


The RCIA and the Christian Initiation of Children – **CHILDREN’S CATECHUMENATE**



St. Matthew's Parish – December 2, 2017
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What we hope to accomplish...

- ❖ A brief overview of the R.C.I.A.
- ❖ Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children
- ❖ Using the RCIA for the formation of Children
- ❖ Initiatory and Ongoing Catechesis
- ❖ A walk through the process of RCIA with children
- ❖ An example of a successful Children's Catechumenate
- ❖ Questions / Answers / Clarifications

2

What does RCIC mean?

RCIC	Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization (<i>Texas</i>)
RCIC	Reactor Core Isolation Cooling (<i>Nuclear Power</i>)
RCIC	Regulatory Compliance Information Center
RCIC	Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (<i>Canada; est. 1947</i>)
RCIC	Regional Center for International Child Health (<i>Cleveland, OH</i>)

Using "RCIA" and "RCIC" implies there two Rites – there is only one. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for Children. There is an Adult Catechumenate and a **CHILDREN'S CATECHUMENATE**

3

What is the RCIA?

“ The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for ... [persons] who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God’s help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and ... will receive the sacraments fruitfully.”

RCIA #1

4

What is the RCIA? *continued...*

The mystery of Christ proclaimed ...	Evangelization that takes place during the Precatechumenate
... freely seek...the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts ...	Conversion and Formation that takes place during the Catechumenate , maturing initial faith with God’s help
...strengthened spiritually during their preparation...	Support and increase of God’s grace in the Liturgical Rites , along with deeper spiritual preparation during Purification & Enlightenment
...to receive the Sacraments fruitfully.	Culminating in the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation with reflection and post-baptismal catechesis during Mystagogy

5

What is the RCIA?

- “ ... a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful....
- ... by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.”
- ... a spiritual journey ... that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place...”

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What is the RCIA? A bit of history ...

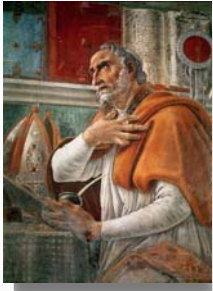
- It is the renewed and updated adaptation of the ancient catechumenate; how adult converts were prepared to become members of the Church.
- Fully in use by the 4th Century.
- Restored at the Second Vatican Council and promulgated for use again in 1972 – and was available in English & mandated in the US Church in 1988.

7

De Catechizandis Rudibus
“On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed”

“You have requested me, brother Deogratias, to send you in writing something which might be of service to you in the matter of catechizing the uninstructed. For you have informed me that in Carthage, where you hold the position of a deacon, persons who have to be taught the Christian faith from its very rudiments, are frequently brought to you ... “

St. Augustine
 Bishop of Hippo




8

RCIA as a Liturgical Reality

The RCIA is a liturgical order consisting of:

rites – Steps which the participants take and receive graces as they progress in conversion

periods – Stages along the process of Initiation that prepare for the next step through catechesis and spiritual preparation



9

The Structure of the RCIA

- Divided into 4 Periods or Stages:
 1. Evangelization/Pre-Catechumenate
 2. The Catechumenate
 3. Purification and Enlightenment
 4. Post-Baptismal Catechesis, or Mystagogy
- Containing 3 major Liturgical Rites:
 1. Rite of Acceptance/Rite of Welcome
 2. The Rite of Election/Call to Continuing conversion
 3. Reception of the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist

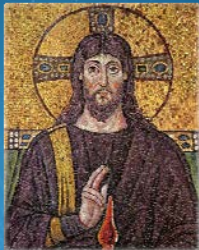
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The 3 Aspects of RCIA & *Conversion*

1. **Catechetical** – One who is asking for faith (seeker) becomes the one who professes faith (believer)
2. **Liturgical** – One who is a recipient of the first liturgical action of the Church (receiving the Sign of the Cross) becomes a full participant in the liturgical life of the Church (receiving the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist)
3. **Pastoral** – From an earthly, self-centered orientation (sin) to intentional discipleship (seeking holiness)

11

Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children



12

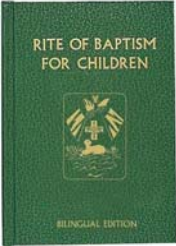
Case Study – Jane

Jane is five years old and earlier in the year began spending the weekends with her grandparents. Jane was never baptized and her parents did not expose her to Church on Sundays. Her Catholic grandparents began taking Jane to Sunday Mass with them; her parents had no objection. After some months, Jane expressed an interest in becoming Catholic, like her grandmother.

Her parents contact the Church secretary and begin asking if this can be done, and how they should go about it...

13

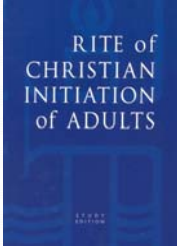
Canon Law and Christian Initiation



RITE OF BAPTISM
FOR CHILDREN

BI-LINGUAL EDITION

or

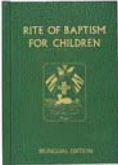


RITE of
CHRISTIAN
INITIATION
of ADULTS

LEUNG EDITION

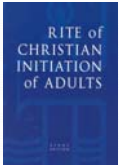
Canon Law and the Question of Baptism for Two Categories of Children or Minors

- Children under seven years old, and those who lack the use of reason.
- Children, 7 and older, as well as those who have the use of reason.



RITE OF BAPTISM
FOR CHILDREN

BI-LINGUAL EDITION



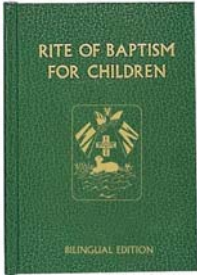
RITE of
CHRISTIAN
INITIATION
of ADULTS

LEUNG EDITION

15

Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children

- “Children or infants are those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore cannot ... profess personal faith.”
- Introduction, *Baptism of Children*, paragraph 1.



16


Case Study – Billy

Billy is in the second grade at a Catholic School. He notices his friends are getting excited about their First Holy Communion in the Spring and he asks his parents what Holy Communion is and why they don't go to Church. Billy has never been baptized, but he wants to receive Holy Communion just like his classmates.

Billy's parents ask their son's teacher what they can do so that Billy can receive Communion, just like his classmates.

17

Canon Law and Christian Initiation



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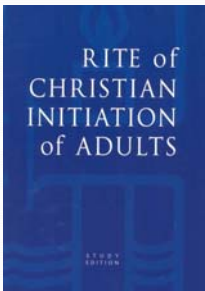


Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children

“The prescripts of the canons on adult baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason.”

- Canon 852, §1.

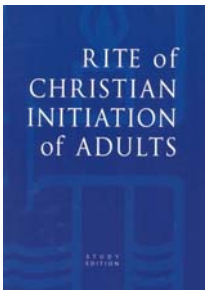
For Christian Initiation, any non-baptized person above the age of reason is called a **catechumen**. A person having received valid baptism is called a **candidate** (for full communion in the Catholic Church).



19

Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children

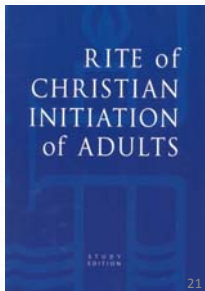
- With reference to Baptism, an adult is considered to be anyone seven or older with the use of reason
- Those who are 7 or older and have the use of reason are baptized according to the RCIA (catechumens)



20

“Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age”

- Part II, Chapter One, paragraphs 252 – 330.
- “This form of the rite of Christian initiation is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age.”



21

National Statutes for the Catechumenate

- “Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults, their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens.”

• National Statutes for the Catechumenate, no. 18.

22

Case Study – Jade

Jade is 12 years old. Jade’s father is a non-practicing Catholic, her mother is a member of the Methodist church. As an infant, Jade was baptized in the Methodist church. The family has now moved to a new town and really like the Catholic church down the street. Jade’s father has started returning to Sunday Mass, and her mother has accompanied her husband. Jade’s mom would like to become Catholic, and Jade is also interested – many of her friends at school are Catholics and she sees them at Sunday Mass.

23

Baptized (non-Catholic) Children

- The Baptism of most Christian churches is considered valid by the Catholic Church and is not repeated.
- This is a question of a baptized, non-Catholic who wishes to come into full communion with the Catholic Church.

24

Baptized (non-Catholic) Children

- Children seeking full communion are also considered adults for purposes of Christian Initiation.
- They are **candidates** – they participate in the liturgical rites, make a Profession of Faith, are received into the Church, are Confirmed and receive the Eucharist at Easter Vigil or at a Sunday Mass during the Easter Season.

25

Case Study - Leo

Leo is 8 years old and the child of a Catholic single mother who had him baptized in her faith at two months of age. Since his mother works two jobs and was very involved in his school, Church fell by the wayside. Hearing his classmates talk about their religion, Leo asked his mother what his was – and she told him he was Catholic. He began asking her questions about the faith she couldn't answer and realized his religious formation had been neglected. She contacts the closest parish, registers as a parishoner and calls the R.E. Office so that her son "could learn to be Catholic."

26

Baptized Catholic (uncatechized) Children of Catechetical Age


Two Options :

1. They can be considered **candidates**, participate in the liturgical rites, are Confirmed and receive the Eucharist at Easter Vigil or at a Sunday Mass during the Easter Season.
2. They can be evangelized and catechized in such a way that they are prepared to receive the Eucharist and Confirmation along with their peers and continue their formation/mystagogy through the parish religious education program.

See Canons 852.1 & 883.2; RCIA 400
Adaptation permitted in the Archdiocese of San Antonio

27


**CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN WHO
HAVE REACHED CATECHETICAL AGE**
 What does the Rite tell us about their Formation?
 RCIA paragraphs 252 - 330



*Do not keep the children
from me. Lk 18:16*

28


RCIA, 252
 “[C]hildren are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith and of recognizing an obligation in conscience. But they cannot yet be treated as adults because, at this stage of their lives, they are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings.”



Let the children come to me...

29


RCIA, 253
 “The Christian initiation of these children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need. The process of initiation thus must be adapted both to their spiritual progress, that is to the children’s growth in faith, and to the catechetical instruction they receive.”



Go and teach all nations...

30

Conversion




Repent and believe in the Gospel!

“...conversion that is **personal** and somewhat **developed**...”

- ❖ Look for signs of change in the family’s life, as well as in the individual child.
- ❖ A child is capable of conversion – **this is the most important element of their formation** – to develop a real, personal relationship with God and with the Church.
- ❖ Each [child] will experience conversion differently, “depending on the many forms of God’s grace.”

31

Conversion




Who do you say that I am?

Children are capable of:

- Telling the difference between right and wrong, and admit when they have done something wrong.
- Forming intimate relationships, especially with Jesus.
- Telling the difference between regular bread & wine, and the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Learning to love and forgive, even those not well-disposed to them.

32

Catechesis




You shall love the Lord your God.

The Christian initiation of these children requires ... the **assistance** of the **education** they need.

- ❖ Involve parents/guardians in catechesis & spiritual formation.
- ❖ Should participate in RCIA sessions with other child catechumens/candidates
- ❖ In some cases, it is helpful for them to join their parish religious education program peers, especially if they are young.
- ❖ The previous religious formation or education of each child catechumen or candidate should always be taken into account.

33

Catechesis




*With all your heart
and with all your mind...*

RCIA, 253
“Accordingly, as with adults, **their initiation is to be extended over several years, if need be**, before they receive the sacraments...”

RCIA, 254
“[If they] belong to a **group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist**, their initiation progresses gradually and **within the supportive setting of this group of companions...**”

34

Catechesis



And with all your strength.

RCIA, 254
“It is to be hoped that the children will also receive as much **help and example** as possible **from their parents**, whose permission is required for their children to be initiated and to live the Christian life. The period of initiation will also provide a good opportunity **for the family to have contact with priests and catechists.**”

RCIA, 255
It is advantageous...to form a group of several children who are in the same situation, in order that by example they may help one another in their progress as catechumens.”

35

Initiatory Catechesis

“Comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith... Includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a “complete Christian initiation,” which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith, in such a manner that the entire Person, at his deepest levels, feels enriched by the word of God”

~ General Directory for Catechesis, 67

36

So ... the **Catechumenate for Children** is a process of Evangelizing Catechesis and Conversion set within the context of peers, catechists, parents and companions...



This context is critical because "... children are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings." RCIA, 252

37

A Culture of Encounter



Pope Francis reminds us that reaching out, fostering dialogue & friendship and making a point of encountering people neglected and ignored by the wider world should be a part of any program of formation, including Christian Initiation. Welcome and Hospitality are the first steps to nurturing a Culture of Encounter.

38

A Walk through the RCIA with children

A succession of Periods and Rites leading to the Sacraments of Initiation



39

The Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

- “The Living God is faithfully and constantly proclaimed” (#36).
- The children will become acquainted with the all-loving God and Jesus Christ – as well as learn to pray.
- Provide for a gathering of parents participating in the Children’s Catechumenate, where they can become acquainted with one another and learn about their role and essential participation in the process.

40

Rite of Acceptance (Catechumens) Rite of Welcome (Candidates)

- Marks the end of the first period and the beginning of the second period, the Catechumenate.
- Celebrates the initial conversion of the children and the first public witness of the catechumens and candidates to the Church.
- The children declare their intention to become members of the Church, and the Church “marks their reception and first consecration.” (#41).

41

The Period of the Catechumenate

- A time to deepen the child catechumen’s initial conversion by means of “suitable pastoral formation” (#75).
- “Suitable catechesis based on the word of God and accomodated to the liturgical year” (#75.1).
- Familiarity with the Christian way of life through interaction with members of the parish community

42

The Period of the Catechumenate

- If a deacon or priest can be present, the use of the minor liturgical rites pertinent to this period, such as celebrations of the Word of God, blessings, and (for the non-baptized) anointings.
- The Rite of Acceptance/Welcoming at the beginning of this period indicates that the Word of God will have prominence during the Catechumenate. Scripture should be used generously.
- Once the child has “undergone conversion in mind and in action” and has “developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching” (#120), the child is ready for the next step...

43

The Rite of Election

- Optional for children (#227) – but most parishes include children in the RCIA process in this Rite, which closes the period of the catechumenate and begins the “final, more intense preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation” (#118).
- The Rite is a celebration of God’s election, or choosing, of the children as expressed through the voice of the Church (the local [arch]bishop or his delegate).
- The Rite acknowledges the conversion that has taken place and anticipates the continuing conversion that will take place in the third period...

44

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- A time of “intense spiritual preparation” for the children and their families” (#138).
- Proximate preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, which coincides with Lent.
- The Scrutinies and the presentation of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer are among the means of formation for the children during this season. It is a time for more intense prayer, reflection, and repentance.

45

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Although only one Scrutiny is required for child Catechumens, “the guidelines given for the adult rite may be followed and adapted” (#138) so that children and adults can participate together in this minor rite during the appropriate Sunday liturgies during Lent.
- The Scrutin(ies) are to be adapted in such a way that they also benefit child Candidates so that they also can participate. (#293)
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be received by child Candidates before they receive Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. (#303) The child Catechumens and Candidates should be prepared together for this sacrament, although the Catechumens will not celebrate Reconciliation until the period of Mystagogy after Easter.

46

Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

- The final step of initiation – Reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- Takes place at the Easter Vigil or one of the Sundays of Easter, together with the adults (#305, National Statute 18).
- Children Catechumens and Candidates always celebrate the fullness of sacramental initiation. Confirmation and Eucharist are not to be delayed for the Catechumens and Candidates in this process.

47

Postbaptismal Catechesis during the Period of Mystagogy

- A time for the children to reflect upon and discuss the great mysteries and events celebrated during their journey to Initiation.
- They come to deepen “their grasp of the Paschal Mystery.” (#330, 224).
- Catechetical topics such as popular devotions and other less central teachings can be treated during this period.
- Time of transition into the community of the faithful and to be incorporated into the parish catechetical program with their peers.

48



Adapting Prayers of Blessing for Candidates in the Children's Catechumenate

<p>Prayer C God our Father, you have sent your only Son, Jesus Christ, to free the world from falsehood. Give to your catechumens fullness of understanding, unwavering faith and a firm grasp of your truth. Let them grow ever stronger, that they may receive in due time the new birth of baptism that gives pardon of sins, and join with us in praising your name. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.</p>	<p>Prayer H God of power and Father of our Savior Jesus Christ, look kindly upon these your servants. Drive from their minds all taint of false worship and stamp your law and commandments on their hearts. Lead them to full knowledge of the truth and prepare them to be the temple of the Holy Spirit through their rebirth in baptism. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.</p>
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50

Adapting Prayers of Minor Exorcism for Candidates in the Children's Catechumenate

<p>Prayer K Lord, Creator and Redeemer of your holy people, your great love has drawn these catechumens to seek and find you. Look upon them today, Purify their hearts, And bring to fulfillment in them the plan of your grace, so that, faithfully following Christ, they come to the waters of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.</p>	<p>Prayer H Lord and God, you know the secrets of our hearts and reward us for the good we do. Look kindly on the efforts and the progress of your servants. Strengthen them on their way, increase their faith, and accept their repentance. Open them to your goodness and justice and lead them to share in your sacraments on earth, until they finally enjoy your presence in heaven. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.</p>
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51
