



# The RCIA: Rites and Processes

An Overview

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# Prayer



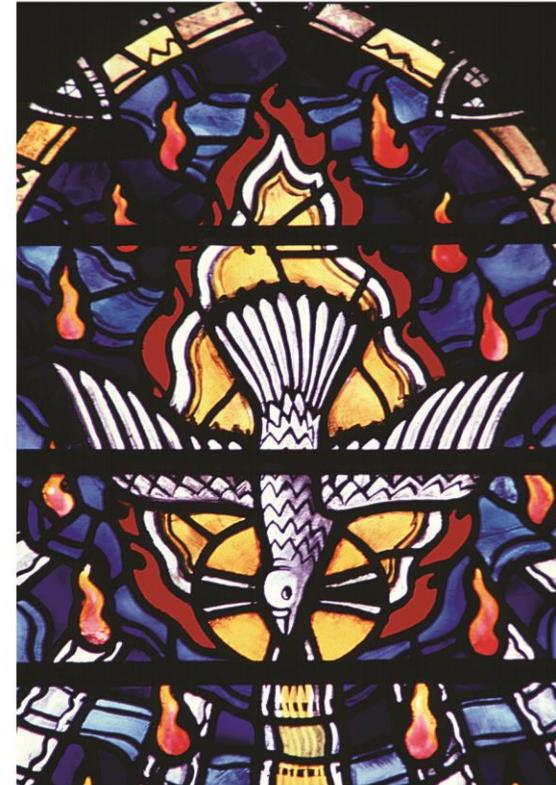
*Loving God,*

you called us each by name and gave your only Son to redeem us. In your faithfulness, you sent the Holy Spirit to complete the mission of Jesus among us.

Open our hearts to Jesus. Give us the courage to speak his name to those who are close to us and the generosity to share his love with those who are far away.

We pray that every person throughout the world be invited to know and love Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. May they come to know his all-surpassing love. May that love transform every element of our society.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.



# Steps, Processes, Rites

**An Integral Process  
of Conversion**



# RCIA

- Adopted as part of *resourcement*, retrieving the thinking of the early Church
- Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan speaking to largely pagan people in a largely pagan world
- Ambrose had many catechumens who resisted baptism because membership in the Church seemed so strict. (*Font of Life: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Mystery of Baptism* by Garry Wills)
- We apply the RCIA in a very different situation today, one in which Catholics, baptized non-Catholics, and non-Christians might all have a claim to participation.



# Rite And Process

The RCIA is called a “rite.”

It has a series of rites.

These rites mark an underlying process.

Today we explore the **steps** involved in the RCIA, the **rites** that celebrate these steps, and begin to talk about the **processes** that make the ministry effective.



# What is the RCIA?

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

The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.”

(#4-5)



# Essential Elements of the Catechumenate

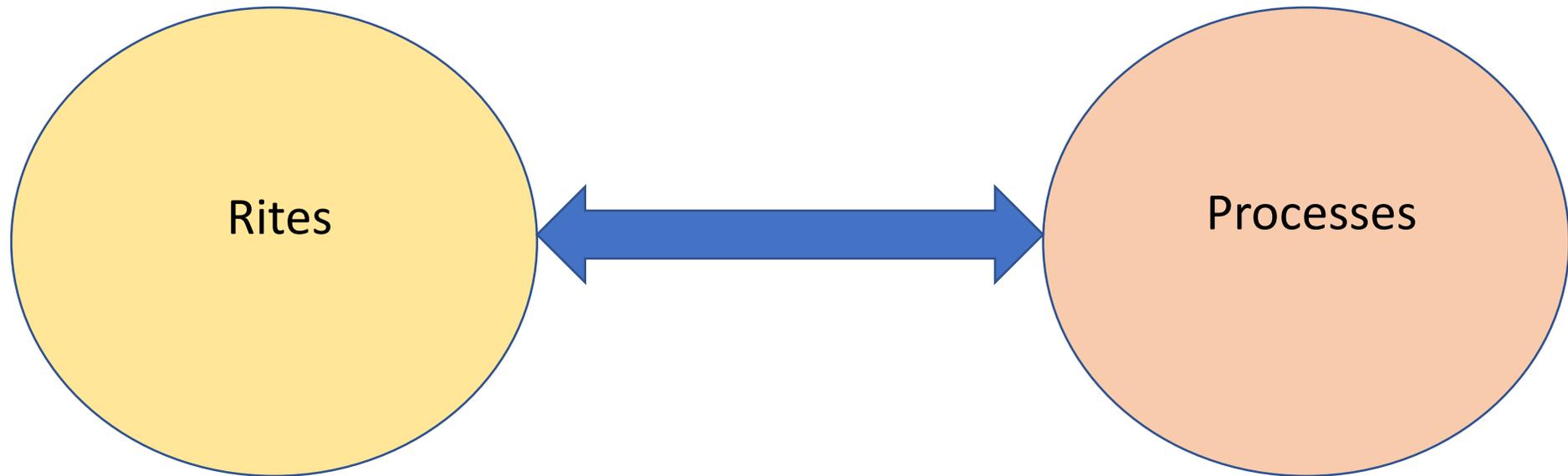
- **Paschal:** “everything is oriented toward the mystery of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection”
- **Initiatory:** “an initiation into faith that leads catechumens to the discovery of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.”
- **Liturgical, ritual & symbolic:** “interwoven with symbols, rites, and celebrations that touch the senses and the affections.”
- **Community:** “a process that takes place in a concrete community . . . ”
- **Ongoing conversion & witness:** “conversion is never fully accomplished but lasts a whole lifetime . . . ”
- **Progressive:** “a dynamic process structured in periods that succeed one another in a gradual and progressive way. This evolving character responds to the actual life story of the person . . . ”

*Directory for Catechesis* 64 (also see 62)





# Rites and Processes Reinforce Each Other



# The Steps

The Five Steps in the  
Catechumenate



# Steps, Process, and Rites

Inquiry

Catechumenate

Election

Initiation

Mystagogy



# 1. Inquiry: Evangelization and Precatechumenate

#36: "... faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all."

For non-Christians thus they "may believe and be freely converted to the Lord..."

#37: "From evangelization... 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."

#38: "The candidates are to receive help and attention so that... they may cooperate with God's grace."

Provide opportunities "for them to meet families and other groups of Christians."



## 2. Catechumenate

#75-1: “A suitable catechesis... planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and supported by celebrations of the word.” Candidates are led to accept dogmas and precepts “but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation...”

#75-2: Catechumens, with the example of other believers, “learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self-renunciation.” This is a “progressive change.”



## Catechumenate (cont'd)

#75-3: Catechumens “when they are present in the assembly... should be kindly dismissed before the liturgy of the eucharist begins (unless their dismissal would present practical or pastoral problems).”

#75-4: “Since the Church’s life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.”

#76: Duration is long enough for the conversion and faith of the catechumen to become strong.

#78: Instruction during this time also “enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the Spirit of Christ.”



### 3. Election or Enrollment of Names

#118: "... marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation, during which the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity."

#119: "... the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation. Thus the Church makes its 'election'..."

#120: "Before the rite of election is celebrated the catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion of mind and in action..."

#121: "The election, marked with a rite of such solemnity, is the focal point of the Church's concern for the catechumens."



## 4. Initiation

#206: “The third step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God.”

#211: “In their renunciation of sin and profession of faith those to be baptized express their explicit faith in the paschal mystery...”

#212: “... the elect come forward and receive that mystery as expressed in the washing with water; ...the divine persons act so that those they have chosen receive divine adoption and become members of the people of God.”



## 5. Postcatechumenate or Mystagogy

#244: “The third step of Christian initiation, the celebration of the sacraments, is followed by the final period, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in make it a part of their lives through meditation of the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing works of charity.”

#245: “The neophytes are, as the term ‘mystagogy’ suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received.”

#246: “... their new participation... increases their contact with the rest of the faithful and has an impact on the experiences of the community. As a result, interaction between the neophytes and the faithful is made easier and more beneficial.”



# Postcatechumenate or Mystagogy (cont'd)

#247: "... [mystagogy's] main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season. ...these celebrations include particularly suitable readings from the Lectionary, especially the readings for year A."

#248: "All the neophytes and their godparents should make an effort to take part in the Masses for the neophytes and the entire community should be invited to participate in them."

#249: "... some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter Season... "

#250: "On the anniversary of their baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment."



# Rites

**Liturgical Actions that  
Accompany the  
Processes**





## Adaptations

#35: “In many places the manner of acting or praying is intentionally left undetermined or two alternatives are offered, so that ministers, according to their prudent pastoral judgment, may accommodate the rite to the circumstances of the candidates and others who are present.”



# Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (#52)

- Acknowledgement of one's name
- Request for "faith"
- Request for "eternal life"
- First Acceptance of the Gospel: "Are you prepared to begin this journey today under the guidance of Christ?"
- Affirmation of the Sponsors and the Assembly
- Signing with the Cross: "N., receive the cross on your forehead. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know him and follow him." (#54)



# Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens— Options (#69ff)

- Exorcism and renunciation of false worship
- Giving of a new name
- Presentation of a cross



# Rites of the Catechumenate (#81ff)

- Celebrations, done on Sundays, of the “word of God that accord with the liturgical season and contribute to the instruction of the catechumens and the needs of the community.”
  - To imprint teachings in their hearts
  - To give catechumens instruction and experience of different aspects of prayer
  - To explain the signs and celebrations of the liturgy
  - To prepare catechumens “gradually to enter the worship assembly of the entire community.”
- Minor exorcisms (#90ff)
- Blessings of catechumens (#95ff)
- Anointings of catechumens (#98ff)





Rites for  
Catechumens:  
Sending of  
Catechumens for  
Election (#106ff)

- Presentation of Catechumens
  - Affirmation by godparents and assembly
  - Intercessions for Catechumens
  - Prayer over Catechumens
- 

# Rite of Election (#130ff)

- Presentation of Catechumens
- Affirmation by godparents and assembly
- Invitation and Enrollment of Names (inscription of names in the Book of the Elect)
- Act of Admission or Election (“I now declare you to be members of the elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil.”)
- Intercession for the Elect
- Prayer over the Elect
- Dismissal of the Elect



## Period of Enlightenment (#141ff)

- First **Scrutiny** (Third Sunday of Lent)
- **Presentation** of the Creed (Third Week of Lent)
- Second **Scrutiny** (Fourth Sunday of Lent)
- Third **Scrutiny** (Fifth Sunday of Lent)
- **Presentation** of the Lord's Prayer (Fifth Week of Lent)



# Initiation-Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday (#185ff)

- Recitation of the Creed
  - Ephphetha Rite
- Choosing a Baptismal Name



# Initiation-Easter Vigil (#218ff)

## **Baptism**

- Litany of the Saints
- Prayer over the Water
- Baptismal Promises
- Baptism
  - Explanatory rites: anointing after baptism, white garment, lighted candle

## **Confirmation**

- Laying on of Hands
- Anointing with Chrism

## **Liturgy of the Eucharist**



# Rites and Processes

Inquiry

Catechumenate

Elect

Neophytes

Acceptance into the Catechumenate

Rites for Catechumens

Sending of Catechumens

Election, Scrutinies (3) and Presentations (2)

Rites of Initiation



# Process

*From Inquiry . . .  
to Initiation . . .  
and beyond . . .*





What's  
the  
Personal  
Process?

**Accompaniment→**

**Apprenticeship→**

**Missionary  
Discipleship**

**“Every form of catechesis is to do all it can to illustrate the dignity of the Christian vocation, to provide accompaniment... It is up to catechetical action to demonstrate that the faith lived in a commitment to loving as Christ did, is the way to foster the coming of the kingdom of God in the world and to hope in the promise of eternal beatitude.”**

*Directory for Catechesis 85*



What is the faith? How do I live it? How do I share it?

What's  
the  
Personal  
Process?  
(cont'd)

**Information→**

**Formation→**

**Transformation**

***“Formation is an ongoing process that, under the guidance of the Spirit and in the living womb of the Christian community, helps the baptized person to *take shape*, which means unveiling his deepest identity which is that of being a son of God in profound communion with his brothers. The work of formation acts as a *transformation* of the person, who internalizes the evangelical message existentially and in such a way that it may be light and guidance for his ecclesial life and mission”***

*Directory for Catechesis* 131



## Ministries Within the RCIA

**There are a variety of ministry roles within  
the RCIA:**

- >Inquiry leader**
  - >Catechist**
  - >Sponsor**
  - >Dismissal leader**
  - >Etc.**
- 

# The RCIA is a Ministry of the Entire Parish

The Parish Community is the primary minister of initiation. “[The] people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. Therefore the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ.” (#9) The Parish Community comprises the welcoming body that provides the women and men of the RCIA an example of how our Catholic faith is lived and celebrated. By participating in the liturgical rites of initiation that mark the RCIA on various Sundays throughout the year, the Parish Community recognizes and celebrates with them. The Parish Community also is asked to pray for the women and men of the RCIA, take the time to get to know them, and invite them to experience ministries in which they are involved.





## The RCIA is a Ministry of the Entire Parish (cont'd)

In a 2000 report on the RCIA in parish life, *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, the U.S. bishops affirm that the RCIA has the power to transform parishes. The only way for such transformation to occur is through **the involvement of the whole parish**. The RCIA is not a class or a program. It is not solely about the accumulation of knowledge or information. It is a journey of formation – conversion and renewal – for all of us. We witness to the fact that our search for God is a lifelong journey during which we grow and learn when we walk with one another.





Webinar #2

Next Tuesday, 2 PM Eastern

***EXPLORING WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN THE  
INDIVIDUAL CATECHUMEN/CANDIDATE  
DURING THE CATECHUMENAL PROCESS.  
I.E., CHANGES IN THE CATECHUMEN/CANDIDATE***



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