Jesus the Savior | ✠ Jesus the King |
| ✠ Jesus the God-Man | ✠ Jesus the High Priest |
| ✠ Jesus the Teacher | ✠ Jesus the Way for us |
| ✠ Jesus the Son of Mary | ✠ Jesus the Truth for us |
| ✠ Jesus the Redeemer | ✠ Jesus the Life for us |

Offer a library of basic books, pamphlets, tapes, and videos for people to use.

Offer a tour of the church and sacristy.

Encourage inquirers to ask questions, and answer them in an apologetic form (in order to remove “stumbling blocks”).

Make sure that there is time for silent reflection. Make sure that there is time for sharing between inquirers and team/godparents/sponsors/clergy.

Provide the opportunity for friendships to begin.

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his Creator. (CCC 27)





Apologetics in the Precatechumenate: Speaking the Truth in Love

In the presentation of the Christian religion, catechesis must deal with the many questions, difficulties, and doubts which arise in the human heart. Indeed, these questions should be brought to light when they have been obscured or confused by ignorance or indifference. The faith response to these questions will appear meaningful if it is rooted in the Bible and in concrete historical life, and if it is respectful of reason and attentive to the signs of the times. (ACCC 48)

USE OF APOLOGETICS IN THE PRECATECHUMENATE

- ✧ Inquiry, not challenge
- ✧ Primarily presentation of principles, not refutation of hostile arguments
- ✧ Hotly debated topics are not answered simply

PRINCIPAL TECHNIQUES

- ✧ Prompt for Questions:
 - ✧ **Ask for them**; welcome and encourage questions—even repeatedly—draw them out
 - ✧ **Give a list** and let people pick their favorites
 - ✧ **Provide blanks** for submitting questions
 - ✧ Consider **answering important questions** not asked
- ✧ Answer Questions:
 - ✧ **Restate** the question so all hear exactly what you are answering and the questioner knows you heard the question correctly
 - ✧ Explain Catholic beliefs **simply and clearly**—this is key
 - ✧ Answer **accurately**—if you're not sure, admit it, then look it up
 - ✧ Answer **respectfully and non-defensively**
 - ✧ Rely on **Scripture, Tradition, the Magisterium, liturgy, and reason**
 - ✧ Answer **practically** with real life application in mind
 - ✧ Answer **immediately**, or give good reason for necessary delay (inquirers may not be there 'later')
 - ✧ Answer **cheerfully, tirelessly, and patiently**
 - ✧ Ask for further questions did you answer the question **adequately for them**

IMPORTANCE OF OVERCOMING

AN OVERLY APOLOGETIC APPROACH TO DOCTRINE

- ✦ The aesthetic aspect of doctrine in catechesis—God's revelation of truth is deeply beautiful
- ✦ The organic, systematic nature of doctrine in catechesis—belief is a totality, not a collection of doctrines (pattern, not a pile)
- ✦ The glory of the Lord as expressed in catechesis
- ✦ The truths of the faith are a way of life, not just a way of thinking

PREPARATION FOR CATECHISTS

- ⊕ Prayer: "As much time before the Blessed Sacrament as on the platform." (Frank Sheed)
- ⊕ Doctrine as an organic reality—we teach the paradigm of love given and love returned (see John 15:9-12)
- ⊕ Scripture, the Magisterium, Church history
- ⊕ Sound reasoning: read, listen, practice
- ⊕ Knowledge of the primary points of the most common belief systems

A catechist can deal with tough questions if the inquirers are led to see that the Church is about expressing God's love—this gives them a paradigm, a lens, a background for seeing and processing the world. (see 1 John 4:7-12)





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.



Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming

Interviewer: Before beginning, read RCIA 42 and 43. This meeting should be preceded by a discussion with any members of the RCIA community (clergy, team members, godparents, sponsors, etc.) who have assisted in the formation of the individual regarding the person's readiness to take this step.

Use the following questions as a guide for a conversation with the inquirer. As you talk, let the inquirer know how you have seen God at work in his or her life during the inquiry period. Be sure to explain that, while some individuals may be ready to go through this Rite at this point, others may not, and that if someone needs more time to discern, learn about, and decide to follow the Catholic way of life, that is fine. If the individual is interested in celebrating these Rites, and you or others with whom you have spoken have concerns about his or her readiness, explain your concerns and that it might be in the inquirer's best interest to continue to discern for a period of time. At the conclusion of your conversation, unless you or the inquirer needs more time to come to a decision, let him or her know whether or not he or she will participate in the Rite of Acceptance or Welcoming. Notes on the conversation should be taken as needed.

Name: _____

Seeking admission as a ☐ catechumen (unbaptized) ☐ candidate (baptized)

Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s), if determined: _____

- 1) What has been your experience of the sessions up to this point? What has affected you the most? What have you enjoyed the most? What has challenged you the most?
- 2) What changes have occurred in your relationship with God or with your family or friends during this time?
- 3) What kind of changes do you see in yourself?
- 4) How has your relationship with your godparent/sponsor (if established) been working out?
- 5) What experiences have you had in this parish community up to this point? Are you beginning to have a sense of belonging to this parish community?
- 6) What experiences have you had in reading the Scriptures?
- 7) Tell me about how you pray.
- 8) How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?
- 9) To what degree do you see yourself turning away from sin and developing a desire for virtue?
- 10) Do you feel that you have a good grasp of the gospel (the good news) that Jesus Christ came to reveal? What do you most desire to learn more about?
- 11) How would you describe what being a Catholic/living a Catholic life means? What does it mean to you that a Catholic is called to live a life of charity?
- 12) What does it mean to be a member of the Body of Christ? A member of the Roman Catholic Church?

After explaining the importance of the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming, and the questions that will be asked of the inquirer during the Rite, then ask:

- 13) Do you understand what is being asked of you in the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming?
- 14) Do you feel that you are prepared to take this step in the initiation process?

Giving a Personal Testimony (Witness) in an RCIA Setting

*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
~ 1 John 5:11*

The Importance of a Testimony

A testimony is a verbal sharing that describes a conversion to Jesus and his Church that happened through the action of grace. A testimony allows inquirers and participants to hear and see how conversion of heart takes place and how to enter the mystery of Christ and to join his Church. For inquirers and participants who do not have a strong relationship with Christ, or who may have limited experience of authentic Christian witness, fellowship, and service, the RCIA team needs to demonstrate what those realities are like. Otherwise, how will inquirers and participants know what they are called by God to be? How will they know what it looks like to respond to that calling and to try to live as a disciple of Christ?

There are three ways in which this calling and this response can be demonstrated:

- 1) Teaching the life of Christ as the model *par excellence*.
- 2) Teaching the lives of saints for the purpose of showing that Christ can be followed successfully in every era, every age-level, and every state of life.
- 3) Teaching your life to them, within the context of how you have heard, responded to, and are striving to live out the very personal call to holiness that the grace of the Holy Spirit makes possible.

This last point is the purpose of a testimony.

The Purposes of a Testimony

A testimony is valuable to the work of conversion in the RCIA process for these reasons:

- ✠ It *removes misconceptions and barriers to relationships*: When inquirers and participants begin coming to sessions, they normally do not know members of the team, and cannot know what kind of person you are and what you think of them. Perhaps they wonder if you are a know-it-all, or the opposite — someone who knows little about Christ and the Bible. Perhaps they think you are there “just to do a job,” or to make the group larger, or to learn more about the Catholic faith yourself without any direct interest in them. They might wonder what you think of non-Catholics, or if you are judgmental. Done well, a testimony allows inquirers and participants to become knowledgeable about you, which may not otherwise occur quickly, or occur at all, in casual conversation. After you have given your testimony, their ability to relate to you is greatly increased, because you have given them “keys” to entering a relationship with you as a follower of Christ. Your testimony clears up misconceptions by communicating your humility, your joy at their presence in the RCIA process, your intention to serve them, and your desire to love them and have fellowship with them. The ice is broken. Instead of conversations and small-group sessions that are awkward and superficial, inquirers and participants can be at ease with you and are more likely to open their hearts to you.
- ✠ It *models conversion*: Inquirers and participants need to have others demonstrate what it would look like to turn one’s life away from sin and towards Christ and his Church. They may be aware of many poor examples of weak, lukewarm Catholicism that could be interpreted as the norm, unless countered by team members who give a more faithful witness to a life converted to Christ. Your testimony should reveal you as a real person, imperfect and struggling with sin, yet serious about sinning less and less, and seeking holiness, confident that God not only desires this, but will make it possible to any soul that seeks honestly to know and do his will.

What to Do

- Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you to say only that which he wants you to say.
- Speak clearly; make eye contact.
- Be sure to speak to inquirers and participants, not to other team members; it is very easy to unconsciously default to speaking towards those you are most familiar with in the room.
- Consider practicing your testimony, perhaps in front of a mirror.
- Consider having a note card or a very simple outline on a sheet to remind you of the points you want to make.
- Be brief; generally between five and, at most, fifteen minutes is normal for a testimony in an RCIA setting.
- Know what you are going to say and what you hope to achieve.
- A possible outline could be:
 - ✦ Begin with an interesting story.
 - ✦ Describe your early faith life, to the degree that you were distant from, or not as close as you are now, to God and the Catholic Church.
 - ✦ Tell the story of how and why this changed, perhaps gradually or suddenly, in your life.
 - ✦ Explain what difference a relationship with Jesus and Holy Mother Church has made in your life.
 - ✦ Conclude with a thought-provoking comment, question, or loving challenge to those present.Keep in mind that a testimony is often a powerful way to help others think about what God and the Church are asking of them and offering to them.
- Allow inquirers and participants to see your joy in the Lord and your love for his Church.

What to Avoid

- ✦ Do not give a biography of your life; although it is important to you. In a testimony only that which is relevant to how you came to love Jesus and his Church should be included, so every detail you include must in some way serve this purpose.
- ✦ Do not use Catholic terminology or phrases that would be unfamiliar to inquirers and participants.
- ✦ Do not exaggerate elements of your story, or downplay things out of a false sense of humility.
- ✦ Do not be negative about other people or other religious organizations; a testimony is about hope and your thankfulness for God's mercies.
- ✦ Do not read your testimony from a pre-written text; this is your story, to simply be told from the heart.
- ✦ Do not speak condescendingly to inquirers and participants, or give a lecture; you are giving a testimony, not a teaching.
- ✦ Do not be afraid; the focus is not on you, but on the works of God in your life.

Questions to Help You Consider the Content of Your Testimony

Reflect on some or all of these questions to help you identify the “wonderful works of God” in your life:

- What prompted me to respond to God's grace?
- How have I found joy in the Lord and in his Church?
- When have I experienced the peace which surpasses understanding (through the Church)?
- How have I experienced my heart being softened by Jesus (through his Church)?
- How has my mind been changed by Christ and the Church?
- How have I grown in virtue through Jesus and the Church?
- What other blessings have I received from the Lord and his Church?
- What difference has the Holy Spirit made in my life?
- How have I loved those who are difficult for me to love?
- What are some things I am thankful to God for (to his Church for)?

“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 8).

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.

Three Examples of Arrangements of Teachings

This appendix offers three examples of how parish RCIA directors and catechists have used the principles discussed in the introductory sections of this *Manual* to determine an initial ordering of their RCIA teachings. The purpose of the three lists presented here is to offer examples of the *order* of catechetical teachings only, for the purpose of fleshing out the concept of a *systematic* arrangement of doctrine that takes into account the purpose of each of the four periods of the RCIA process (as discussed in Section Three). The *organic* aspect of teaching each session cannot be fully deduced from these basic lists because this relates more to *how* doctrines are taught than to how they are *sequenced*.

The arrangement of the teachings in each list should not be interpreted as a “topical” approach — which usually exists in parishes that use some set of pre-ordered handouts or a bound text that necessitates a certain arrangement of teachings. In these circumstances, the RCIA director and catechists can exercise little or no choice in the ordering of teachings, and must forfeit this decision-making process to a publishing organization or company that obviously cannot account for situations unique to that parish in that year. This restriction is detrimental to the need for flexibility discussed in Sections Five and Six of this *Manual*. In contrast to this, the lists given in this appendix are designed to follow the hierarchy of truths, but are not intended to be substitutes for the careful considerations that can only occur at the parish level.

Lists of this kind can only be considered *initial*. They are necessarily completed by parish personnel prior to knowing who the participants will be. While much of this initial ordering usually remains intact in any given year, the catechist must allow the process to remain open to changes. These changes may result from various pastoral circumstances, for example: the need for a second or even a third teaching on certain aspects of the faith with which a certain group is struggling; the need to add a teaching or two to attend to unanticipated needs; bad weather that forces cancellation of scheduled sessions; changes in parish leadership that temporarily disrupt the process; a news event that claims a session or two to suitably address the issue, etc.

These lists do not indicate which teachings might occur together during a retreat, nor do they incorporate events that are specific to the liturgical or parish calendar that might take the place of a regular session (such as a Tenebrae Service, attendance at a Chrism Mass, a party for new Catholics, attendance at an Eastern Rite Divine Liturgy, participation in a Parish Mission, attendance at a Catholic Baptism, wedding, or funeral, etc.). Nor does this set of lists include suggestions for the Neophyte Year, beyond the seven weeks of the Mystagogy period. Lastly, the following three examples offered in this appendix do not restrict themselves solely to the titles of the 60 doctrines presented in this *Manual*. Instead, these lists present various ways that the Deposit of Faith could be arranged to accomplish systematic catechesis in a nine-month setting, a twelve-month setting, and a year-round setting.

Example One

PERIOD OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE

Welcome Session
 The Existence of God
 The Trinity
 God the Father
 Creation
 Angels
 Made in the Image of God
 Original Sin
 The Mystery of Evil and Divine Providence
 The Story of Salvation
 Revelation
 Sacred Scripture
 Sacred Tradition
 The Sacramental Economy as the Father's Plan
 The Person of Jesus
 Salvation, Justification, and the Paschal Mystery
 The Gift of Grace
 The Holy Spirit
 The Four Marks of the Church
 The First Three Commandments
 The Second Seven Commandments
 Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell
 The Life of Prayer and the Hope of Salvation
 Devotion in the Church Family
 The Lord's Prayer as the Family Prayer
 The Communion of Saints
 The Blessed Virgin Mary
 The Kingdom of God
 The Second Coming of Christ

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

The Great Covenants
 The Incarnation and the Final Covenant
 Church History as the Story of Salvation Continued
 Liturgy in the Church
 Sacraments and Sacramentals in the Church
 Traditions of Prayer in the Church
 Holy Orders
 Baptism
 Confirmation
 Eucharist
 Teaching Mass
 Reconciliation
 Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering

Matrimony
 Natural Law
 Freedom in Christ
 Temptation and Sin
 The Battle of Prayer
 The Seven Deadly Sins
 The Dignity of the Human Person
 The Sin of Contraception in Our Culture
 The Sin of Abortion in Our Culture
 The Culture of Life
 The Cardinal Virtues
 The Theological Virtue of Faith
 The Theological Virtue of Hope
 The Theological Virtue of Love
 The Two Great Commandments of the New Law
 Social Teachings of the Church
 The Corporal Works of Mercy
 The Spiritual Works of Mercy
 The Priesthood of the Faithful
 The Mystical Body of Christ
 The Universal Call to Holiness
 The Personal Call of Vocation

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Adoration of God the Son (Transfiguration)
 Mercy and Humility of the Son (Samaritan Woman)
 Spiritual Blindness and Pride (Blind Man)
 Liturgical Prayer and the Hope of New Life (Lazarus)
 The Lord's Prayer and Forgiveness
 Eucharistic Meditation and Chaplet of Divine Mercy
 Meditation on the Sacraments in the Church Fathers

PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS (MYSTAGOGY)

Sacramental Living in the Apostolic Church
 The Mass as the Way of Life
 Evangelization and the Call of the Good Shepherd
 Personal Devotion to Jesus
 Ecumenism and Other Religions
 Becoming a Saint
 The Catholic Worldview

Example Two

PERIOD OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE

Get Acquainted Gathering
 Who is God? (The Trinity)
 What Does God Begin? (Creation)
 What Does God Want? (The Story)
 Who Am I? (Image and Likeness of God)
 How has God Spoken? (Revelation)
 How to Communicate with God? (Prayer)
 What Does It Mean to Believe? (Faith)
 What Should We Believe? (The Deposit of Faith)
 Who is Jesus? (The Son of God)
 What Difference Does Jesus Make? (The Incarnation)
 What About My Sin Problem? (Sin and Grace)
 The Father's Plan and the Means to Follow It
 The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church
 God's Family and My Part in It (Body of Christ)
 The Blessed Virgin Mary
 Saints and the Church
 What Do I Do Now? (Repent; Give Your Life to God)
 Faith, Hope and Love (The Adult Catholic Life)

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

God's Plan in the Sacramental Economy
 The Church as Dispenser of the Mysteries
 The Church as Necessary for Me
 The Sacrament of Baptism
 Saints and the Power of Baptism
 The Ten Commandments of the Moral Life
 The Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Moral Life
 The Sacrament of Eucharist
 Explanation of the Mass
 The Sacrament of Confirmation
 The Sacrament of Holy Orders
 The Sacrament of Marriage
 NFP and the Darkness of Contraception
 The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick
 Suffering and the Call of the Cross

Saints and the Power of Redemptive Suffering
 History of the Church (Part I) (1st 1000 Years)
 History of the Church (Part II) (1000-Present)
 My Part in the Church (God's Work for Me)
 Participating in the Life of Christ
 Helping Others to Participate in the Life of Christ
 The Dignity of the Human Person in Matthew 25
 The Challenge of Charity and Holiness
 The Catholic Vision of the Moral Life
 The Corporal Works of Mercy
 The Spiritual Works of Mercy
 The Pursuit of Happiness in the Trinity
 Relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 The Lord's Prayer as a Summary of the Gospel
 The Lord's Prayer as the Church's Mission Statement
 The Lord's Prayer and the Hope of Heaven

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The Eucharist as Christ Revealed (Transfiguration)
 Sin and the Challenge of Purity (Samaritan Woman)
 Sin and the Challenge of Humility (Blind Man)
 The Dignity of Life in Christ (Lazarus)
 Teaching on Holy Week
 Workshop on the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 Lord's Prayer as a Prayer of Unity

PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS (MYSTAGOGY)

Pursuing Holiness in Holy Mother Church
 The Eucharist as a Call to Virtue
 Who Is Jesus to You Now?
 Who is the Father to You Now?
 Who is the Holy Spirit to You Now?
 Being Catholic in a Non-Catholic Society
 God's Plan for the Glory of His Life in You

Example Three

PERIOD OF THE PRECATECHUMENATE

Welcome and Introduction
 Who Am I? and What Am I?
 The Story of God's Work Among Us
 What is Faith?
 What is the Gospel?
 God Calls Us By Name: God's Plan for Us
 Special Question and Answer Night
 God as a Trinity of Persons
 The Incarnation of Jesus Christ
 The Holy Spirit and the Supernatural Life of Grace
 Relationship: The Life of Prayer to God
 Broken Relationship: The Life of Sin
 Restored Relationship: The Covenants of God
 Guides for Our Relationship: The Commandments
 Special Question and Answer Night
 The Church in God's Plan
 Revelation and the Church
 Tradition and the Church
 Scripture and the Church
 Special Question and Answer Night
 The Old Testament
 The New Testament
 The People of the New Testament
 The Mother of Us All: Mary
 The Elder Members of the Family: Saints
 The Connection Among Us All: Liturgy
 The Sacramental Principle and Sacramentals
 The Mass as the Life of the Family in Jesus
 Special Question and Answer Night

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

The Salvation Story and the Pattern of the Creed
 The Father as the Origin of All Truth
 The Father as the Origin of All Goodness
 The Father as the Origin of All Beauty
 Jesus as the Answer to Sin
 Jesus as the Incarnation of Perfect Love
 Jesus as the Model of Holiness
 Jesus as the Invitation to Divinization
 Special Question and Answer Night
 The Holy Spirit as the Guarantor of the Church
 The Holy Spirit as the Animator of Our Faith
 The Holy Spirit as the Giver of Gifts and Sanctifier
 The Church Militant: Dispenser of the Mysteries
 The Church Suffering: The Last Mercy of Purgatory
 The Church Triumphant: The Joys of Heaven
 Special Question and Answer Night
 Tour of the Church
 The Sacraments of the Church

Holy Orders and the Gift of Apostolicity
 Baptism and Faith
 The Eucharist and Love
 Teaching Mass
 Confirmation and the Fruits of the Holy Spirit
 Reconciliation and Hope
 Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering
 Special Question and Answer Night
 Matrimony as a Holy Union
 The Call to Serve Life: The Culture of Life
 Family Life and the Culture of Death
 Vocation and the Culture of Life
 Suffering and the Culture of Death
 The One Destiny: Death and Judgment
 The Two Ways: Heaven and Hell
 The Christian Call: Happiness in Holiness
 Special Question and Answer Night
 Morality for All Humans: The Human Virtues
 Morality for All Christians: The Theological Virtues
 Social Issues
 Social Sins
 Discipleship and Charity: Loving as Jesus Loves
 Discipleship and Evangelization: The Royal Priesthood
 Discipleship and Prayer: Staying in the Relationship
 Adoration in the Life of the Church
 Catholic Traditions of Prayer
 Struggles in the Life of Prayer
 Special Question and Answer Night

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The Transfiguration and the Light of Faith
 The Woman at the Well and Baptism's Living Water
 The Man Born Blind and Seeing All That Jesus Offers
 Lazarus and Our Resurrection in the Second Coming
 Reconciliation as a Sacrament of Healing
 Praying with Scripture and the Our Father
 Eucharist: Source and Summit of Catholic Worship

PERIOD OF POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS (MYSTAGOGY)

How Baptism Enables the Call to Holiness
 How Confirmation Enables the Call to Holiness
 How the Eucharist Enables the Call to Holiness
 How Reconciliation Enables the Call to Holiness
 How Anointing of the Sick Enables the Call to Holiness
 How Marriage Enables the Call to Holiness
 How Holy Orders Enables the Call to Holiness

For Those Exploring the Teachings of the Catholic Church: A First Teaching

By Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

Archbishop Sheen, who died in 1979, is being considered by the Catholic Church for sainthood. During his long life of service, he wrote 95 books on the Catholic faith, and preached hundreds of retreats, especially for priests. In 1951 he began his famous television series entitled, "Life is Worth Living." It eventually reached an estimated 30 million viewers each week, and won an Emmy. He wrote the following to those beginning to explore the Catholic faith...



Dear Inquirer...

1. You are not here because you are going to join the Catholic Church – you are here to investigate it.

There is no more obligation to embrace the Catholic Church because you come to learn about it in inquiry sessions, than there is a duty to buy a mink coat because you enter into a department store. On the other hand, even though you were willing, the Church would not let you join, unless you knew its teachings and the Church was certain of your good dispositions of soul. As St. Peter said: "If anyone asks you to give an account of the hope which you cherish, be ready at all times to answer for it" (1 Peter 3:15).

2. There is only one thing required of you at the beginning, and that is good will.

Good will is readiness to accept the truth. Someone might prove to you that there was sunlight outside of the window, but all the proof in the world would be useless, unless you had the good will to lift up the curtain to allow it to enter the room.

3. Though good will comes from you, God must add something to it, and that is what is called actual grace.

Actual grace is a momentary or transient illumination of the mind to see a truth which was not previously seen, or to do something about that truth which was not previously done. When conversion, therefore, is completed it will be found to be a union of good will with the grace of God.

You may think that you have decided to come to these sessions because you read a certain book, or were inspired by a certain person, or had reached a decision through your own wisdom. These are not the cause, but only the occasion. The real cause is God Himself.

As our Blessed Lord said: "I am the Way; I am Truth and Life; nobody can come to the Father, except through Me" (John 14:6). It is our good will that responds to a God-initiated call.

4. To understand the fullness of the truth, it is necessary not only to study but also to lead a good life.

Not all men are outside of the Church because of ignorance; some are outside of it because of the way they live. Most people do not have difficulty with the creed of the Church; they have difficulty with the commandments.

Good behavior or a moral life are just as essential as study and knowledge. It is the clean of heart that see God. As our Blessed Lord said: "Anyone who acts shamefully hates the light, will not come into the light, for fear that his doings will be found out" (John 3:20).

As a bank robber does not like to have the searchlight of a policeman fixed upon him in his crime, so neither do sinners who are unwilling to abandon their sinful ways like to have the searchlight of God's truth on their iniquity.

5. You will not normally begin your time learning in these sessions with faith, you will begin them with reason.

Just as you cannot go into any store and ask for credit without an investigation having been made of your ability to pay, so neither can you have faith in Christ without a reason for believing Him. These reasons are called motives of credibility. Instead, therefore, of faith being contrary to reason it actually begins with it. That is why instructions in Christian doctrine are not the same as indoctrination into Communism, for example. Communism is forced upon the mind, whereas Christianity is a free correspondence with God's grace.

Furthermore, Communism is contrary to human nature with its hate, whereas Christianity is the perfection of human nature and particularly of human reason. As the telescope does not destroy the eye, so neither does faith destroy reason, but rather opens up to the vision of other worlds.

6. Though there will come a moment in these sessions when you will become absolutely convinced that Christ is the Son of the Living God, True God and True Man, you must not think that this acceptance of His Divinity is due solely to your reason, your judgment, or to a study of the motives of credibility.

This tremendous conviction comes from God Himself through the gift of faith. When Peter affirmed the Divinity of His Master, he was told: "It is not flesh and blood, it is my Father in Heaven that has revealed this to you" (Matthew 16:17).

7. The gravity and the number of your sins are not an obstacle to coming to the Church.

It is rather the recognition of our sinfulness that makes our soul clamor for a Redeemer. Just as we sometimes can run up more debts than we can pay, so we know that of and by our own resources we cannot make up for sins. Hence Christ, Who is the Son of God, became Man.

As Man He could take our sins upon Himself, as God His reparation and atonement for them on the Cross would have infinite merit. The worst thing in the world is not sin, it is far worse to deny sin. He who is blind and denies vision has no hope for a cure. If you had never sinned you never could call Christ your Savior.

8. The teaching will lead to an understanding of another life than that of the physical or the natural.

Two little tadpoles in the water were one day discussing the possibility of another kind of existence than their own. One said that he was going to look for another world. His companion said: "Don't be so foolish as to think there is anything else in the world besides water."

As it would be foolish for the rose to deny that there was a higher life than that of the plants, so it is foolish for us to deny that there is a higher life than that of the human. This life which is above the natural is called supernatural, which means above the natural, and is the life of God in which we participate once we are united to Jesus Christ.

You are natural because you were born of your parents; you are supernatural because you were born of God. That is why sacred Scripture always urges us to become something that we are not. By nature we are only creatures; by supernatural grace, we are children of God.

It is possible to put a pebble in a gold setting but the gold setting was made for a diamond; so it is possible for us to go on living human natural lives though we were made to become settings for the Divine life of grace.

9. All during your instructions you must pray.

Though you may know few formal prayers, say many times during the day this simple invocation: "O Lord, give me a knowledge of the truth and a strength to follow it." Let your first petition be to know the fullness of truth, not mere fragments of it that come from human knowledge. When finally this fullness of truth does come to your mind, you will see that all the bits of information that you had before were like the crazy patterns of a Japanese lantern. But after Divine Truth comes into your mind it is like a candle put into that lantern, in which everything is revealed as a beautiful design.

But, it is not enough to merely know the truth. Truth implies tremendous responsibility. There are many who like to knock at the door of truth, but they would hate to see it open. That is why you must add the second prayer, the strength to follow the truth as you see it.

St. Paul condemned the pagan Romans: "Although they had the knowledge of God, they did not honor Him or give thanks to Him as God... and their senseless hearts grew darkened" (Romans 1:21). During the time of these inquiry sessions remember that there are thousands of blessings suspended from Heaven on silken cords, and prayer is the sword that cuts them.

10. Be prepared for the enmity and hatred of the world.

If you joined a sun cult, or one of the Oriental religions, or became a Muslim, or started a religion of your own, your friends would say to you, "Well he's free and that is the way he believes." But just as soon as you embrace the Catholic Church you will be accused of having lost your reason, of having surrendered your freedom, and of cutting off the pleasures of life. It is the Church that makes the difference.

So long as you join any natural religion you are part of the world, therefore, the world accepts you. But when you embrace the Church, you are lifted out of the natural into the supernatural order; your mind undergoes a complete reversal of values, the world sees that it has lost its own and therefore, it will despise you.

Our Blessed Lord warned that this would happen. "If the world hates you be sure that it hated Me before it learned to hate you. If you belonged to the world, the world would know you for its own and love you; it is because you do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you from the midst of the world that the world hates you. Do not forget what I said to you. No servant can be greater than His Master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you" (John 15:18).

11. Be not disturbed by any prejudices against the Catholic Church which you bring to your first sessions.

Perhaps if I had been told the same lies against the Church that so many in our society have been told, I might have hated the Church ten times more than some. People, I find, do not hate the Church, they only hate that which they mistakenly believe to be the Church.

When you look at stained glass windows from the outside of a church, they seem to have no pattern, they are only a mass of crazy leaden lines; but once you are in the church, these windows glow with Scriptural figures. So the Church will shine before your soul as Christ continuing and living through the ages, once you are in it.

12. Your greatest joys are before you.

Even if there are sorrows and trials in your life they will be made sweet through the cross. All other religions are sunshine religions. The Catholic faith begins not with sunshine but with the shadow, not with the feast but with the fast, not with the Resurrection but the Cross. We begin with defeat and end in glory.

In the faith, you will come to the fullness and perfection of love. As the highest peak of love in the natural order is the union of two in one flesh in matrimony, so in the reception of Communion you have the union of two in one Christ which is the perfection of love. In the future, you will refrain from sin not because it is the breaking of a law, but because it is the wounding of Someone you love.

From the day of your conversion onward, you will read your own autobiography on the crucifix. Every sin of pride will be seen as the crown of thorns, every grasping avarice will be seen in His nailed hands, every wandering from God's grace will be told in His riven feet, every errant love will be read in His wounded Heart, but there will never be despair but love, for you will say with St. John of the Cross:

**Oh sweet burn! Oh, delectable wound!
Oh, soft hand, Oh, delicate touch
That savors eternal life and pays every debt,
In slaying thou has changed my death to life.**