Basics of the Catechumenate Process

Webinar for New and Nearly New RCIA Teams & Leaders - #1

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Ancient Catechumenate

Well developed by 5th Century, known especially through writings of St. Augustine.

Declined & fell into disuse by 14th century – when most baptisms were for infants rather than adults.

A form of instruction/preparation for baptism of adults practiced in mission territories & as needed.
Why was the Catechumenate restored after Vatican II?

By the mid-20th Century, previously evangelized areas were becoming more like the pre-evangelized ancient world.

widespread secularism, unbelief, moral relativism, plain old-fashioned depravity, etc. etc.

It’s Back to the Future!
Restoration of the Catechumenate

The catechumenate for adults is to be restored and brought into use … [bishops] are to take steps to reestablish … the adult catechumenate [in their dioceses].  

Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 64 & 66, On the Pastoral Office of Bishops, 14; 1963

Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulutorum - updated

guidelines and liturgies for restored catechumenate - 1972

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults - English Translation of the above Rite - 1988

Implemented as Normative for all US dioceses - 1990
The restored catechumenate (RCIA) is effective because:

1. Assists the participants in establishing a solid relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

2. Forms and supports participants in the Christian life.

“[The catechumenate] is not, therefore, an optional activity, but basic and fundamental for building up the personality of the individual disciple, as it is for the whole Christian community.”

(GDC 64)
The RCIA (catechumenate) is NOT:

**NOT a CLASS:**
- Simple instruction denies need for developing a relationship with Christ, the Church and the Christian community.

**NOT a PROGRAM:**
- Programs have a fixed length of time and a predetermined course of studies and disregards the need to facilitate conversion for individuals.
Aspects of the Catechumenate

1. As it is formation for the Christian life it [the RCIA] comprises but surpasses mere instruction.

2. Being essential, it looks to what is [indispensable] … without entering into disputed questions nor transforming itself into a form of theological investigation.

3. Finally, being initiatory, it incorporates [individuals] into the community, which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith.
The authentic catechumenate IS:

• Authentically Personal – providing pastoral flexibility to help call individuals to deep conversion.

• Authentically Unitive – providing a liturgical experience to help realize union with God and his family, the Church.

• Authentically Truthful – providing authentic catechesis that is full and complete.
The authentic catechumenate IS:

- Authentically Personal – *providing pastoral flexibility to help call individuals to deep conversion.* **Pastoral Aspect**

- Authentically Unitive – *providing a liturgical experience to help realize union with God and his family, the Church.* **Liturigical Aspect**

- Authentically Truthful – *providing catechesis that is full and complete.* **Catechetical Aspect**
### Pre-Catechumenate Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pastoral Aspects</th>
<th>Catechetical Aspects</th>
<th>Liturgical Aspects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sponsor/godparent can begin to accompany Inquirer</td>
<td>An explanation of the Gospel – Matthew is a good choice</td>
<td>No liturgical rites are called for during this period, however:</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCIA team and leader should get to know all participants</td>
<td>Should include an account of the Kerygma – essence of Christianity</td>
<td>Different forms of prayer can be introduced and practiced</td>
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<tr>
<td>First stirrings of initial conversion should develop</td>
<td>May include a study of upcoming Gospel readings</td>
<td>An initial, (not detailed) “tour of the Church” may be conducted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary understanding of the Church and its members</td>
<td>First questions may be addressed – but not in too much detail</td>
<td>The upcoming Rite of Acceptance/Welcoming should be explored</td>
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Is there a curriculum for RCIA?

“It can happen that in the present situation of catechesis, reasons of method or pedagogy may suggest that the communication of the riches of the content of catechesis should be organized in one way rather than another…The selection of a particular order for presenting the message is conditioned by circumstances, and by the faith level of those to be catechized.” (my emphasis)