

RCIA : A Faith Process

- ❑ Evangelization
- ❑ Year-round access
- ❑ Lectionary-based



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Foreword

June 15, 2015

Pastoral Ministers and Clergy,

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the formational and ritual process through which people are brought to baptism and full communion in our Church. This RCIA process has been in use in the Catholic Church in Canada for over 25 years and is explained in detail in the “Blue Book”.

This information package, prepared by the Office of Liturgy and Diocesan Forum on Initiation, gives a short introduction to the process for clergy and catechists and highlights the three priorities for the process in parishes in the Diocese of Calgary: evangelization, year-round access to RCIA, lectionary-based catechesis

It is the Holy Spirit that calls individuals to the journey of conversion to Christ. This journey leads individuals through a process of discovery to see where God has touched them and continues to touch them in their daily lives. When the clergy, catechists, and parish view conversion as an inspired journey guided by the RCIA process, they respect the promptings of the Holy Spirit and support the journey of the individuals seeking communion with the Church at whatever point they come to us.

We invite you to use this resource to evaluate, reinvigorate, or even start your parish RCIA process. If you have any questions about the material presented in this package or about the process, please contact the Office of Liturgy directly.

In Christ,

Documents prepared by:

- Diocesan Forum for Reception & Initiation
- Office of Liturgy
Roman Catholic
Diocese of Calgary



Most Rev. Frederick Henry
Bishop of Calgary

RCIA: A Faith Process

Rooted in the Word of God, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a journey of evangelization, formation, and apprenticeship in the Christian life.

The Diocesan Forum on Initiation prepared this document, *RCIA: A Faith Process*, to help parishes in the Diocese of Calgary develop and nurture the RCIA as articulated by the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* approved by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

We invite you to use this document to initiate parish-level conversations about RCIA.

In keeping with Bishop Henry's priorities for Christian initiation in the diocese, *RCIA: A Faith Process* outlines three pillars:

- Evangelization
- Year-round access to RCIA
- Lectionary-based catechesis

RCIA is the work of all parishes and faith communities. While different parishes—large and small, rural and urban—approach RCIA with vastly different resources, all should engage their communities in the work of evangelization.

Since RCIA implementation differs from parish to parish, this document includes practical ideas about how RCIA teams can strengthen and invigorate RCIA at the parish level

Receive Ongoing Support

The Office of Liturgy and Diocesan Forum on Initiation offer ongoing support to RCIA teams across the diocese. We invite you to ask for help with everything from specific challenges, to organizing workshops, or finding resources. We would also like to know what works well in your parish so we can share the ideas with other RCIA teams in the diocese.

Contact the **Office of Liturgy**: liturgy@calgarydiocese.ca



- ❑ **READ** this document and reflect upon the priorities of Evangelization, Year-round access to RCIA, and Lectionary-based catechesis.
- ❑ **GATHER** with others in your parish to talk about how your parish already lives these priorities, how you can cultivate and communicate them among the entire community, and what obstacles you face.
- ❑ **USE** the practical suggestions in this guide to help you generate specific ideas your parish can put into action with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelization

- ❑ **IDENTIFY** people who would make good sponsors and extend a personal invitation.
- ❑ **SEND** an RCIA advocate to other parish group meetings to talk about RCIA and the importance of sponsors.
- ❑ **GET** creative with your bulletin and website posts!
- ❑ **INVITE** those who want to learn and share more about their faith to participate in formation programs for catechists.

In the various circumstances of daily life, even as in the apostolate, all the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities.

RCIA #9

Evangelization is the Work of the Whole Parish

Evangelization is the means by which Christians share their love of Christ. Through baptism all Christians are responsible for evangelization; baptism calls Christians to share in the triple mission of Christ as priest, prophet, and king.

- We perform our priestly role through a generous spirit of sacrifice in our daily work and in our interaction with others. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 901, *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 34, 1 Pt 2:5).
- We perform our prophetic role as daily witnesses to Christ's example (CCC 905, LG 35).
- Christ communicated to his disciples the gift of "royal freedom". Through the holiness of their lives, the faithful exercise their kingly role as they work for justice, healing, and virtue in the world.



Create Opportunities for Evangelization

All baptized parishioners are RCIA ministers. While the RCIA team may provide the organizational support, a parish-based process looks for ways to engage the larger parish community.

Draw in Sponsors & Team Members

Let parishioners know that RCIA sponsors are Catholics who live lives dedicated to faith and discipleship. Sponsors are Catholics who seek to live the Christian life; no special certification required!

See examples on the right.



*Go therefore and make
disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the
name of the Father and
of the Son and of the
Holy Spirit.*

MATTHEW 28:19-20

- ❑ **INVITE** representatives from various parish groups and parish demographics to attend an RCIA session to talk about how they witness their faith in the parish, community, and in their families.
- ❑ **LOOK** for parish or diocesan events to which you can invite individuals interested in the church. Introduce them to church members.
- ❑ **ASK** the parish and parish groups to pray for the candidates and catechumens. Include a prayer for candidates and catechumens in the bulletin.
- ❑ **TAKE** a few minutes before mass to explain the rites to parishioners or incorporate the explanation into the homily. Print a simple explanation of the rite in the corresponding week's bulletin.



Year-Round Access



*Ask and it will
be given to you;
seek and you
will find;
knock and the
door will be
opened to you.*

MATTHEW 7:7

Keep the Door Open Year Round

It may sound demanding but year-round access is about hospitality and does not necessarily mean year-round meetings. Remember, RCIA is a process, not a program. The programmatic element may not run year-round but the process is ongoing. Every parish community will need to determine how they can best welcome inquirers who come seeking a connection to the community at any time of year.

Year-round access to RCIA is essential to any parish's authentic effort to welcome people on their journey to God and the church.

People come to seek God and know the church through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We would never ask the Holy Spirit to wait until our "program" begins. The year-round process acknowledges that an inquirer's journey begins long before the individual contacts a parish. Hospitality dictates that we welcome inquirers whenever they knock.

The RCIA process is divided into several **periods**, which act as signposts along the way:

- Pre-catechumenate or Inquiry
- Catechumenate
- Purification and Enlightenment
- Mystagogy

Formal **rites** (called "steps" in the blue book) connect the periods of this process:

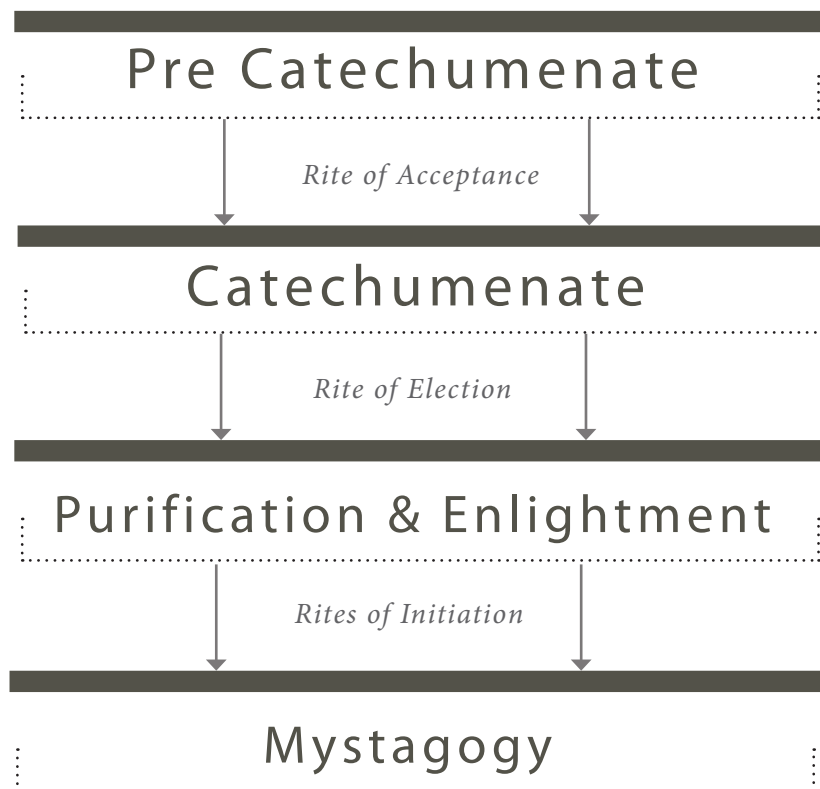
- **Rite of Acceptance** enables a candidate to move from the pre-catechumenate to the catechumenate
- **Rite of Election** signals the movement from the catechumenal period to the intense preparation of Purification and Enlightenment, which corresponds with Lent
- **Easter Vigil Rites of Initiation** signal the movement into the period of Mystagogy
- **Optional minor rites** enrich the experience of initiation.

Note: For those already baptized, the rituals are simpler even though the catechetical process may be similar (see the Forum's other document, *Baptized Christians*, 2011).

While the last two periods of the process are connected to the liturgical year, specifically Lent and Easter, the first two are timed in response to the readiness of the candidate. As such, they can occur several times throughout the year.

The visibility of the year-round RCIA process inspires and strengthens entire parish communities to persevere in their own journey.

RCIA Periods and Rites



How to Give RCIA a Year-Round Profile

A year-round process can connect inquirers to the parish community at any time.

- ❑ **HOLD** inquiry meetings year-round or identify parishioners to partner with inquirers.
- ❑ **LOOK** at your church calendar and find ways your parish can respond to the prompting of the Spirit!
- ❑ **WELCOME** inquirers to a Sunday Mass, parish picnic, feast day celebration, or social.
- ❑ **USE** your weekly parish bulletin to invite potential inquirers to contact a team leader.



Lectionary-Based Catechesis

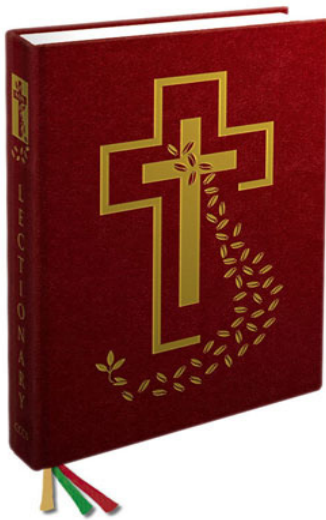
Lectionary-Based Catechesis Roots the Process in the Gospel

Through the scriptures, God himself speaks to us. The Word proclaimed invites the faithful into the life of Christ. "When this word is proclaimed in the Church and put into living practice, it enlightens the faithful through the working of the Holy Spirit and draws them into the entire mystery of the Lord as a reality to be lived" (Introduction to the Lectionary, 47). Lectionary-based catechesis prepares candidates for a lifetime of Christian learning and discipleship.

Use the Lectionary to Shape the Process

Lectionary-based catechesis and year-round RCIA complement one another because one is never too early or too late for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With lectionary-based catechesis, catechumens can join the process at any time because weekly topics are suggested by the readings for Sunday Mass, not by a linear syllabus. As most catechumens will continue in the catechumenate for at least a full liturgical year, topics for study and discussion will recur during their time in the process. Moreover, if a catechumen needs to spend a longer time in the process, the three year lectionary cycle provides a rich context of Gospel-writing through which to explore topics central to the Catholic faith.

The liturgical year, reflected in the cycle of readings for Mass, draws us into the fullness of the Paschal Mystery. By using the lectionary to shape the catechetical process, catechists can offer formation that is intimately connected to the liturgical and spiritual life of the Church. Lectionary-based catechesis keeps catechists rooted in the Gospel. It helps catechumens see that the Catholic faith flows from and is built upon the solid foundation of the Gospel. It connects learning about faith to the lived expression of that faith in the communal celebration of the liturgy. Other resources for catechesis should complement the lectionary but the Gospel and the topics they suggest, should be the starting point.



*Today this
scripture has
been fulfilled in
your hearing.*

LUKE 4:21

Use Catechetical Materials to Serve the Process

While theme-based catechetical programs have excellent content, a finite program cannot determine the shape of RCIA in your parish. A programmatic approach undermines the Holy Spirit's direction of the conversion process.

Lectionary-based catechesis flows from the liturgy and permits people to stay in the process as long as necessary. Do use the theme-based materials, but use them in service of a lectionary-based process.

A suitable catechesis is provided by priests and deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful, planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word. This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.





Resources

Here is a short-list of resources recommended for use in the Diocese of Calgary.

Liturgical (Lectionary-Based) Lesson-Planning

- Birmingham, Mary. *Word and Worship Workbook for Year A, B, C.*
- *Foundations in Faith.* This series of manuals and handbooks offer a complete package for your parish's initiation process. The series includes:
 - Director's Guide
 - Pre-catechumenate manual
 - Catechist's Manual for the Catechumenate for years ABC
 - Participant Book for years ABC
 - Resource book on Purification and Enlightenment for years ABC
 - Resource book on Mystagogy for years ABC
 - Handbooks for Sponsors, Catechumens, Neophytes, Inquirers, and on Prayer
 - Celebrating the Rites

Topical Catechetical Resources

- Barron, Robert. *Catholicism series.*
<http://www.wordonfire.org>
- *Journey of Faith.* Liguori Publications
- Mallon, James. *Dogmatic Theology.*
<http://dogmatictheology.com/>

The Initiation of Adults is

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL THE BAPTIZED

RCIA #9

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