

# Glossary of Some Terms for the RCIA

**Inquirer** – those beginning the RCIA process and desire to know more about Christ and the Church (can describe both Catechumens and Candidates for Full Communion)

- Have been led by the grace of the Holy Spirit
- Should be welcomed with an open heart, friendly welcome and listening ear
- May have some knowledge of Christ or have some mistaken ideas about Christ and/or the Church

## **Pre-Catechumenate Period**

- Is the time for inquirer to share his or her story
- Can serve as a time for people to discover or rediscover faith in Christ
- Time to seek and question
- Period to delve into the Gospels – especially Matthew and John
- About evangelization and not doctrinal teaching
- Time for listening and discovery
- Appropriate to answer particular questions on doctrine but not primary focus
- Can be a year-round activity
- Time for inquirers to become familiar with patterns of common prayer
- To move to period of the catechumenate they must express their initial conversion
  - Have they met the living Christ in the Gospel and community?
  - Have they been moved to turn their lives toward Christ and become part of the Community?

**Catechumen** - one who has not been baptized but has taken the initial step of conversion and desires to grow in and fully develop a life of faith in Jesus Christ in the context of the community of faith.

- No longer an inquirer but not yet a Christian
- Has accepted faith in Christ
- Has begun a journey of conversion
- Has begun a gradual change in outlook and conduct centered in Christ
- Can begin to take an active role in church's mission
- Is admitted by means of liturgical ceremony
- Must be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and practice of gospel living
- Is led gradually into the ways of faith, liturgy and charity of the people of God
- Is supported by liturgical rites and the community as a whole on the journey

**Candidate for full Communion** - one who has been validly baptized and seeks full communion with the Catholic Church. He or she must be supported in the life of faith they are discovering and the person should be helped to grow in that life. When dealing with people in this group it is important to pastorally consider their life story in order to appreciate how best to approach the level of formation they may require as they are fully initiated into the life of the Church.

**Elect** – those going forward to after the Rite of Election who will prepare to receive the sacraments of initiation when they have completed the period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Time of intense spiritual preparation
- Celebration of pertinent liturgical rites is important
- Open themselves to Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit
- Receive strength from Christ and the Faithful

**Neophyte** – the term used to describe a person within the first year of their full initiation into the Catholic Church.

- Now immersed in a life centered in the Paschal Mystery
- As one begins this new life they must still be supported by the whole community particularly in the early stages
- The one-year period of mystagogy is centered on them

**Orthodox** - anyone who has been initiated in an Orthodox church is fully initiated and is required only to give a profession of faith. They are initiated into the equivalent Eastern Rite Catholic Church; they are not Latin Rite Catholics.

**Catechized** - through the faith life they already are living as a member of another Christian tradition and they have already been formed at some level into a life with Christ; the degree of continuing formation that might be needed must be determined on an individual basis; the biggest issue is adherence to the Church and her teachings; bridging the gap between doctrinal differences of their previous community and the Church; recommit his or her life to continuing conversion to Christ

**Un-Catechized** (Non-Catholic or Catholic who has not received first communion) – Has no formation in a life with Christ and needs to develop it; there are similarities to the catechumens but they should not be treated as catechumens; it is important that they are given the appropriate time to develop and be formed in the Christian faith; they must be formed spiritually, morally and intellectually.

**Conversion** - (*metanoia* from Greek) radical turning around of the whole person towards Christ; a radical reorientation of one's desires thought processes and actions centered in the Paschal Mystery; never accomplished in a single moment but rather is a process of transformation; it is a striving for holiness that is centered in God and supported by the community; conversion must bring about change in all levels of our person and way of thinking spiritually, morally, intellectually; any such change is always at the initiation of God.

Conversion involves "both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and the concrete milieu which are theirs." *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 18

- Necessary because sinful humanity is alienated from God
- Primarily it is God's initiative
- Requires a response on the part of humanity
- It is a sense a spiritual maturation process
- Conversion is Cognitive, Relational, Affective, Commitment
- Conversion changes the answers we give to the events and the world around us
- Ongoing process it never really ends
- It is individual in nature and cannot be rushed

**Catechesis** - "[is] not only [about] an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also [the person] is brought to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate." (RCIA, no 75.1)

- About personal communication of faith
- It is as much about experiencing faith as learning how to intellectually express that faith
- The Church's teachings are about someone (Jesus) not something
- The truth expressed in dogma is the Church's expression of the Church's experience of the risen Christ; this truth cannot change because Christ does not change
- The content then of catechesis is founded upon this dogma and is tied into helping the person learn the truth of who Christ is and what that means to the life the person is called to live
- Six Basic tasks of Catechesis (General Directory for Catechesis - 1997)
  - Promote knowledge of the faith
  - Promote meaningful participation in liturgical worship and the sacramental life of the Church
  - To integrate moral formation into a Christian way of life
  - Teach Christians how to pray with Christ, in Christ, and in communion with the Church
  - Initiate the Christian into the life of the local church community and foster active participation in the mission of the Church
  - Promote a missionary spirit that prepares Christians to witness Christ in society

**Evangelization** - is aimed at bringing others into a true relationship with Christ and his Church. It is the duty of all the baptized and entails the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ in word and action. It also calls us to personally invite others to know God through Christ in the context of the community formed by the Holy Spirit.

"Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize." *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World), par. 18, Pope Paul VI.

- The mission of the Church is the continuation of the mission of Christ
- Aims at drawing others into the life and mission of the Church
- Bring the message of Christ to modern culture
- It is primarily about proclamation of Jesus Christ
- Incorporating others into the body of Christ by their encountering Christ through us
- It is about leading others to a conversion of Christ through our own conversion in Christ

It is an essential part of every parish's life and pastoral outreach.