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CELEBRATING INITIATION
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community's life of worship and prayer.

Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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Celebrating Initiation

Our freshly revised *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is now in use. This challenging and practical Bulletin presents a clear picture of the process of initiation and its rites, and helps us to see the ways our community can grow in sharing and celebrating the Christian faith.
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Monsignor Patrick Byrne

It is fitting that this issue begin with a tribute to Monsignor Patrick Byrne. After sixteen years as Editor of the *National Bulletin on Liturgy*, he has chosen to leave that ministry to become pastor of a parish in his home diocese of Peterborough, Ontario.

During his editorship the *National Bulletin on Liturgy* "grew in stature and wisdom," gaining some 5000 subscribers in more than forty countries. It established a reputation for having sound and pastorally relevant content, and few areas of liturgy were not dealt with at one time or another. All this is a credit to Patrick Byrne's diligence, energy, discernment, scholarship and pastoral concern.

For all this, appreciation and thanks are due to Patrick Byrne and to God. May God's blessings remain always with him in his new ministry.

As the new Editor of the *National Bulletin on Liturgy*, I am conscious of the standards that Parick Byrne has set, and the expectations that now attend publication of the Bulletin. I hope to be able to build on the foundations that Patrick Byrne established so well, though my style and approach will necessarily be somewhat different than his. There will be both continuity and evolution in the forthcoming issues of the Bulletin.

To accompany the change in editorship, the appearance of the Bulletin has been redesigned, as readers will already have noticed. We hope that you will find the new cover, type styles and type sizes pleasing to the eye.
Introduction
Celebrating Initiation

This issue is designed to accompany the new Canadian edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. It is a kind of "user's manual," which describes, interprets, and comments upon the contents of this important liturgical book. The aim of this manual is to help all who are implementing and celebrating the Christian initiation of adults across our country understand this liturgy of the Church better and celebrate it more fruitfully. For those who have not used this rite previously, this issue is intended as a step by step introduction.

A new edition: Why do we have a new edition of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*? What does it contain? These two questions are addressed first.

A thorough description of the complete and normative rite follows, with separate chapters on the RCIA as a whole, the catechumenate, election and Lent, the sacraments of initiation themselves, and the last stage of the RCIA during the Easter season. This description is followed by some theological reflections on the rite.

Adaptations of the RCIA that are intended for use with unbaptized persons and also with baptized persons are considered next. Some of these are found only in the Canadian edition of the RCIA.

Resources: Suggestions for further reading on the RCIA and Christian initiation in general will be contained in the next issue of the Bulletin.

An Improved Edition

The rite of Christian initiation of adults has reached a new stage in its life.

The modern RCIA was born on the feast of the Epiphany 1972 as *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*. Many of us met this liturgy a few years later when the first English translation became available. Released in 1974 by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), it reached us as the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition* published the same year by the Canadian Catholic Conference. We soon nick-named it "RCIA" for short, and this abbreviation will also be used here.

The 1974 edition was an interim version, circulated by ICEL within the English speaking Church for study, consultation and comment. By convention, such texts are called Green Book versions to indicate that they are still maturing. Bishops of individual countries may put such interim texts
into actual use, and so it was introduced into dioceses and parishes in
Canada and elsewhere. The use of the Green Book version of RCIA has
borne much fruit in the last ten years.

**From Green Book to White Book:** The next step in the growth of a liturgical
book is the maturation of the Green Book version into a definitive or White
Book edition. This process takes into account academic study of the rite
during its interim stage, pastoral experience gained using this liturgy, and
comments received from consultants.

**The 1987 edition** is this definitive, White Book edition of RCIA. It was com­
pleted by ICEL and published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic
Bishops in late 1987.

**Future revision:** Though the 1987 edition is definitive, it may eventually
mature even further into a "revised" edition. This will take into account
further pastoral experience and theological reflection, and express more
accurately how we initiate adults here in Canada. Such a revised version of
RCIA is not likely to appear for a number of years.

**Improvements:** The 1987 edition of RCIA has the same general content as
the 1974 edition. However, it has been improved in six areas: presentation,
text, order, arrangement, additions, and adaptations.

**Improved Presentation**

**Appearance:** RCIA now appears in an attractive and sturdy dark blue
binding with two ribbons, and is printed on good quality paper. The cover is
decorated with an attractive graphic depicting an adult emerging from the
font, next to a sheaf of wheat symbolizing the eucharist.

**Typography:** Size of type, use of two colors, layout of text on pages, titles at
the bottom of pages, and other typographic features, all make the book
easy to use and to pray from. One does not have to turn pages in the middle
of prayers.

**Improved Text**

**More accurate:** The text has been improved in several respects. It is a more
accurate translation from the Latin. Additional study by experts around the
world pointed out some instances in which the translation needed to be
amended.

**More readable:** The new English version has also been improved so that
liturgical texts are easier to proclaim aloud. Some texts have also been
changed to make them more clear and easier to understand. Finally, an
effort has been made to make the language of the rite more beautiful.

**Inclusive language:** The language of RCIA is now inclusive with respect to
persons. That is, language in the 1974 edition that excluded women has
been replaced by language that consciously includes them. The principle
that new liturgical books use inclusive language was adopted by ICEL in
1975, and principles and guidelines for doing so were published in 1980.
These principles were endorsed by the Canadian bishops the same year.
Improved Order

**Easier to use:** The 1974 edition of RCIA presented its contents in the same order as in the Latin text. As its primary purpose was study and consultation, little attention was paid to the ordering of the contents for best pastoral use. The 1987 version was designed with presiders and other ministers in mind, and every effort has been made to make it simple to use and readily intelligible. In the language of the computer world, it is "user friendly."

**First things first:** Content that is of primary importance is distinguished from other material. This is indicated in the table of contents of the 1987 edition. Part I, entitled Christian Initiation of Adults, contains the ordinary and normative form of RCIA, namely the celebration of this rite in several stages.

**Of secondary importance:** Part II is entitled rites for particular circumstances, and contains chapters II to V of the 1974 edition, plus its appendix. Within part II, the rite of Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age is printed first, rather than later. This indicates that it is closer in form and content to the normative rite found in Part I. It may also be of greater pastoral significance than the other sections of Part II.

**Appendices:** Finally, there are three appendices, to be described later.

Improved Arrangement

**Introduction and notes:** Contents of the 1974 edition of RCIA have been slightly rearranged for greater clarity and usefulness. The earlier edition contained a lengthy introduction as well as substantial introductory notes prior to each rite (or in some cases prior to individual parts of a rite). The introduction and notes were excellent, but they were rather long and there was considerable repetition. To make this material more accessible, the introduction has been shortened and now introduces the book as a whole. The remainder has been placed later and combined with other notes to reduce repetition.

**Alternative texts:** Chapter VI of the 1974 edition contained a large collection of "Various texts for use in the celebration of adult initiation." Most of these have been removed from this chapter and are now found as alternative texts in different parts of the book. This makes this rich variety of texts easier to use. The few texts that remain are given in appendix 2: acclamations, hymns and songs. It will be used primarily as a resource for musicians.

**Optional rites:** The 1974 version of RCIA placed certain optional rites, such as the renunciation of non-Christian worship and giving the new name within the normative form of the liturgies in which these might be used. In the 1987 edition these optional rites are have been removed from the normative rites and placed after them. A section entitled optional rites for particular regions follows the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, and optional rites during the catechumenate follow rites belonging to the period of the catechumenate. This makes it easier to use the normative rites as they are less cluttered with material that usually will be skipped over. In general, alternatives and options are clearly indicated.
Helpful Additions

Outlines: In recent years ICEl has placed outlines of individual liturgies on the page opposite the beginning of each liturgy. This assists the presider and others to grasp the overall structure of each rite, and helps them see the relationship of individual parts of a liturgy to the rite as a whole. There are nineteen such outlines in the 1987 edition.

- The RCIA as a whole: An especially helpful outline of the full rite of Christian initiation of adults, with brief but clear explanations of its various periods and steps, is placed at the very beginning of the rite (page 14).

Pastoral notes: A few pastoral notes have been added where additional clarification seemed necessary. These are found at the end of the notes that introduce each section.

Fuller liturgies: To flesh out a point that was only alluded to in the Latin text, a model for a celebration of the word of God during the period of the catechumenate has been prepared by ICEl; this is given on page 41. In addition, a model structure for a Holy Saturday liturgy that would include the preparation rites has been provided.

Adaptations

The 1987 edition contains in appendix 1 and appendix 3 two sets of “adaptations.” These deal with ways in which the RCIA may be adapted for use with baptized persons.

The RCIA is for the unbaptized. The RCIA itself, strictly speaking, concerns the initiation of unbaptized persons. Pastoral experience has shown, however, that the type of rite exemplified by the RCIA is beneficial when applied to baptized but uncatechized Catholics who wish to complete their Christian initiation. In addition, an RCIA-like rite has been found useful in preparing to receive into the Catholic Church adults who were baptized in other Christian Churches.

Adaptations for baptized persons: The 1972 and 1974 versions of RCIA contained only brief and general provisions for the adaptation of the RCIA to baptized persons. In addition, the rite of reception of baptized Christians into full communion with the Catholic Church was included as an appendix. In the last ten or so years individual ministers, communities and groups such as the North American Forum for the Catechumenate have engaged in much fruitful experimentation with respect to such adaptation. This work and experience have led to appendices 1 and 3 of the 1987 Canadian edition of the RCIA.

Adaptation of the Easter vigil: Appendix 1 was prepared by ICEl. It contains a suggested order of service for the Easter vigil when unbaptized persons are to celebrate the sacraments of initiation, some baptized persons are to complete their Christian initiation, and other baptized persons are also to be received into the Church at the same time.

Special Canadian rites: Appendix 3, entitled other rites for use in Canada, presents adapted liturgies for several periods and steps of an RCIA-like rite for use with baptized persons.
Canadian adaptations: These appendices are not intended to stop further reflection. However, they represent the present position of the Canadian bishops regarding the ways in which the RCIA should be adapted for use with baptized persons. The corresponding provisions in the United States edition (which has not yet been published) may be somewhat different, and will not be used in English-speaking Canada.

Conclusion: Nothing of substance contained in the 1972 or 1974 versions of the RCIA has been deleted, nor has its content or intent been fundamentally altered. The changes that have been made have improved this liturgical book considerably. It is easier to use and more applicable to the wide variety of situations encountered in pastoral ministry in Canada.

Studying the New Edition

The 1987 edition of RCIA needs to be studied as a whole before its individual parts are examined. This study may be aided by posing three questions: What does the new edition contain? How are its contents arranged? How does one begin to use this liturgical book?

What does it contain?

The RCIA contains four kinds of material. One type explains the meaning of Christian initiation and of the RCIA. A second category consists of the liturgical rites of the RCIA. Third, matters of persons, times, and adaptations are considered. Finally, the formation of candidates for baptism outside of the liturgies, and the discernment that accompanies this process, are explained.

Meaning and Explanation

Important explanations: This liturgical book contains excellent explanations of the RCIA as a whole and of its many parts. These are found especially in the document called Christian Initiation, General Introduction (p. xi), and in the Introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults itself (p. 3).

Introduction to Christian initiation: The general introduction, published in Latin in 1974, is intended to accompany baptism for children and confirmation as well as the RCIA. It summarizes the meaning of Christian initiation as a whole and provides an excellent statement of the meaning of baptism. The RCIA and its meaning are then explained in no. 1 and nos. 4-8 of its own introduction.

Explanations of the periods and steps: The notes that introduce each part of the RCIA also contain fine explanations of the periods and stages of Christian initiation. These are found as follows:

- Period of evangelization and precatecumenate: nos. 36-37
- Acceptance into the order of catechumens: 41-42
- Period of the catechumenate: 75-76
- Election of enrollment of names: 105-107
• Period of purification and enlightenment: 125-126, 128, 131, 134-136
• Preparation rites on Holy Saturday: 180, 184, 187, 191
• Celebration of the sacraments of initiation: 198, 201-210
• Period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy: 234-235.

Corresponding notes precede the contents of part II as well. These need to be studied by all who use the rite. Their intent should be communicated to the Catholic people at large, as well as to the candidates for initiation.

Liturgies

The second kind of material consists of the many liturgies of the RCIA. These fill most of the book, and will be discussed in detail later.

Persons, Times and Adaptations

The third type of material tells us who is involved, when rites are most appropriately celebrated, and adaptations that are permitted. Though apparently more practical that the other kinds of content, these matters have underlying theological implications that are important.

Who is involved? The question of “who” considers both the candidates and the community. The role of the local Church community often is considered under the heading “ministries and offices.” This question is dealt with in the initial introductions already referred to and in the notes that introduce each section of the book.

Times of celebration: Consideration of “time” usually begins with the “proper or usual time” when liturgies or other aspects of the RCIA are most appropriately celebrated or carried out. Other possible occasions are considered under the heading “outside the usual time.” Again, this material is scattered throughout the book.

Local adaptations: Three kinds of adaptations are noted. Some are to be made by the conference of bishops, and others are to be carried out by each bishop in individual dioceses. Finally, adaptations may be made by the minister or presiding celebrant of the various liturgies, and by other ministers. All of these are indicated in the two introductions as well as throughout the book.

Formation and Discernment

Formation: The RCIA does not consist simply of liturgies. It is a rite that involves the whole life of the candidates, both their ordinary, “secular” daily lives as well as their daily Church lives outside the liturgy. It involves the total life of the Church community as well. Some of the interaction of the Church community and the candidates takes place in formal gatherings, in the homes and ministry of members of the community. This dimension of the overall process of the RCIA includes evangelization, catechesis, conversion, giving example, informal instruction and private conversation, and will be
referred to here as formation. This is just as much an essential part of the RCIA as are the liturgies. The content and method of RCIA formation are described in the formal introduction to the RCIA and in the notes that introduce each period of this rite.

Discernment: In addition to formation as described above, careful and loving discernment is part of the RCIA as well. It is to be carried out at various stages in the rite by the Church community as well as the candidates themselves. What this involves and when it is to be done is described in the notes accompanying the various steps of the RCIA.

Table of contents

The second way of looking at the RCIA as a whole is to consider how its contents are arranged within this liturgical book. This is indicated in the table of contents, which is worth careful study.

Introductory material: The 1987 edition of RCIA begins with several types of introductory materials. They include a forward to the Canadian edition by Bishop James L. Doyle, the table of contents, editorial notes regarding the 1987 edition, the original 1972 decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship, notice of Roman confirmation of the 1987 Canadian edition, the general introduction on Christian initiation, and the introduction to the RCIA itself.

Part I (pages 13-146) contains the ordinary and normative way of celebrating the RCIA, with its various distinct periods and steps. These are as follows:
- Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate
- First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens
- Period of the Catechumenate
- Second Step: Election or Enrollment of Names
- Period of Purification and Enlightenment
- Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
- Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy.

Part II (pages 147-236) contains rites for particular circumstances. These are adaptations of the ordinary and normative rites of Part I for use in situations when the complete RICA is not possible or appropriate. Appendix 1 and appendix 3 will be considered together with Part II itself. These materials may be divided into two categories, those for use with unbaptized persons, and those for use with baptized persons.

Shortened rites: The sections of part II that are applicable to unbaptized persons begin with the rite of Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age. This is a version of the full RCIA that has been abbreviated and adapted for use with older children.
- Special circumstances: The rite of Christian initiation of adults in exceptional circumstances is intended for a large variety of circumstances when adults cannot use the usual complete rites of part I, or when it is not appropriate for them to do so. This may be celebrated in a single liturgy, or in
several. Among other applications, it is the form that preferably is used by priests or deacons when they initiate persons in danger of death.

- **Danger of Death:** This rite of Christian initiation of a person in danger of death is designed particularly for use by lay ministers, but priests and deacons may use it in emergencies.

**Adaptations for baptized persons:** Most of the remainder of part II plus appendices 1 and 3 contains rites for use with baptized persons. These rites begin with a section entitled the preparation of uncatechized adults for confirmation and eucharist. This is concerned with persons who were baptized in the Catholic Church but who have never completed their Christian initiation. It is a brief and general consideration of the matter, and contains no specific liturgies. Appendix 3 gives concrete shape to suggestions it makes.

**Reception into full communion:** Next, there is a separate liturgy called reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church. It is designed for persons baptized in other Christian Churches who are becoming Roman Catholics. These persons receive their first eucharistic communion as Catholics, and may or may not also celebrate the sacrament of confirmation.

**Adapted Easter Vigil:** Appendix 1 shows how the sacraments of initiation for unbaptized candidates and the rite of reception of baptized persons may be celebrated within the Easter vigil. The challenge here is to respect the distinctions that exist between unbaptized and baptized persons, while at the same time keeping the liturgy as a whole from becoming too lengthy.

**Other rites for use in Canada:** Finally, appendix 3 presents adaptations of some of the liturgies of the full RCIA (part I) that may be used if baptized persons are following an RCIA-like process in order to complete their Christian initiation.

**Using the 1987 Edition**

**Purpose and structure:** The first thing to do to make best use of the new Canadian edition of the RCIA is to get a firm grasp of the purpose and structure of the rite as a whole. This may be gained from a study of the general introduction on Christian initiation and especially the introduction to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. In addition, the structure of the ordinary and normative rite as shown in the table of contents and in the outline on page 14 deserve careful study.

**Canadian adaptations:** Second, note the adaptations that have and have not been made by the Canadian bishops. They have approved the adapted rites presented in appendices 1 and 3. They have not approved the following:

- During the period of evangelization or precatechumenate:
  - the formal reception of inquirers

- During the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens:
  - exorcism and renunciation of false worship
  - giving of a new name
  - additional rites of reception
During the period of the catechumenate:
- anointing of the catechumens
- presentations

Optional rites: For various reasons several sets of optional rites have been left in the liturgical book, and normally they will just be ignored. Under unusual circumstances they may be found helpful, however.

Special Vocabulary: The third thing that is helpful — indeed necessary — in order to use this new liturgical book intelligently is to learn the special vocabulary of the RCIA. More than any other liturgy of the Church, the RCIA has a special terminology that sometimes seems formidable to beginners.

Are the new terms necessary? People often ask why this is so, and whether it is really necessary. Those who prepared the RCIA were unable to find terms in current use that adequately described its various aspects. Because this was the case, they revived ancient terms that had been used when the Christian initiation of adults was common practice. Though the present liturgical book permits the use of alternative terms, an adequate modern vocabulary has not yet been developed. Perhaps this situation will change in time. At the present time, however, everyone is having to learn a new set of terms. Most people soon get used to them.

Names of persons: Candidates for baptism are at various times called inquirers, catechumens, and elect. The newly baptized are called neophytes.
- "Catechumen" means one who is receiving rudimentary instruction
- "Elect" means one who is chosen or called
- "Neophyte" refers to someone or something that is newly planted.

The "periods" of the RCIA also have uncommon names.
- evangelization and precatechumenate refer to preaching the Good News during the time prior to formal instruction
- catechumenate refers to giving instruction and formation
- purification and enlightenment refer to the cleansing and clarifying effects of Lenten prayer and practices
- mystagogy refers to reflection on the sacraments of initiation celebrated at Easter

Steps: The "steps" of the RCIA are simpler: acceptance into the order of catechumens; election or enrollment of names (making a decision to initiate or be initiated at Easter, and signing one's name to indicate this); celebrating the sacraments of initiation.

Initiation: Finally, there is the term "initiation" itself. It is bigger than "baptism," and refers to baptism, confirmation and first eucharist all at once. It also reflects the notion that something is beginning that continues throughout our human life. The noun "initiation" goes with the preposition "into": candidates are initiated into Christ and into the Church.
Initiation of Adults

RCIA in Stages

The complete rite: The ordinary and normative celebration of the rite of Christian initiation of adults takes place in stages, over a considerable period of time. This form of the rite is described in part I of the new liturgical book.

Shortened rites: Christian initiation may also be celebrated all at once, over a short period of time, or be adapted for use with baptized persons. These forms of the RCIA, found in part II and appendices, are secondary and are derived from the full, ordinary rite that takes place in stages. It is necessary to understand the full rite before one considers any shortened or adapted forms.

The RCIA is unique among the liturgies of the Church. The rite as a whole encompasses the celebration of a number of individual liturgies. Furthermore, these are spread out over a period of time that may last between 6 months and several years.

Daily life as well as liturgy: The RCIA is also unique because it consists not only of liturgies in the usual sense of the word, but other aspects of Church life as well. Catechesis, the example of the ordinary lives of Christian women and men, the many ministries of the Church and of Christian people, private prayer and much more are equal partners in the RCIA with the formal liturgies. In fact, these apparently non-liturgical dimensions are considered as if they were liturgies.

The word of God is central: The RCIA shows the importance of the word of God. Liturgies of the word and catechesis based on this word form the core of the RCIA for most of its duration. When the sacraments of initiation are celebrated at the Easter vigil, they follow a particularly long liturgy of the word. The word leads to the sacraments. The sacraments arise out of the word.

Baptism, confirmation, eucharist: The Christian initiation of adults involves the celebration of these three sacraments all together and in an integrated manner. Though some other sacraments, including baptism of infants and confirmation of children, may be celebrated in the context of the eucharist, the link between them is not always made clear. In the RCIA the unity of baptism, confirmation and eucharist is emphasized.

Periods and Steps

The stages of the ordinary and normative form of the RCIA are described in terms of periods and steps. The steps of the RCIA are liturgies that conclude one period and mark the beginning of another period. There are three steps and hence four periods.
Period of evangelization and precatechumenate: This is an indefinite time of inquiry into the Christian religion and its values. It has no fixed structure.

First Step: Acceptance into the order of catechumens: In this liturgy candidates first publicly declare their intention to follow the way of Christ, and the Church publicly expresses its desire to help them know Christ.

Period of the catechumenate: This is the time when the individual grows in faith and conversion. Its length depends on the progress of the catechumen. Celebrations of the word, catechesis, and the example of members of the Christian community are important components.

Second step: Election or enrollment of names: This liturgy is usually celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent. Candidates declare that they feel ready to receive the sacraments of initiation at Easter, and the Church states its belief that they indeed are ready to do so.

Period of purification and enlightenment: This corresponds with the season of Lent. It is a time of reflection, prayer and conversion. Its liturgies are the scrutinies and presentations.

Third step: Celebration of the sacraments of initiation: This liturgy usually is integrated into the Easter vigil. Candidates celebrate the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

Period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy: During the Easter season, candidates and the Christian community reflect on the sacraments that have been received, and on the regular Sunday eucharist that they now celebrate. It is a time of integration into the Christian community as new members.

A complex unity: Each period and step will be described in detail later. It needs to be emphasized that the RCIA is not just a series of independent elements. They form a unity, though one of considerable complexity.

Liturgies of the Word

Celebrations of the word of God are the most important form of liturgy during the first three periods and first two steps of the RCIA. The word continues to be important during the third step and fourth period of adult initiation. Before going further, therefore, these liturgies will be considered as a group. All the liturgies of the word in the RCIA have features in common, but they are not identical.

At the Sunday eucharist: One type of RCIA liturgy of the word is simply those of the Sunday eucharists through the year. Even when nothing "special" is done, the word of God celebrated on the Lord's Day in the midst of God's holy people is an integral part of the RCIA. Catechumens and elect are usually dismissed following the homily. The Sunday by Sunday proclamation of the word of God provides the basis for the ongoing catechesis of the catechumens, elect and neophytes.

Sundays of Easter: The Sundays of the Easter season are the principal celebrations of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy, and their liturgies of the word are an important element in this catechesis.
Other celebrations of the word: Special liturgies of the word mark the acceptance into the order of catechumens, election or enrollment of names, and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter vigil. Special liturgies of the word are also prominent during the period of the catechumenate and the period of purification and enlightenment.

Readings

The Sunday lectionary: The liturgies of the word of the RCIA depend primarily on the scripture readings for the Sundays of the liturgical seasons and ordinary time that are appointed in the lectionary.

- Regular readings: The rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is ordinarily celebrated at a Sunday eucharist, and the regular three readings appointed for the Sunday are used. The rite of election or enrollment of names and the scrutinies of the period of purification and enlightenment are celebrated at Sunday eucharists during Lent, and the readings of Lenten Sundays are used. The Lenten readings of cycle A are particularly important, and the prayers of the scrutinies refer to these readings.

Weekday lectionary: Exceptionally, the steps of the RCIA or the scrutinies of the period of purification and enlightenment may be celebrated on weekdays rather than on Sunday. In addition, the presentation liturgies of the latter period are ordinarily celebrated on weekdays. In these cases special readings are designated; they have been chosen with Christian initiation in mind.

Free choice of readings: Liturgies of the word apart from the eucharist may be celebrated at any time during the period of the catechumenate, either by themselves or in connection with catechetical sessions. In these cases appropriate readings are chosen by the catechist or catechumens.

Easter vigil and Easter season: It is no accident that the peak of the initiation process is celebrated at the Easter vigil, with its rich and lengthy liturgy of the word. Finally, the readings of the Sundays of Easter are also integrally related to the RCIA.

Proclaimed by believers: In all cases, the word of God is proclaimed by members of the community — baptized persons — and not by the catechumens or elect.

Structures of liturgies of the word

The liturgies of the word described in the new liturgical book have six slightly different shapes or structures.

The Sunday liturgy of the word: One simply the form we ordinarily use on Sundays: first reading, psalm, second reading, gospel acclamation, gospel, homily. Though the creed and general intercessions are part of these Sunday liturgies of the word, catechumens and elect ordinarily are dismissed from the assembly before these elements. Candidates normally do not stay for the full liturgy of the word until the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at Easter.
More complex forms: Other liturgies of the word contain various additional elements following the homily and before the candidates are dismissed. Three patterns are as follows:

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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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Pattern (1) is found in the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens and the rite of election or enrollment or names. Pattern (2) is found in the scrutinies of the period of purification and enlightenment. Pattern (3) is found in the presentations and preparation rites on Holy Saturday of the period of purification and enlightenment.

Less formal liturgies of the word: Another form of the liturgy of the word is suggested for less formal celebrations during the period of the catechumenate (no. 1 below). If this period has to be adapted for use with baptized persons (see appendix 3: rites for use in Canada) yet another structure for the liturgy of the word is described (no. 2).

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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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Actions within Liturgies of the Word

Some kind of action having to do with the catechumens or elect is inserted into the liturgy of the word on several occasions.

Presentations: There may be "presentations," such as the presentation of the bible in the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, and the presentation of the creed and presentation of the Lord’s Prayer during the period of purification and enlightenment. The latter is unusual in that the Lord’s Prayer is presented during the gospel reading but before the homily. A rubric states that the homily is to explain this prayer. Other presentations take place after the homily.

Rite of election: The actions of the rite of election or enrollment of names are more complex. These consist of the following:

- Presentation of the candidates
- Affirmation by the godparents
- Invitation and enrollment of names
- Act of admission or election

The scrutinies of the period of purification and enlightenment contain a period of silent prayer after the homily and before the intercessions. This is a
kind of action in that the elect and their godparents come forward, stand in front of the assembly, and either kneel down or bow their heads for the silent prayer.

Intercessions

Litanies of intercession are common features of liturgies of the word celebrated for the catechumens and elect. They are absent only from the presentation of the creed and presentation of the Lord’s Prayer of the period of purification and enlightenments.

A new form of public prayer: Litanies were uncommon in recent liturgical prayer, i.e. prior to Vatican II, though frequently used privately or in popular devotions. They have now been reintroduced into the official liturgies of the Church, and are prominent in the Sunday eucharist, the RCIA, the liturgies for the sick and dying, and in the funeral liturgies.

What are litanies? In structure, litanies consist of a brief invitation by the celebrant, a number of short intercessions, petitions or intentions presented by an “assisting minister,” a repetitive response to each petition said or sung by the community, and a concluding prayer. In some intercessions (those of the eucharist, for example) the concluding prayer is brief and simple. In the RCIA these usually are longer and more solemn, and constitute a separate element.

Alternatives: When two alternative sets of intercessions are presented (as in the act of election and the scrutinies), a single introduction or invitation is given. It is used for both of the sets, not just the first one.

A variety of litanies: There are nine different litanies of intercession in the rites for catechumens and elect presented in part I of the new liturgical book, another four in part II, and two in appendix 3: other rites for use in Canada. In most cases the accompanying rubrics indicate that the printed texts are models, to be “adapted to fit various circumstances.”

What do they say? The litanies of the ordinary and normative rite contain between six and eleven verses or petitions, seven being the most common number. In content they have to do mostly with the catechumens or elect, asking in various ways for growth in faith and continued conversion. Some intentions also pray for the families of the candidates, their teachers, and godparents. Often there is also one petition for the wider world and one for the Church community.

The regular general intercessions: The catechumens and elect ordinarily are dismissed prior to the creed and regular general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist. The Mass continues with these elements after the candidates leave the assembly, and so some Sunday eucharistic celebrations will contain two sets of intercessions, rather close together. A petition for the catechumens or elect will be added to these intercessions.

Omitting the regular intercessions: The rubrics indicate that for pastoral reasons the creed and regular general intercessions may be omitted when there are also special intercessions for the catechumens or elect. Presumably this could be done if the community finds the liturgy as a whole too long. If the regular general intercessions are omitted, some of their content

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needs to be added to the intercessions for the catechumens or elect. The intentions for the needs of the world that would be presented during the regular general intercessions are too important simply to omit. In this case there will be a single longer litany in place of two shorter ones.

Prayers

Special concluding prayers: Prayers for the catechumens or elect conclude all of these liturgies of the word. In some cases they are called prayers over the catechumens or prayers over the elect. These are relatively straightforward collects for these persons. During the period of the catechumenate two special kinds of concluding prayer are offered, respectively titled minor exorcisms and blessings. Finally, the scrutinies of the period of purification and enlightenment contain more complex prayers entitled exorcisms.

Prayers for conversion: By whatever name, they are all prayers for conversion (including the “blessings,” which are not blessings at all in the usual sense of the term). More will be said about these different types of prayer as individual liturgies are considered.

Dismissal

The liturgies of the word conclude with the dismissal of the catechumens or dismissal of the elect. Three types of dismissal texts are given.

Dismissal from the assembly: The first alternative actually does dismiss the catechumens or elect from the assembly: they are told to go in peace.

Staying with the assembly: In the second case the celebrant tells these persons that although they cannot yet participate fully in the eucharistic celebration, they may stay as a sign that all people may one day be converted and work for the realization of God’s kingdom.

Everyone is dismissed: The third form is a dismissal of all those present. It is used when the eucharist does not follow the liturgy of the word. Everyone is told to go in peace.

Dismissal is the norm: The rubrics of the RCIA indicate that if the eucharist is to be celebrated, the catechumens and elect are normally or ordinarily to be dismissed. However, “for serious reasons” or if “their dismissal would present practical or pastoral problems,” they may remain with the baptized.

After the dismissal: Candidates are not dismissed just to go home. Neither are they dismissed just for classroom instruction. The rubrics of the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens state that “with the help of some of the faithful, the catechumens remain together to share their joy and spiritual experience.” During the period of the catechumenate, the time following the dismissal may be spent in catechetical reflection on the word.

Potential difficulties. The act of dismissing candidates can be a difficult issue. Its purpose needs to be understood and communicated both to the catechumens and elect and to the entire community. It also needs to be carried out gracefully (the rubrics say in a “kindly” manner). Finally the candidates need to remain together and spend their time profitably.
Dismissal of baptized persons? The question of dismissal can become more complicated if an adapted RCIA is being celebrated for baptized persons at the same time as the regular RCIA for unbaptized persons. Baptized Catholics who are completing their initiation are not supposed to be dismissed, whereas candidates for reception as well as the unbaptized are dismissed. This distinction can cause confusion and even bad feelings.

Embarrassment: Candidates may also be embarrassed at being singled out, and may feel that they are being discriminated against. They also may not like to be separated from their families and friends.

Reasons for the dismissal: Nevertheless, the dismissal has a serious rationale and can be a valuable experience. Standing up and leaving the Sunday liturgy allows the community to know who their catechumens and elect are, and invites people to pray for them and interact with them outside the liturgy. Having catechesis in the time made available by the dismissal links it more closely to the liturgy, to the word of God, to the liturgical year, and to the Church community.

○ Participation of catechumens is limited: Dismissal also makes it clear that there is much that the candidates are not yet able to participate in, and should make their eventual admission to the eucharist more meaningful. It is not just eucharistic communion that they are admitted to at Easter. They also participate fully for the first time in the general intercessions of the eucharist, in bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, in the eucharistic prayer itself, and they can say “Our Father” for the first time as one of God’s adopted children. The sign of peace, expressed first in the liturgy of confirmation, is also exchanged for the first time with other members of the community as sisters and brothers in Christ. They can also become readers and proclaim the word.

○ If candidates are not dismissed: If catechumens and elect are present for the whole eucharistic liturgy, they inevitably will experience participation in some of these parts of the liturgy, even though theologically they cannot do so or cannot do so fully. This can cause confusion.

○ Dismissal is waiting: The dismissal makes it clear that there is a lot to wait for. It is a kind of “anticipatory” fast, and the tensions that it creates are desirable ones that promote the process of conversion.

Ministry and Offices

Another matter that has to do with the RCIA as a whole is the role and responsibility of the Church and its members. In the new liturgical book these often are considered under the heading of ministry and offices.

The ministry of the assembly: It is extremely significant that the ministry that is described first in the introduction to the RCIA is that of the Church community as a whole: the assembly. This is no accident, but a theological statement.

All are responsible: The primary minister of Christian initiation of adults is the entire local Church community — all of the baptized. This is made very clear by the liturgical book. The community always needs to be prepared to help those who seek Christ and who desire to enter the Church. All members
are to spread the faith as best they can. This responsibility is described in various ways.

- **Caring for the candidates:** The baptized are to show the spirit of the Christian community in their lives, welcome inquirers and candidates into their homes, converse with them privately, take them along to gatherings of the community, show what the Good News means by the evidence of their lives, give example of prayer and love of neighbor, take them to spread the gospel and engage in the ministries of the Church, and teach them Christian values.

- **Praying for the candidates:** Community members are to pray privately and publicly for inquirers and candidates, take part in the various liturgies of the rite of Christian initiation of adults, and participate in the discernment that precedes the several steps. During Lent they are to give the example of their own personal renewal through penance, faith and charity. At Easter the public renewal of their baptismal promises is part of their ministry.

- **Welcoming the neophytes.** After they celebrate the sacraments of initiation, the community is to welcome the neophytes with open arms, make them feel at home, and help them grow and reflect further on the Christian sacraments and Christian life.

**Sponsors** are special representatives of the community. The ministry of sponsor is exercised in the rite of admission to the order of catechumens and during the period of the catechumenate. Sponsors are those who have known the candidates at an early stage in their journey and can attest to the candidates' character, intentions and faith. It is they who walk with the candidates during the longest period of their formation, who are their main examples of how Christians live, and who play an especially important role in discerning candidates' readiness for election.

**Godparents** also are special representatives of the community. The ministry of godparent begins with the rite of election or enrollment of names, and continues through the period of purification and enlightenment, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. Godparents are chosen by the candidates from those in the community to whom they have grown close. The catechumens and godparents may have become friends, and the godparents have been important in the lives of the candidates because of the example of their Christian lives. Godparents show the candidates how to live as Christians in their personal and social life, help them in difficulties, and discern the candidates' progress in the spiritual life.

**Sponsors may become godparents**, but persons other than sponsors may also be chosen as godparents.

**Catechists**, together with priests and deacons, have an important responsibility in the formation of the candidates. They teach by example as well as by other means, and their instruction is to be filled with the spirit of the gospel, based on the word of God and the liturgical rites, and adapted to the needs of individual candidates. Catechists, priests and deacons need to be able to discern the state of individual candidates and their progress in faith and conversion. Catechists also have a role in some of the liturgies of the RCIA, and may preside at the liturgies of the word during the period of the catechumenate.
Bishops directly or indirectly oversee the celebration of the rite of Christian initiation of adults as a whole. It is especially desirable that they preside at the rite of election or enrollment of names, and celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the Easter vigil.

Priests will care for the initiation of candidates on the parish level. Deacons, if available, may also participate in the preparation of candidates for initiation.

Catechumenate

The initial stages of the journey toward the complete Christian initiation of adults begins with the period of evangelization and precatechumenate. Next comes the first step, the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, and finally there is the lengthy period of the catechumenate.

Evangelization and Precatechumenate

Considering a journey: One image of Christian initiation is that of journeying. The period of evangelization and precatechumenate is the time when the possibility is beginning to emerge that one may want to travel. The idea that one may have to leave one's home begins to take shape. It is something like starting to think about a forthcoming holiday — but much more serious. Should I go, or just stay home? If I go, where is the best place, time and means of transportation? Will I go by myself, or with someone else? One begins to consult guidebooks, maps and more experienced travelers.

Seeds are germinating: Alternatively, initiation may be imaged as growth. The period of evangelization and precatechumenate is when seeds are sown and germinate and new growths just begin to emerge from the earth. They are still fragile and susceptible to being overgrown by weeds. The new growths may even be difficult to discern, and their final shape cannot be determined.

Loosely structured: The period of evangelization and precatechumenate has no definite structure and can last an indefinite length of time. It is a time of inquiry, of getting acquainted with Christian people and their beliefs and practices. It is a time for the first beginnings of faith. Hearts are opened by the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the word of God evokes a response, people begin to know Jesus Christ. They begin to believe, to be converted, to commit themselves to Christ.

Evangelization: This period is one of evangelization, of being called away from sin, of being drawn toward God. It is a time in which one's desire to follow Christ and to be baptized begins to grow and mature.

Role of the Church: Though this period is not structured in any way, members of the Church are expected to explain the gospel to inquirers, help them with their questions, and introduce them into Christian circles. They are also to pray for them, both in a general way and when they meet with inquirers.

Liturgies: No liturgies are prescribed for this period.
Acceptance as a Catechumen

The first step: The rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is the first step of the RCIA. It marks the end of the period of evangelization and precatechumenate and the beginning of the period of the catechumenate. It is the first act in which the local Church community and inquirers acknowledge each other publicly. It is a liturgy in which they enter into a closer, deeper, more permanent relationship.

Discernment

Not for just anybody: The rite of acceptance is a beginning, but not the first beginning. It builds on and requires some prior growth in the knowledge and appreciation of God's love for us in Jesus Christ. Not just any inquirer is eligible for acceptance into the order of catechumens, therefore. There are specific criteria, and a process of discernment is required.

Visible changes in lifestyle: The new liturgical book states that several changes in the candidates' lives should be evident: initial faith, initial conversion, a real intention to change one's life and to know Christ, the beginnings of repentance and of prayer, being drawn toward the Church, and acquaintance with individual members of the Church community.

Proper motives required: The disposition and motives of the candidates need to be evaluated. If there are any misunderstandings or misapprehensions, they are to be clarified or corrected. This process of discernment is to take whatever time is necessary, and should not be prefunctory or merely a formality.

Candidates are unbaptized: Pastors are also to make sure that potential candidates have not been baptized. If they have, then a modified RCIA and different liturgies are needed; these are described below.

Choosing sponsors: Another prerequisite for the liturgy of acceptance is the choice or assignment of one or more sponsors for each candidate.

Liturgy of Acceptance

Participation of the community: The liturgy of acceptance may be celebrated within the eucharist, or separately. In either case it is desirable that members of the local Church community take part, especially friends and acquaintances of the candidates. Sponsors, catechists and pastors will participate as well.

Shape of the liturgy: The liturgy of acceptance itself has two parts, receiving the candidates, and a liturgy of the word.

Receiving the Candidates

At the door of the church: The act of receiving the candidates is celebrated at the door of the church, in the narthex, or at least somewhere at the back of the nave. This may cause some inconvenience or present some practical challenges. Some or all of the congregation are to be present, wherever the candidates are received. What is said by candidates and celebrant during
this part of the liturgy needs to be heard by as many as possible. (Recall that
the beginnings of the liturgies of baptism of children, marriage, and funerals
also take place at the back of the church.)

- **Knocking on the door:** This setting signifies physically and spatially that
the candidates have been outside of the Church up to now. They seek admittance
to the Church by — figuratively speaking — knocking on the door of the
church building. Their knocking is heard, the door is opened, and they
are cordially welcomed and received into the church building and Church
community.

- **Church building and Church community:** The church building serves as a
symbol or icon of the Church community. Entrance into the building
accompanies and signifies entrance into the community. After the liturgy of
reception, the physical movement of the candidates from the entrance of the
church into the nave for the liturgy of the word is also an important part of
admission into the order of catechumens. It may explain what is happening
more effectively than the words that are said.

**Greeting:** The verbal dimensions are significant, however. The greeting and
opening dialogue are only sketched out in the liturgical book. Yet they need
to be well prepared. The celebrant begins by greeting the candidates “in a
friendly manner.” He is supposed to speak of the joy and happiness of being
a Christian and of life in the Church. A song may be sung.

**Opening dialogue:** The candidates then are asked their names, what they
seek in entering the Church, and why they wish to become Christians. This
dialogue is deceptively simple and brief.

- **What is your name?** Asking the candidates’ names is not just a way of
taking attendance. It is a way of making a public and formal introduction of
each candidate to the Church community. It is also a way for each candidate
to say, I am here to enter the Church not only physically but in my entire
person. The question, What is your name? can also be understood as
meaning, Who are you, really? And to speak one’s name in response signifies
that one is an adult human individual, unique in God’s creation and
possessing the dignity and worth of a human person.

- **What do you want?** Having asked, Who are you?, the celebrant then pro-
cedes to ask, What do you want?, and Why? These questions may be
phrased in different ways, and this should be a matter of discussion between
celebrant and candidates prior to the liturgy. The latitude given here is
remarkable, and of theological significance. It calls for considerable thought
and responsibility on the part of the candidates. The freedom given here
acknowledges that people come to the Church by many different routes,
drawn by the Spirit of God in a variety of ways, and are at various stages on
their journey of life.

- **Alternative questions:** “What do you ask of God’s Church” therefore is not
the only possible question, as the accompanying rubric clearly indicates.
Likewise, candidates may respond with different words than simply “Faith.”
The celebrant’s next question does not have to be “What does faith offer
you?” but should pick up on whatever the candidates actually say. Again,
prior planning is helpful.
The deeper meaning: These questions have two dimensions. At one level candidates say that they have come to join the Church, and do so because the Church has something desirable to offer. At a deeper level, the questions ask, What is it to be fully human? What is the nature of true human happiness and fulfillment? In their responses candidates acknowledge that the Church is where one can be fully human, where people can achieve true happiness. These goals are achieved by becoming sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ in the People of God through baptism. This brief dialogue, therefore, is a kind of shorthand for questions about life's deepest realities.

Acceptance of the gospel: Another dialogue follows, entitled candidates' first acceptance of the gospel. Three alternative texts are given in full. The one that best connects with the opening dialogue is to be chosen. Furthermore, these texts are only models and are supposed to be adapted so that they build on what has been said in the preceding dialogue.

An address and a question: The candidates' first acceptance of the gospel really consists of an extended address given by the celebrant, followed by a question along the lines, Are you ready to accept this? The candidates answer, I do.

Alternative texts: The three alternative texts all begin by speaking of God, and then of Jesus Christ whom God has sent. Three different images of the gospel are then presented.

- Journey: The first image is that of journey. The gospel is a way of faith upon which we walk and along which one is led by Christ.
- Way of life: The second image is that of a way of life. The gospel is lived in the company of other believers, and consists of knowing God and loving our neighbor. It leads to eternal life.
- Teachings: The third image is that of teachings of the gospel. One is led to the fullness of truth that Christ has revealed, making the mind of Christ's one's own.

The Church welcomes and embraces: Having questioned the candidates regarding their intentions in several kinds of dialogue, the Church embraces and welcomes them. Community members state their intention to help the candidates along the journey towards full incorporation into the Church through the sacraments of initiation.

The affirmation by the sponsors and the assembly has two movements. In the first the sponsors and entire congregation state their willingness to help the candidates find and follow Christ. This is a challenging task, and one not to be taken lightly.

- Prayer of praise: Then the celebrant leads the community in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. God is thanked for calling the candidates to know Christ. God is also thanked for enabling them to respond through the movement of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and through the witness and ministry of the Church community.

Signing with the cross: All this leads to the signing with the cross. The cross is both the instrument of salvation upon which Christ died for us and a symbol of the Christian way of life. The cross identifies the candidates with Jesus Christ.
• **Importance of the cross.** The cross is the principal symbol of the catechumenate, and the sign of the cross is a way in which Christians have identified themselves with Christ from ancient times. By the cross the candidates are protected and strengthened during their journey through the desert of conversion. The cross shows the likeness of Christ and the nature of his love. It indicates the shape that the lives of the catechumens and the entire community are to take. The cross is the source of all conversion, and it is the sign of victory over death and sin. The sign of the cross is made repeatedly during the path of Christian initiation, and its significance needs to be reflected upon frequently. It is not to be taken for granted. A cross or crucifix may be given to the new catechumens.

• **Forehead and senses:** The cross is signed on the forehead, but other parts of the body and the person as a whole may also be signed with the cross. This act is very moving, and the texts that accompany it are beautiful.

• **Glory and praise:** The congregational acclamation that follows each signing needs to be vigorous. All sing or say something like “Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

• **Concluding prayer:** A concluding prayer (with two alternative texts) refers to the power of the cross of Christ and asks God to help candidates persevere in the grace which has begun in them.

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### The Word of God

**Entering the assembly:** Finally, the candidates are invited to enter the church building — icon of the People of God — and share in the meal of God's word. The word is not simply to be listened to, but shared in — a more communal and participatory image. At this stage of their life, the principal nourishment for their journey comes from the word, rather than the eucharist.

**Shape of the liturgy of the word:** This liturgy of the word follows one of the patterns considered above: first reading, psalm, second reading, gospel acclamation, gospel, homily, action, intercessions, prayer and dismissal. The eucharist may or may not follow.

**Presenting a bible:** This action is optional, but seems like a good idea. A bible or New Testament or simply a book containing the gospels may be given to the candidates. The celebrant says something such as, “Receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” and the candidates respond as they feel moved to do so.

**Intercessions:** The intercessions begin by acknowledging that the catechumens have already traveled a long way. It mentions that this is a joyful occasion for them and for the whole Church community. The petitions ask God to continue to guide the catechumens. God is also asked to enable the Church community to be faithful to its responsibilities toward the catechumens.

**Concluding prayer:** The prayer over the catechumens (with two alternative texts) asks God to lead them toward baptism. Finally, they are dismissed.
Afterwards

**Keeping records:** Following the rite of acceptance, the names of the catechumens, sponsors and ministers, and the date of the celebration are to be inscribed in a suitable book.

**Now part of the Church:** From now on, the catechumens are considered to be "joined to the Church" and "part of the household of Christ." They may take part in Sunday liturgies of the word, and they may receive blessings and sacramentals. They may be married in the Church, with a priest as presider and official witness; the rite for celebrating marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person will be used. The Catholic funeral liturgy may be celebrated if they die before baptism.

**Period of the Catechumenate**

**Learning the Christian life:** The core of this stage of the RCIA is pastoral formation and guidance, and its aim is to train the catechumens in the Christian way of life. Liturgical celebrations are part of this formation, but they play a secondary role. Though the content and method of the catechumenal formation are described in only a few pages (nos. 75-80, pages 37-39), this description is extremely rich and needs to be studied and restudied.

**Formation**

**A lengthy period:** The period of the catechumenate is an extended one. It is a journey, one that develops as the liturgical year gradually unfolds, and proceeds little by little. It is not some kind of course that can be scheduled, or a set of lessons that can be memorized. Its length cannot be settled in advance, but depends on the grace of God, the way in which the local Church community carries out its responsibilities, and the cooperation, interior dispositions and journey of faith and conversion of each individual catechumen.

- **Gradual formation:** The catechumenate needs to be long enough for the faith and conversion of the candidates to become strong. Are they beginning to live like Christians and practice gospel values in their lives? Are they beginning to believe, pray privately and publicly, and exercise charity the way Christian people do?

**Different means of formation:** The training of catechumens in the Christian way of life is approached in several different ways.

**Catechesis:** The first approach is catechesis or instruction. This is described only as "complete in its coverage," "presenting Catholic doctrine in its entirely," and as leading "to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts." These descriptions imply that breadth rather than depth is the aim. One cannot possibly give candidates a graduate course in theology, but the full range of Catholic doctrine is to be touched upon; some areas will be dealt with in more detail than others. Catechesis, it is important to note, is to be related to the liturgical year and based on the word of God, especially as this is experienced liturgically.
Not catechism: The catechesis of the RCIA is not the same as the catechism classes of yesteryear. It is emphasized strongly that catechesis should lead catechumens to "a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate." It should also enlighten their faith, lead them toward God, enable participation in the liturgy, promote a ministerial life, and lead them to a life that is "in accord with the spirit of God."

Example and support: The second way in which the catechumens are trained in the Christian life is through the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and other members of the community. Basically, catechumens simply see how Christian people live, and begin to share that way of life. It is an apprenticeship or on the job type of training: training by example.

Acquiring a new vision: By personal contact, example, private conversation and informal teaching, catechumens learn how to view human relationships and the world in general in a new way, with a Christian vision. They learn Christian values and their consciences are formed along Christian lines.

New ways of living: This gradual formation should bring about a "progressive change of outlook and conduct, and should have "social consequences." It will lead to private prayer, giving witness to Christ, and practicing love of neighbor. In other words, this teaching by example is to bear visible fruit.

Liturgical celebrations: The third aspect of catechumenal formation is the liturgy. In liturgical celebrations the catechumens experience the presence of God and the care of the community. Through prayer they are strengthened, purified and encouraged. In liturgies of the word they experience Christ calling them to himself. It is a call to conversion, and the basis for reflection and catechesis. Their liturgical experiences also prepare them for eventual participation in the eucharist.

Learning to serve others: Finally, catechumens are formed by participation in the ministry of the Church. Once again, this comes about through the example of the Christian people around them. It is assumed that the members of the local Church community, and the community as a whole, are leading ministerial lives. The formation of the catechumens involves walking with community members as they engage in ministry. At first catechumens may just look on, but in time they will learn skills, develop the spirit of ministry, and begin to participate more actively with their teachers and exemplars. One ministry or apostolate that is mentioned in the new liturgical book is that of evangelization. The gospel is proclaimed, faith is professed and Christ is witnessed to in people's lives whenever they reach out in service to others in Christ's name.

A serious responsibility: The formation of catechumens is a serious responsibility for the parish and its members. Catechists and sponsors have particularly important roles, and they need training and support. However, because this formation relies so much on the example given by members of the community, it really involves everybody. To carry out the formation of catechumens well is a challenge to Christian communities, and often a beneficial stimulus to a more vibrant community life.
Liturgies

Celebrations of the word: Liturgies of the word of God are one of the four elements of to catechumenal formation. They also support the other dimensions of formation.

The purpose of such liturgies is carefully explained. They should assist the instruction of the catechumens, and relate to the needs of the community as a whole. They are to help implant in their hearts the teachings the catechumens receive. The word of God also teaches them about prayer and gives them experiences in prayer. These liturgies explain the "signs, celebrations and seasons of the liturgy," and prepare the catechumens gradually to worship with the entire community.

Three kinds of liturgies of the word are important in the period of the catechumenate. The liturgy of the word of the regular Sunday Mass is one of these. In addition, the word of God may be celebrated in separate liturgies at any time during the catechumenate. Finally, liturgies of the word may be held in connection with catechetical instruction.

The Lord's Day: Catechumens are to be taught to value Sunday, and some of the special liturgies of the word will be held on the Lord's Day. These celebrations will help them to learn what liturgies of the word consist of, what they mean, and how to celebrate them properly. All this prepares them for celebrations of the liturgy of the word during the regular Sunday eucharist of the community. When appropriate, catechumens should begin to participate regularly in the first part of the Sunday eucharist.

Basis for catechesis: Liturgies of the word that are held in connection with catechesis make it possible to carry out this instruction in a context of prayer. They also allow catechists to base their instruction on the word of God just proclaimed.

Model liturgy of the word: A model has been provided for liturgies of the word that are held especially for the catechumens. It suggests an opening song, one or more readings from scripture (proclaimed by a baptized member of the community), a homily that explains and applies the message of the scripture, and concluding prayers.

At catechetical sessions: Briefer liturgies of the word held in connection with catechetical sessions may include a reading and one or more concluding prayer.

Minor Exorcisms and Blessings

Two types of prayers are provided to conclude liturgies of the word held for catechumens. They may also be used at the beginning or end of catechetical sessions, or even privately for individual catechumens. These are entitled minor exorcisms and blessings of the catechumens.

Prayers for conversion: These titles do not immediately reveal the content or purpose of these prayers. Both really are prayers for conversion.

Minor exorcisms are so titled to distinguish them from the exorcisms of the scrutinies celebrated during the period of purification and enlightenment. Neither type of prayer implies that one is possessed by the devil. However,
they do recognize that conversion to Christ and Christian values is not yet complete, and that one is still on the journey towards baptism, confirmation and first eucharist. Catechumens still have bad habits, values that are not fully Christian, forms of behavior that still need to be christianized. As the liturgical book states, "they draw the attention of the catechumens to . . . the struggle between flesh and spirit, the importance of self-denial . . . and the need for God's help."

**Prayers of petition:** Eleven minor exorcisms are presented; seven are addressed to God and four to Christ. They are prayers of petition, and the petition itself often follows statements regarding the state of the catechumen, the love and mercy of God, or both.

- **What God has done:** The prayers remind us that God has promised us the Holy Spirit through Jesus, that God makes known the true life, that God created us in God's image and likeness and formed us in holiness and justice, that God has called the catechumens and received them, that God knows the secrets of our hearts and rewards us for the good we do, that God chose the apostle Paul to proclaim Christ to every nation, and that it is God's great love that has drawn these catechumens to seek and find God. We offer praise to God by remembering what God has done in the past and still does today.

- **The ministry of Christ:** We recall that Christ preached conversion from the mountain and revealed the beatitudes, that his name alone has the power to save, and that Christ calmed the storm and freed the possessed. Christ called Matthew the tax collector to follow him and record his command to baptize all peoples.

- **What do we ask?** The key to the petitions lies in the verbs they contain. God is asked to protect, guard, remove, save, free, help, probe, watch over, strengthen, increase, lead, enlighten, heal, blot out, show, and purify the catechumens.

- **The old life:** As prayers for conversion, the minor exorcisms state what needs to be left behind, and what the goals of the journey are. The negative side is expressed in many images.

  - There are references to the spirit of evil, the snares and malice of Satan, the power of the evil one, the tyranny of the enemy, being enslaved by a spirit of unbelief.

  - The old life is characterized by error and sin, corruption, hesitation in faith, love of money, lawless passions, enmity and quarreling, falsehood and greed, lust and pride, weakness and sins, being tied to earthly desires, being wounded by sin, trust in flesh and blood, deception, and being estranged from the hope of Christ's promises.

**Images of the new life:** The positive side of these prayers is expressed through a wide variety of images.

  - It is having hearts open to understand the gospel, and delighting in the discovery of the gospel.

  - It is generously following Christ's call, believing in Christ, experiencing the mercy Christ promised, being loyal to Christ, being counted among
Christ's disciples on earth, knowing what pleases Christ and having the
courage to live by his gospel.

— The new life is coming to share Christ's kingdom, entering into God's
kingdom, and finding the blessing's of God's kingdom.

— It is becoming holy and sinless, having a spirit of faith, reverence,
patience, hope, temperance, purity, charity and peace. It is bearing witness
to God's truth, putting into practice God's commands of love, working for
peace, enduring persecution, being kept in God's providence, possessing
goodness and justice, sharing God's sacraments, drinking the waters of
salvation, and striving for what is to come.

— The new life is becoming temples or dwelling places of the Holy Spirit,
and submitting to the Spirit.

— It is becoming members of the Church and joining the priestly people.

— It is finally seeing God in heaven, coming to enjoy God's presence in
heaven, looking forward to the coming of Christ, being acknowledged by
Christ in heaven, sharing in the joy of the new Jerusalem.

A rich variety: There is a rich variety in these prayers. Presiders are to chose
whichever are most appropriate.

Blessings: Nine prayers of blessing are also provided. They are not trini-
tarian blessings of the usual sort, but yet another kind of prayer for conver-
sion. These texts refer mostly to the positive side of the process of conver-
sion, and only a few mention what has to be left behind. They dwell on God's
love and the Church's care. They are used so that the Church may encour-
age catechumens with courage, joy and peace as they proceed along the
sometimes difficult journey of conversion and faith.

○ Content: The blessings may be led by lay catechists as well as ordained
ministers. All are addressed to God, and they are prayers of petition. God is
asked to form, bless, prepare, fulfill, look upon, teach, enfold, sanctify, look
kindly, prepare, strengthen, keep, enliven, bring, lead, and help the cate-
chumens. All look forward to baptism.

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Election and Lent

The second step of the RCIA is the rite of election or enrollment of names. It
is celebrated at the beginning of Lent, and marks the end of period of the
catechumenate and the beginning of the period of purification and enlight-
enment. The latter period concludes with the preparation rites of Holy
Saturday.
Election

In addition to the celebration of a special liturgy, the rite of election also requires careful discernment. After this liturgy and for the duration of Lent, candidates for initiation are known as “elect” rather than as catechumens.

Discernment

An important decision: Prior to the beginning of Lent the decision is made whether individual catechumens are to celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the subsequent Easter vigil. If so, they celebrate the rite of election. If not, they remain as catechumens for a longer period, perhaps until next Lent. It is important to note that this decision is made prior to the start of Lent, and not at the end of Lent in connection with the Easter vigil itself.

A decision by the Church: “Elect” means one who is chosen, and election refers to the fact that the Church chooses those catechumens who have the appropriate dispositions and admits them to the final preparatory state of the journey of Christian initiation. This step is also called election because the Church’s decision is based on election by God.

A decision by the catechumens: The phrase “enrollment of names” refers to the catechumens’ role. They state their own readiness and intention by writing their names in the list of those who await initiation at Easter.

Change in lives required: Catechumens are expected to have traveled a satisfactory distance in their journey of faith and conversion. Their lives should show evidence of Christian charity and conversion, and they should be acquainted with Christian teaching. Catechumens must judge their own readiness and themselves make a decision to celebrate the sacraments of initiation following Lent. They must be prepared to state their intention publicly before the whole Church community.

Careful and unhurried discernment: The decision that is made by the Church and the catechumens is no mere formality, but the result of careful and unhurried deliberation. Though it may be carried out in various ways, it should involve everyone who has had something to do with the catechumenate: pastors, catechists, sponsors, godparents, and the entire community. The catechumens as a group may also take part.

Liturgy of Election

At the beginning of Lent: The ordinary time for the rite of election or enrollment of names is during the eucharist on the first Sunday of Lent. If possible, the bishop is to be principal celebrant.

The homily: The rite itself follows the homily, which should refer to the meaning and significance of the act of election. The homilist urges the catechumens to prepare themselves diligently during Lent for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at Easter. He also addresses the whole community and encourages everyone to give good example and walk closely with the elect along the path of the Lenten journey.

The shape of the liturgy: The structure of the rite of election is similar to that of the receiving of the candidates in the rite of acceptance into the order of
catechumens, with some changes in order. Despite the use of different titles, the following elements have similar functions in the two liturgies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Election</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening dialogue</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation by sponsors</td>
<td>Affirmation by godparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First acceptance of the gospel</td>
<td>Enrollment of names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing with the cross</td>
<td>Admission or election</td>
</tr>
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In the rite of acceptance the entire liturgy of the word follows these elements. In the rite of election they are preceded by the readings and homily, and followed by the intercessions, prayer and dismissal.

A dialogue: These elements of the rite of election constitute a kind of dialogue between the Church and those seeking admission to the Church. It begins (presentation) by focusing on the catechumens, and then turns to the Church community, as represented by the godparents. The candidates then enroll their names, and the community acts to elect or admit them. Through this overall dialogue, there are many spoken dialogues as well, and the celebrant guides the catechumens and the community through the various steps.

Presentation of catechumens: The catechumens are presented to the celebrant (the bishop) by a priest, deacon, catechist or representative of the community. The model text given indicates that they are completing their preparation as candidates for initiation, that God has graced them, and that the community has led them with prayer and good example. They now ask to be allowed to celebrate the sacraments at Easter.

The bishop's invitation: The bishop then invites "those who are to be chosen in Christ" to come forward, together with their godparents. They are called by name, and stand before the celebrant. The calling of each candidate by name is an important part of the rite of election.

Testimony of godparents: The bishop then addresses the assembly, as represented by the godparents, asking them to testify publicly that the candidates are ready and willing to celebrate baptism, confirmation and eucharist at Easter.

Alternative forms of affirmation: Two forms of this affirmation are given. The first implies that the celebrant himself knows the catechumens and has taken part in the discernment of their suitability. He can therefore state that they are sincere in their desire to be initiated, and that during their preparation they have listened to God's word, tried to follow his commands, and lived with the Christian community. The celebrant then announces that "our community has decided to call them to the sacraments." To confirm this statement, he asks the godparents to state publicly their belief that the candidates are worthy. They reply simply, "We do."

Another form: The second form is for use when the celebrant has not personally been involved with the candidates. He therefore asks the godparents three questions that are intended to relate to the various dimensions and aspects of the period of the catechumenate. Have they listened to the word of God proclaimed in the liturgy and reflected upon in catechesis? Have they reformed their lives and begun to live as Christians do? Have they
worked with members of the community, learned from their example, and prayed with them?

Approval by all: In both cases, the celebrant may also ask all present to express their approval of the candidates. For this to be authentic, the community must actually know the candidates.

The candidates are questioned: The candidates are then asked if they wish to enter fully into the life of the Church, and they then give their names to be enrolled. When that is completed, the celebrant declares that they are members of the elect, and will celebrate the sacraments of initiation at Easter.

Conclusion: Intercessions and concluding prayer follow, and the new elect are then dismissed as usual.

Purification and Enlightenment

Liturgies are central: Liturgical celebrations are the primary element of the period of purification and enlightenment. This is in contrast to the period of the catechumenate, in which the liturgy was only one of several elements to the process of conversion. Following the act of election or enrollment of names on the first Sunday of Lent, there are special liturgies for the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. Additional special liturgies are provided for the third and fifth weeks of Lent. In addition, the regular liturgies of the other Sundays of Lent are also important.

The season of Lent: Lent is a time of spiritual recollection or "more intense preparation" for the Easter sacraments, and this preparation consists more in reflection and prayer than catechesis or instruction. The purpose is to "purify the minds and hearts of the elect," lead them to search their own consciences, do penance, and enlighten their minds and hearts in the spirit of Christ.

For the whole community: In all of this the elect are not alone. The whole community walks with them on this last stage in their journey, recalling the meaning of their own baptism and doing penance. The entire community seeks renewal in preparation for the annual celebration of Christ's death and resurrection at Easter.

Scrutinies

A difficult name: The special liturgies for the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent are called "scrutinies." This term, unfortunately, has negative connotations in contemporary English. It implies that the community is examining every aspect of each candidates' life with suspicion and the intention of finding weaknesses. Furthermore, one might think that this emphasis on the "old life" of sin and non-Christian ways of thinking and acting should have come earlier in the journey of Christian initiation, and not occupy the last few weeks before the joy of Easter and the celebration of baptism, confirmation and eucharist. Was this not included in the discernment that preceded the act of election at the beginning of Lent?

Self-examination: Certainly the scrutinies are for the purpose of searching and further conversion. However they are primarily for self-searching and
self-examination on the part of the elect themselves, though pastors, catechists and sponsors might help in this discernment. Furthermore, the whole assembly should benefit from the scrutinies as well.

**Intense period of conversion:** The last few weeks of Lent are a time of final intense effort at conversion, a last "push" to prepare oneself for Easter. It takes on the appearance of a struggle in order to emphasize the importance of this phase of the RCIA. It also needs to be appreciated that the forces of the old life may raise up strong obstacles to Christian conversion at this final stage in the process. The old life may be stronger and more influential than we think; the scrutinies tell us to be on our guard.

**The old life versus the new:** The forcefulness with which the scrutinies depict the old life is not to condemn individual elect, but to make the contrast between old and new vivid and strong. They are intended to reinforce in the elect their desire to undertake Christian conversion and their realization that they are in great need of God's grace to do so — indeed, totally dependent on God.

**For healing:** In addition, the purpose of this self-searching is healing. Only if deficiencies are appreciated can appropriate remedies be applied.

**The progress the catechumens have made:** Finally, the scrutinies have a second side, that of making one aware of the progress that has been made, the extent of the journey already made, all the graces of faith and conversion that have been given by God and responded to by the elect. These liturgies are intended to strengthen the positive, encourage the elect to further conversion, and deepen their resolve to "hold fast to Christ."

**The shape of the liturgies:** The scrutinies are insertions into the regular Sunday liturgies of the word, and consist of an initial period of silent prayer, intercessions, a prayer of exorcism, and the dismissal. The intercessions are of the usual kind, and two alternative sets of petitions are given, following a single invitation.

**Silent prayer:** The scrutinies are unique in beginning with a period of silent prayer. First the elect with their godparents come forward and stand in front of the celebrant. He speaks first to the whole assembly, inviting them to pray in silence that the elect with be given "a spirit of repentance, a sense of sin, and the true freedom of the children of God." He then invites the elect to pray in silence. They kneel or bow their heads. It is directed that "all pray for some time in silence." Afterwards, all stand for the intercessions.

**Prayers of exorcism:** The second unique feature of the scrutinies is the prayer of exorcism with which they conclude. Again, the term exorcism has a negative connotation, but the purpose of these prayers is basically positive. The introductory notes states that through these prayers the elect are freed from the effects of sin, from the influence of the evil one, receive new strength, and open their hearts to receive Christ's gifts.

**Shape of the exorcisms:** For each scrutiny two alternative prayers of exorcism are given. These prayers have a more complex structure than the minor exorcisms of the period of the catechumenate. They consist of three parts. The first is a prayer addressed to God, which is said by the celebrant with hands joined. The second part is the laying of the celebrant's hands on each of the elect, "if this can be done conveniently." The third part is again a
prayer text. It is addressed to Christ, and is said with hands outstretched over all the elect.

Reference to the lectionary: Each prayer contains a reference to the gospel of the Sunday according to cycle A of the lectionary. The first scrutiny refers to the woman of Samaria, the second to the man born blind, and the third to the raising of Lazarus. Both halves of the prayer consist of petition, and the principal verb that is used is "free." It is used in all but one of the prayers of exorcism; other verbs used include protect, heal, rescue, deliver and save.

• Prayers for conversion: As prayers for conversion, they refer to both the old life and the Christian life. Many images of the old life are given.

— It is lived under the power of Satan, the spirit of evil, under Satan's cruel yoke. One is enslaved by the father of lies, the prince of darkness, and by the death-dealing power of the spirit of evil. It is slavery to Satan, the source of sin and death, who seeks to corrupt the world

— The old life includes vain reliance on self, deceit, wrong, faults, hidden wounds, infirmities, sickness, thirst, false values, darkness of hatred and lies, error, doubt, unbelief, and above all, sin.

— It is imaged as the realm of death, the tyranny of death, the power of death, the grasp of death, and the spirit of corruption.

• Positive images: There are also many images of new life in Christ.

— It is characterized by desire to become God's adopted children, for the power of the sacraments, the fountain of living water, for new life through baptism, by a hunger for the banquet of life. It is for those who have been chosen for God's sacraments, those who approach the waters of new birth.

— The new life is the way to salvation in the Holy Spirit, and God has offered salvation to all. It allows us to be staunch and fearless witnesses to the faith, and give witness to God's glory before all.

— It is worshipping the Father in truth, serving God faithfully in peace and joy and rendering God thanks for ever. It is coming to know the Father in true faith and love. It is taking on the gentle yoke of Jesus, and being under the reign of God's beloved Son.

— The path to new life leads us to the resurrection, allows us to bear witness to new life in the risen Christ and to live with Christ always in the glory of his resurrection. We share in the power and triumph of Christ's resurrection.

— New life means purity of heart, healing, the power of the Holy Spirit, God's truth, the desire for good, God's light, the light of truth and love, being on the paths of right faith, being safe, having one's eyes unsealed, seeing God face to face, being filled with faith, hope and charity, having life and having it more abundantly. It is being children of the light and being freed from death.

Dismissal: The scrutinies conclude with the dismissal of the elect.

Presentations

Weekday liturgies: The presentations take place on weekdays, rather than on Sundays. If they take place at Mass, the elect are dismissed after the liturgy of the word in the usual way. The presentation of the creed takes
place during the week following the first scrutiny (third week of Lent), and the presentation of the Lord's Prayer takes place during the week following the third scrutiny (fifth week of Lent).

The creed: The option is given of presenting the Apostles' creed or the Nicene creed. The creed summarizes all the catechetical instruction that the elect has received. This ancient text expresses the heart of the Church's faith and the Apostles' creed is a central part of the liturgy of baptism. It recalls how God has reached out to humanity and saved us, and provides the elect with a vision of the faith which they are embracing.

Shape of the presentation: After readings and homily, there is a brief address and then the celebrant begins the creed and the assembly recites it all together. An invitation to prayer and prayer over the elect follow, and the liturgy concludes with the usual dismissal.

To be memorized: The elect are to memorize the creed. They may recite it publicly in the preparation rites on Holy Saturday, and they will be asked in dialogue form to profess the Apostles' creed just before their baptism at the Easter vigil.

The Lord's Prayer is the heart and summary of the Church's prayer. It should fill the elect with a special sense of the spirit of adoption by which they will express their relationship to God in terms of child and loving parent.

Shape of the presentation: The presentation of the Lord's Prayer has a slightly different structure. The gospel that is read is the part of Matthew that presents the Lord's Prayer; this prayer is therefore presented in its scriptural context and as part of the liturgical readings. The homily that follows is supposed to "explain the meaning and importance" of this prayer. The prayer over the elect and dismissal conclude the presentation liturgy.

A prayer of the baptized: This prayer is for the baptized, and will be said publicly for the first time after the elect have become adopted children of God through baptism, and just before they share in the body and blood of God's Son for the first time.

Holy Saturday

A day of preparation: On Holy Saturday, in immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation that night, the elect are to rest, refrain from their usual activities, spend their time in prayer and reflection, and if possible, fast.

Liturgical rites: A liturgical service is provided for use when it is possible for the elect to gather on Holy Saturday. Several different rites are provided, and any or all of them can be included in the actual celebration. These include the ephephtha rite, the recitation of the creed, choosing a baptismal name, and anointing with the oil of catechumens. Certain scripture readings are associated with each element, and a liturgy of the word can be constructed by selecting appropriate readings, depending on which rites are chosen.
Sacraments of Initiation

**Baptism, confirmation, eucharist:** The rite of Christian initiation of adults culminates in the celebration of baptism, confirmation and eucharist during the Easter vigil. The vigil itself follows the preparatory season of Lent, is the culmination of the three days of Easter, and is prolonged during the subsequent fifty days of the Easter season.

**The central symbols:** The celebration of the three sacraments of initiation and the entire Easter vigil constitute a long and complex liturgy, with which readers are already generally familiar. Space does not permit a really thorough treatment of this liturgy, and a hasty description does not seem worthwhile. Instead, it may be more helpful to focus on the principle elements of Easter initiation, the great central symbols of Easter, assembly, word, water, anointing with laying on of hands, bread and wine.

The symbol of Easter

**Easter is the center** and high point of the liturgical year. Easter is our special annual commemoration and celebration of the paschal mystery — the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and all that it means. Because it is so great and there is so much to celebrate, we stretch out the celebration of Easter over three days, beginning with the evening mass of the Lord’s supper on Holy Thursday. Good Friday focuses on the Lord’s passion, and Saturday night and Sunday, Christ’s resurrection.

**The Easter vigil** is an occasion of joy and excitement. It is also a time of unhurried waiting. This liturgy cannot be celebrated in a hurry. It takes lots of time, and we need to be willing to invest ample time as well as energy in its celebration. To try to rush through the vigil will, humanly speaking, ruin it.

**Light is one of the symbols of Easter.** The vigil begins with the blessing of new fire and the solemn lighting of the paschal candle. This candle is carried in procession, with sung acclamations, and all light individual tapers from it. The paschal candle is enthroned and provides light for the rest of the vigil and the entire season of Easter. We hold our lighted tapers during the singing of the Easter proclamation and when we renew our baptismal promises.

**The Easter message** is sung joyfully and extravagantly in the Easter proclamation or exsultet, and the gospel tells of the discovery of the empty tomb and the announcement of the resurrection. Alleluia is the special acclamation of Easter, and it is sung in especially solemn, joyful and elaborate form before the gospel and at the dismissal. The message of death and resurrection echoes through the eucharistic prayer.

**Initiation is an Easter symbol:** The message of Easter is also proclaimed by the initiation of new members into the community. Individuals have died and are raised up in Christ, they are joined to his body, the Church, God’s holy people. They share the body and blood of the Risen Christ, and proclaim the Easter message in their own lives.
The symbol of the assembly

The local Church: The Risen Christ is present and manifests himself in the Church, and the Church is made concrete in particular times and places in the liturgical assembly. Each local liturgical assembly celebrates the paschal mystery and proclaims it to the world in word and sacrament, and in the lives of its members.

The assembly worships: In the liturgy of the Easter vigil the assembly gathers to manifest itself and the unity that exists within Christ's body. The assembly gathers to carry out its corporate responsibility and privilege of worshipping God. The assembly gathers to give birth to new children.

United and gifted: The assembly shows the unity of Christ's body as well as the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit with which it has been blessed. Its members sit together, move in procession with the paschal candle, renew their baptismal promises together and at communion, exchange the sign of peace, share the holy meal, say the Lord's Prayer as God's children.

 Hospitable and gracious: The assembly shows hospitality to guests, to the candidates for the sacraments of initiation, to those whose preparation for initiation continues for a longer period. It is gracious to children and their parents, to the handicapped and the elderly. Members of the assembly are hospitable to each other.

The assembly participates vigorously and whole-heartedly. It listens to God's word, responds in psalmody and silent prayer, and sings Easter hymns at every opportunity. It engages in earnest intercession for the world, the Church and all who are in need. It presents the gifts of bread and wine, and surrounds the newly initiated with love and care. Members minister in various ways, as they are called to do so.

Sent forth. Finally, the assembly is sent forth to carry the Easter message to the whole world. And it is a good practice to have a party before everyone goes home to bed.

The symbol of the word

Christ is also present in the word, and in it God speaks today to God's holy, chosen people. The word of God and the message of the gospel have been central through the entire RCIA, and continue to be so during the entire three days of Easter and the Easter season.

Thursday and Friday: On Holy Thursday we hear of the institution of the memorial feasts of passover and eucharist, and the meaning of the paschal mystery is expressed in terms of footwashing. Good Friday gives us one of the songs of God's special servants, and acclaims Christ's eternal high priesthood. Then the story of the cross is told through the proclamation of the Lord's passion and our veneration of this instrument of our salvation.

The vigil readings: The vigil itself has nine scripture readings plus the homily, and they present the story of God's love of us from the creation of the world to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in our own day.
The Old Testament: The story of the goodness of God's creation is followed by that of Abraham's fidelity and the blessings showered upon the descendants of Abraham and Sarah. The exodus from Egypt follows, with the passage of God's chosen people through the sea. God is then imaged as a spouse taking back the partner with great love. God's invitation to enter into covenant, and God as a source of food, forgiveness, life, knowledge, strength, are recalled, as is God's choice of a people who will show forth God's love to the world. The cleansing of an unfaithful people by pouring clean water upon them concludes the readings from the Hebrew Bible.

Epistle and gospel: Following the Glory to God and opening prayer, the word of God continues with the great baptismal message from Romans. Our baptism is baptism in the death of Christ and returning to life with him. This epistle needs to be proclaimed with great force and vigor. Finally, depending on the year, the Easter message from Matthew, Mark or Luke; John's Gospel is read on Easter day. On the first day of the week the tomb is found empty and the resurrection of Jesus is announced to his friends.

Celebrating the word well: The word of God, the preaching that follows, and indeed all of the liturgical texts, need to be heard by all present. Those who read or speak will prepare their texts prayerfully, speak them clearly, and intend to communicate their message to everyone, even those in the back pews. Amplification will be used as required. Audibility is a particular problem at the blessing of new fire and lighting of the paschal candle. The profession of faith by the candidates for initiation also needs to be heard by all.

The importance of music: The word is also proclaimed in song, and the musical dimensions of the Easter vigil are especially important. Good music leadership and careful choice of songs is essential.

Inclusive language: Finally, the language used throughout needs to be inclusive.

The symbol of water

Water and the Trinity: The central symbol of baptism is the washing with water and invocation of the Trinity. The immersion of candidates into water, or pouring of water over their heads, is the high point of the celebration of this sacrament.

Rites before and after baptism: Baptism with water in the name of the Trinity is surrounded by other liturgical elements. Some prepare for baptism in water, and others continue afterwards. These secondary but still important and meaningful elements need to remain secondary. They should not obscure or take away from the impact and core experience of the washing in water.

Beginnings: In the liturgy of baptism, candidates are presented and then the litany of the saints is prayed to connect this particular liturgical assembly with the Church of all times and places.

Prayers over the water: The water is prepared through special prayers of blessing. Three alternative prayers are provided, and they are quite different in form and content. They proclaim the wonderful works of God, whether
throughout salvation history, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or in the sacrament of baptism. They conclude by asking God to send the Holy Spirit to bless this water of baptism.

**Profession of faith**: Next, the candidates prepare themselves by professing their faith, which is also the faith of the church. This begins with the renunciation of sin, and if not already celebrated, there is the anointing with the oil of catechumens. The principal action, however, is the profession of faith in the words of the Apostles' creed.

**The trinitarian formula of baptism**: If baptism in water and in the name of the Trinity is the high point of this sacrament, how is this to be indicated liturgically? The verbal text, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," though extremely important, also is very short. It needs to be said slowly and distinctly, in three parts to accompany triple immersion or triple pouring. It needs to be audible not only to the candidate but also to the assembly as a whole. The congregation may sing an acclamation following each baptism. This is a good practice, so long as the number of candidates is not too great.

**Generous use of water**. Non-verbally, the importance of this rite is communicated especially by the generous use of water and the care and solemnity with which either immersion or pouring is carried out. Recall that triple immersion is the preferred mode of baptism in the Catholic Church today. The place of the font and its architectural setting and dignity, also are important factors.

**The lighted candle**: After the baptismal washing there are rites of lesser importance that express further the meaning of the sacrament. In the RCIA only one such rite is prescribed, the presentation of a lighted candle. This continues the message of the beginning of the Easter vigil, in which Christ is imaged as light. This rite proclaims that the baptized are those who have been enlightened by Christ. Clothing with a baptismal garment is optional, and there is no postbaptismal anointing if the sacrament of confirmation is to be celebrated.

**The symbol of chrism with laying on of hands**

**Confirmation**: After an initial brief address and invitation to prayer, the celebration of confirmation continues with a prayer said while the celebrant holds his hands outstretched over the entire group of candidates. This is an ancient text, which begins by praising God for having freed God's new daughters and sons from sin and given them new life. God is then asked to send the Holy Spirit, who is described in words taken from Isaiah 11: 2.

**Be sealed**: Then the celebrant takes chrism on his thumb and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each candidate. As he does this he says, "be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit," and adds, "Peace be with you."

**The symbol of bread and wine**

**The bread and wine** of the eucharist are brought to the altar, prayed over in a great prayer of thanksgiving, and then shared among the members of the community to eat and drink.
Initiation into the eucharist: As mentioned before, when we say that candidates are initiated through and into the eucharist, we mean more than simply sharing in communion. The participation of the newly initiated begins with the general intercessions, in which for the first time they express their common priesthood. Then they should be involved in bringing the gifts of bread and wine to the altar. They participate fully for the first time in the eucharistic prayer, where they "offer the sacrifice." In the Lord's Prayer they express their adoption as children of God.

The bread and wine of the eucharist are sacramental symbols of the presence of Christ, the new covenant that we have with God through Christ, the forgiveness of sin, and the once for all sacrifice of his death and resurrection by which we are saved.

Sharing communion: Finally, the newly initiated and the entire community, their new sisters and brothers in Christ, share in communion. The authenticity of the sacramental symbol needs to be expressed by making communion under both bread and wine possible for all. The bread should look like bread, and the wine should be able to symbolize the blood of Christ.

A unity of symbols: The three sacraments of initiation, though distinct, also manifest a unity. The bath of baptism brings us into contact with the baptism of Jesus, when God said to him, you are my child. It identifies us with the death of Jesus, with whom we die and with whom we also rise again. It brings us the presence of the transforming Holy Spirit.

The chrism and laying on of hands identifies with the anointed one, Jesus Christ. It associates us with his ministry as priest, prophet, king and above all, servant. We are charged with carrying forward the ministry of Christ in the world today.

The meal of eucharistic bread and wine proclaim the meaning of the memorial meal of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the memorial meal of Christ's presence today.

All proclaim that we are members of Christ's body, the Church, which is also his bride and God's holy, pilgrim people. Through these sacraments we all become the sacrament that is the Church.

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Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

Becoming a member of the family: Having made a great journey and entered into one's new home, there is a need to settle in and to reflect on what has happened. Though previously acquainted with the Church in a limited way, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy is intended to help the new members of the family get more fully acquainted and feel completely at home. Neophytes may still have questions: who's who, what is this or that called, why do we do it this way, what does that mean, where is this to be found?

A time for reflection: It is also a time to reflect on the rather intense period of Lenten preparation that has just been completed and especially on the
experiences of celebrating the sacraments of initiation at Easter. One’s perspective has changed now that one is on the “other side” of baptism, confirmation and first eucharist. A great deal has happened in a short period of time, and new questions may well have arisen.

The Easter season — the great fifty days — is the time for mystagogy, and it is intended not only for the neophytes but also for the entire community. All are to deepen their grasp of the mystery of Easter; all are to make the paschal mystery a more central part of their lives through reflection, prayer and works of charity. The entire community has to adjust as its new members take their places.

Taking care of the neophytes: It is extremely important that the newly baptized not suddenly be taken for granted or ignored following their initiation. We may recall the first part of the eighteenth chapter of Matthew’s gospel, in which the “little ones” are to be placed in the midst of the community. Though children are included in this category, so are those who are new in the faith, just beginning their life in the Christian community. Older community members have a serious obligation to continue to walk with the neophytes as they enter into their lives as initiated Christians.

Liturgies. The liturgies of this period are simply those of the Sundays of Easter, with the regular lectionary readings.

Theological Reflection

A time for reflection: It may be appropriate to stop for a moment and reflect on the rite of Christian initiation of adults in stages. We will step back from the individual aspects of this long and complex rite and look at the larger picture. To focus this reflection, we will ask two general questions. With what human and spiritual experience is the RCIA concerned? What is the nature and purpose of the liturgies of the RCIA?

Human Experience

What really is happening to and with people during the process of the RCIA? This can be answered in terms of three words that occur over and over again: faith, conversion, and initiation. What do these mean? What are they?

Faith

To have faith in or to believe in something is to acknowledge that thing as a dominant influence in one’s life, to become totally committed to it, to show obedience to it, to pledge ultimate allegiance to it. This is also true if the object of faith is a person.

Faith in the one true God: In the RCIA we are talking about faith in the one true God. This is the result of growth and of journeying, and is not achieved all at once.

Moving from idolatry to true faith: One reason why faith does not come all at once is that adults who were not brought up as Christians are not coming
from a state of no faith to faith in God. Instead, they already have faith, but in “gods” other than the one true God. They have values, ways of thinking and acting, life priorities, allegiances, understandings of the meaning and purpose of human life, that are not focused on God or derived from God’s revelation. They have one or many “false gods” or “idols” which they obey and to which they profess ultimate allegiance. Of course they may not be able to articulate all of this in so many words, but they express it in the way they live.

**Coming to Christian faith**, then, involves leaving all the false gods behind and coming to know, believe in, the one true God. To owe ultimate allegiance to the Christian God is to discard and deny all allegiance to other gods. As scripture says, our God is a jealous God. This transfer of allegiance is not always easy, and may take time, effort and assistance.

**Faith is a gift:** Faith in the one true God is a gift of that God. It also requires that the human person respond to that gift as fully and faithfully as possible. However it is important to realize that even this response is another gift of God. Why these gifts are given to some and not to others we do not understand.

**Faith is relationship:** Faith first of all is a relationship with God, in which we have faith that God is God. This is its most fundamental meaning. This relationship, however, is expressed and has implications in two areas.

**Faith is expressed in beliefs:** Our faith relationship with God is expressed in doctrines and beliefs. We understand or believe certain things about our God and how God’s love is shown in the world. Both divine revelation and theological reflection tell us about our God, the world, ourselves.

**Faith is expressed in practice:** Our fundamental faith in God is also expressed in terms of the practices of Christian living. Our whole lives have to be consonant with our basic faith relationship with God.

**Conversion**

**Conversion means turning**, and refers to the process or journey by which we turn away from other gods and old ways of living, and turn toward the one true God and new ways of living. Conversion has many layers. One may turn from an immoral way of life to a moral life. One may decide to live a life that is more fully human from one that is less so. These levels of conversion may occur without religion explicitly being involved at all.

**Turn to the true God:** One may successively turn to God (or “gods” in a general way, and then to one God, and then the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and finally the trinitarian God: Father, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit.

**Turn to the Church:** Conversion may also involve turning from an individualistic approach to faith to membership in the Christian Church as a community experience. Finally, one may come to membership in the Roman Catholic church. Conversion is not a neat process, not one in which one step necessarily follows another. It is more like a network, in which the goal may be reached by a multitude of routes.

**Conversion means letting go** of old possessions to grasp new gifts. It means changing one’s way of life, learning to live a new way, leaving the old and finding the new.
Seeking a new home: Conversion includes stepping out from one's old and often very comfortable home, and seeking a new home. Sometimes one may not immediately know where this new home is or what it might be. Even if these are pretty clear, it may still remain a sometimes difficult journey.

Discernment and purification: The journey of conversion includes discerning how much of the old life remains. To what extent does one carry one's old ways along instead of giving them up? Discernment and purification go along with increasing clarity regarding the new life. Decisions — often hard ones — have to be made.

The journey of conversion is not always an easy one. It has its ups and downs, and at times one grows homesick. Growth and change often are uncomfortable. It requires effort and can be long — one needs to keep alert and stay focused on the goal.

A time of tension: During the journey of conversion one lives in a state of tension and suspense. There is a certain disorientation, and one is marginal with respect to both old and new homes; one is not quite out and not quite in. It is standing on the threshold, neither out nor in.

Initiation

Initiation into what? The word “initiation” never exists in a vacuum; it always goes with something else. What are persons initiated into? Merely to say “Church” is not enough.

A life-long process: Initiation is not something that just happens at Easter; it continues for the rest of one's life.

Conversion leads to community: The word initiation refers especially to the new home that one is trying to move into, whereas conversion has more to do with the old home that one is in the process of leaving. The growing new relationship with God leads to the community of those who already have this faith, who have already traveled the road of conversion. This community, the Church, expresses its faith in a variety of ways, which for our purposes can be reduced to four.

Candidates are initiated into the Christian story. This includes scripture, the history of the Church, Christian doctrines and beliefs, and the way in which the community structures itself.

Formation of conscience: They are also initiated into Christian moral values. Their consciences need to be formed so that the way they think about the world and about human relationships will be Christian. They way they live their lives also needs to be Christian.

Initiation into ministry: People are initiated into ministry as well. The Church carries out the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world today, and baptism into the Church means initiation into a ministerial way of life. Just how ministry is exercised depends on gifts, needs and opportunities, and will be different for each member of the Church. The basic orientation and commitment to ministry is for all, however.
Initiation into worship: Finally, candidates are initiated into Christian prayer and worship, both public and private.

Liturgy

The Christian initiation of adults is accomplished through two kinds of liturgies. Both depend on and acknowledge God's grace, love and mercy.

Daily life as liturgy: The first kind of liturgy is the ordinary daily lives of Christian people. These lives preach the good news, show the love of Christ, and carry on Christ's ministry in the world today. Though not structured or formalized, and as diverse as the number of the faithful, this is an essential pillar of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Public worship: The second consists of those community acts of worship that we more commonly know as liturgy. They express, act out, deepen and accomplish what is going on in the process of conversion, growth in faith, and initiation into Christ and the Church. They do this both nonverbally and in their texts.

Liturgy as evangelism: The liturgies of the RCIA are evangelistic: they proclaim and preach the word in season and out of season, from the beginning to the end of the long journey of initiation, and at both the regular liturgies of the Church and in the special liturgies of the RCIA. The word is proclaimed and preached, and people are thereby called to conversion, challenged, consoled, encouraged, led to repentance. The vision of the Christian faith is presented in the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the life of the early Church. How that vision is lived today is proclaimed in the preaching.

The Church and the Word of God: The word of God is seen to be proclaimed, preached and lived by the Church in its worship, through the liturgical year and in the structure of various liturgies. The word comes through the Church and is received by the Church. The Church is formed and established by the word of God.

Response to the word: The liturgical proclamation and preaching of the word of God calls for response, both liturgically and in the lives of all who hear it. The baptized are those who have responded, but who also have to continue to respond at every moment. They provide examples to those who are drawn to respond for the first time.

Liturgy as journey: The liturgies of the RCIA act out the journey from one home to the new home of the Church. The rite of admission to the order of catechumens represents the first act in which the candidate publicly steps away from the old life and begins to move toward the new. It is a turning of one's back on the old, a decision to move out on the journey toward the new. At a much later stage of the journey the rite of election or enrollment of names is again a public commitment, more firm this time, of the decision to leave the old and be reborn.
Steps on the journey: The liturgies of the period of the catechumenate and the period of purification and enlightenment are individual steps on the journey by which one slowly, even painfully moves toward the new home. That the candidates are not yet there is indicated in various ways. They have special names, catechumens and elect; they are prayed over in special ways by the community; they are dismissed from the full eucharistic celebration; they are expected to come for catechesis, and to desire this; they are challenged by the word of God, and their spiritual journey is discerned the community. They are singled out by the texts of the prayers — minor exorcisms, exorcisms, blessings, prayers over the catechumens and elect, scrutinies and presentations — which repeatedly speak of the old which still has to be left behind, and the new which lies before them.

Candidates are in-between: In all of these liturgies the in-between or marginal or "liminal" state of the candidates is depicted liturgically and hence experientially.

Entering the new home: The celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter vigil and the Sunday liturgies of the Easter season all say, "You are now at home, you are sisters and brothers with Jesus Christ and with us, you are family."

Liturgy and Church: The liturgies of the RCIA show the Church into which the candidates desire to be initiated, though the whole Church will not be revealed until their Easter celebration of the sacraments. The Church is the community which gathers for worship, after a week of private prayer, ministry, catechesis, and committed Christian life. Worship leads to the same kind of life the following week. The liturgical assembly is the local, concrete manifestation of the Church, in union with the Church throughout the world and with the Church through the centuries. It is a Church of worship, of participation, of celebration, of shared ministry. It is an inclusive Church, and one that is rooted and centered in the death and Church into which the candidates desire to be initiated, though the whole Church will not be revealed until their Easter celebration of the sacraments.

The story of God's love: The liturgies of the RCIA tell the story of God's love for humanity from creation until now, especially as this is manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Because the Church continually and in diverse ways tells this story, we can invoke God's Holy Spirit upon us and the world to heal wounds of division, bring people into unity, inspire them to reach out to others, and have hope for a future in which God's realm will be manifest. Past, present and future are always part of our vision.

Word and sacrament. Finally, the liturgies of the RCIA move from word to sacrament, both being ways in which Christ is present and active in our world. This has already been considered at length in the discussion of the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

God's Grace

Grace and temptation: Wonderful though it is, the RCIA can also be a source of temptation, and can lead us away from God rather than toward God. Its length, the many liturgies and other dimensions of its periods and steps, the
stress that is placed on the roles and responsibilities of Church members and candidates — all these can lead us to regard the RCIA as something that we do. That would be a terrible mistake and a distortion of the basic nature of the RCIA.

**It is God's work:** Faith, conversion and initiation are first of all acts of God, the outpouring of God's grace, mercy and love. Even our response to God's grace is a gift of God. Everything that happens in the RCIA begins with an expression of God's love, and is carried to fruition by the grace of God. The entire journey of faith, conversion and initiation is an act of praise to God, whose initiative we honor.
Special Cases

Shortened Rites for Unbaptized Persons

The second half of the book: Part II of the 1987 edition of RCIA plus appendix 1 and appendix 3 occupy half of the new edition. This half contains adaptations of the RCIA for "particular circumstances" when the full, normative rite described in part I is not possible or appropriate. In addition, part II contains the rite of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The adapted liturgies of part II plus appendices may be divided into two categories. One concerns adaptations made for unbaptized persons, including older children and persons in danger of death. The other has to do with adaptations made for baptized persons, including uncatechized Catholics who wish to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and first eucharist, and persons baptized in other Churches who wish to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The latter may be catechized or uncatechized.

Shortened rites: The ways in which these liturgies resemble those of part I will be summarized here, and emphasis placed on the ways in which they differ from the ordinary, normative rite of Christian initiation.

Three adaptations of the full RCIA are given for unbaptized persons: the rite of Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age (pages 149-185), the rite of Christian initiation of adults in exceptional circumstances (pages 187-206), and the rite of Christian initiation of a person in danger of death (pages 207-221).

Children of Catechetical Age

The rite of Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age is simplified both in structure and in language. It accepts that older children are not infants and in many respects can speak and decide matters for themselves. It also recognizes that they are not fully mature, are living with their families, are much influenced by companions and schoolmates, and are dependent on parents and teachers in many ways. Though the rite does not explicitly define catechetical age, it appears from the text and notes that this is thought of as between about seven and fourteen years of age.

Not infants and not adults: These children may be brought to the Church to be initiated by their parents, or may seek it on their own initiative. They are old enough to receive and develop a personal faith, and to undergo a conversion that is their own but related to their years. As with adults, their initiation may be extended over a period of time, and it is to include catechesis, formation, and discernment of the children's spiritual progress.

The home and school situations of the children need to be taken into account. At school they may be with children who are already baptized and who are preparing for confirmation and eucharist. Their own initiation will progress gradually within this setting. At home it is hoped that parents will be
as supportive as possible, help the children with catechesis and instruction, and give them good example of Christian living.

A group of children: If possible, several children who are seeking Christian initiation will be gathered together to support each other and give example to one another as they progress as catechumens.

Participation of the community: The liturgical book states that “it is generally preferable not” to celebrate these adapted rites with the whole parish community, that is, at a principal Sunday eucharist. However it is definitely expected that representatives of the community will take part, especially parents, family and friends as well as catechists and pastors.

Adapt the rites for the children: Perhaps even more than with adults, celebrants and other ministers are to adapt the model rites provided to make them suitable for the particular children involved. The rite of Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age is divided into three steps: acceptance into the order of catechumens, penitential rites (scrutiny), and celebration of the sacraments of initiation. In addition, there is one “period,” that of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy.

Liturgy of Acceptance

With friends and family: This rite is to be celebrated with a small congregation, but with the active participation of all those present. It is asserted that a large group might make the children uncomfortable. If possible the parents should be present and assume the ministry of sponsors; otherwise, other members of the Church community will act as sponsors.

At the church door: This liturgy takes place in the church, or elsewhere if that is more appropriate. The first part of the rite may be celebrated at the entrance to the church building, and the second part within the body of the church, as with adults.

Language adapted for children: Though the structure of the rite of acceptance is not much changed from that described in part I, the style of language and content of texts are substantially different, having been adapted for use with children.

Greeting and dialogue: This liturgy begins with a greeting, followed by an opening dialogue. The candidates’ first acceptance of the gospel is not used, but in its place there is a brief catechesis by the celebrant regarding what it is that the children are undertaking.

The affirmation by the parents (sponsors) and the assembly begins by instructing the children to “go and ask your parents (sponsors) to come and join them” so that they may give their assent. The parents are then asked if they consent to the children’s desire to be prepared for baptism. The usual questions of affirmation are then addressed to the parents (sponsors) and congregation.

The signing of the candidates with the cross, either on the forehead alone or also of other senses, is also carried out. Again the texts are adapted for children, and in some respects they are more forceful than those given for adults.
Come hear the word of God: The children are invited into the body of the church for the liturgy of the word; they can now take their places in the Christian assembly. Scripture readings are chosen that are most appropriate for the children at this stage of their journey of conversion. A brief homily is given, it is followed by a period of silent prayer, and then a suitable song is sung.

A bible or book of the gospels may be presented, and a litany of intercessions follows. Finally, there is a concluding prayer over the children.

Dismissal: It is assumed that the eucharist will usually not be celebrated (though it is permitted). At the end of the rite of acceptance, therefore, the children and all present are simply dismissed with "Go in peace..." If there is a eucharist, the children are dismissed first in the usual way.

No liturgies are provided for what in the adult rite is the period of the catechumenate.

Penitential Rites (Scrutinies)
The rite of Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age has no liturgy corresponding to the rite of election or enrollment of names. However one, or if possible two penitential liturgies are to be included. These correspond in a general way to the scrutinies of the adult rite.

The second step. The penitential liturgies mark the second step in the children's Christian initiation, and are of considerable significance in the total process of conversion and growth in faith. There needs to be discernment to see that the children are approaching the degree of faith and understanding that is required for baptism, as this liturgy is to be celebrated in the period immediately preceding the celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

Godparents and baptized schoolmates participate in the celebration, and the liturgy is to benefit the baptized children as well as the catechumens. It is celebrated during Lent, if the catechumens are to be baptized at Easter.

A liturgy of the word. In structure, the penitential rite (scrutiny) is a liturgy of the word, with greeting and introduction, opening prayer, readings and homily. A litany of intercessions and a prayer of exorcism follow. Unlike the adult scrutinies, however, the prebaptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens is celebrated after the prayer of exorcism, and then the children may be dismissed. The prayers of exorcism are simpler than those for adults, and do not portray the old life in such dark images.

Preparation for penance: In addition to the use of these penitential services for Christian initiation in its strict sense, the same liturgies may also be used in the preparation of baptized children for the sacrament of penance. Thus there may be two groups of children present, and the same service may have two purposes. The wisdom of this doubling up may be questioned. Confusion should not arise regarding the sacrament of penance: it is not one of the sacraments of initiation.
Sacraments of Initiation

**Baptism, confirmation and eucharist** are celebrated in the usual way, though the language of several invitations to prayer have been adapted for the sake of the children; the texts of the major prayers are unchanged. If possible these sacraments will be celebrated at the Easter vigil or on a Sunday.

**Baptized children too:** The notes envision the possibility that baptized children may complete their Christian initiation by celebrating the sacraments of confirmation and the eucharist at the same liturgy in which the catechumens celebrate baptism. The distinct status of the two groups of children needs to be respected.

**Profession of faith:** The principal adaptation made in this liturgy has to do with the community's profession of faith. After the blessing over the water and prior to the childrens' renunciation of sin and profession of faith, the adults present — parents or guardians, godparents, and others — may be invited to profess their faith. There is an invitation by the celebrant, and then either the Apostles' or Nicene creed is said. The purpose of placing the renewal of baptismal promises by the adults at this place in the liturgy is to give example to the children and is a way of making a commitment to the children that the adults will help them grow up in the faith they profess.

**Mystagogy for children:** The period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy is to be arranged by adapting the guidelines given for adults.

Exceptional Circumstances

**Simplified rite for adults.** The local bishop may for good reasons allow the Christian initiation of an adult using a liturgy that is more simple than the usual, complete rite. This is the rite of Christian initiation of adults in exceptional circumstances.

**Two types of circumstances** are envisioned that would justify abbreviating the ordinary, normal rite.

**The full rite is not possible:** It may be possible that events prevent a person from going through all the steps of the regular catechumenate. Reasons might include sickness, old age, change of residence, long absence for travel, etc. The possibility is also considered that someone might have begun the catechumenate in the usual way, but was forced to interrupt it for some reason. He or she can then complete the catechumenate by receiving abbreviated forms of some of the rites that were missed. This is the form of Christian initiation of adults that usually will be celebrated for a person in danger of death if a priest or deacon is celebrant.

**The full rite is not necessary:** The second type of circumstance is when persons present themselves who are well along the road to Christian conversion and show a high degree of religious maturity. In this case the bishop may decide that the person can be baptized without the usual delay.

**Catechesis and preparation.** In all cases the candidate must have had adequate catechesis and preparation, have good motives, and an adequate degree of conversion and faith.
Both expanded and abbreviated forms of this liturgy are described. However, only the latter is given in full, and it will be considered first. Even the abbreviated form should if possible take place on a Sunday, in the presence of some or all of the local community.

Receiving the candidate: The rite of Christian initiation of adults in exceptional circumstances borrows much of the rite of receiving the candidate from the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens. It therefore begins with a greeting and opening dialogue, there is a declaration by the candidate, and an affirmation by the godparents. Finally the candidate is invited to the liturgy of the word. The signing with the cross is omitted.

The liturgy of the word begins as usual, with readings, homily and litanic intercessions for the candidate. An optional penitential rite may then follow; this consists of the confiteor. There is a prayer of exorcism, which resembles the minor exorcism of the period of the catechumenate more than the exorcisms of the period of purification and enlightenment. To conclude the liturgy of the word the prebaptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens is celebrated.

The celebration of baptism itself is only slightly abbreviated. It begins with the usual invitation to prayer, but there is no litany of the saints. As usual, there is either a prayer of blessing over the water or in the Easter season, one of thanksgiving over blessed water. Then comes the renunciation of sin and profession of faith. (As the prebaptismal anointing was included in the liturgy of the word, it is not celebrated here.)

Baptism and lighted candle: The baptism itself follows, and then the presentation of a lighted candle and, optionally, clothing with a white garment.

The sacrament of confirmation is celebrated in the usual way. Similarly, the liturgy of the eucharist is celebrated as usual.

Expanded liturgies: If time and circumstances allow, this rite may be expanded through the addition of other liturgies of the ordinary, normative rite of Christian initiation, including part or all of the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, and the minor exorcisms and blessings. Likewise, elements of the rite of election or the liturgies of the period of purification and enlightenment may be used. Detailed suggestions regarding such expansions are given in the notes. However it is important that candidates receive a full catechesis, that the liturgies are celebrated with the active participation of representatives of the community, and that an adequate postbaptismal catechesis is provided.

Danger of Death

For lay presiders: The rite of Christian initiation of a person in danger of death is ordinarily to be presided over by lay persons, though priests and deacons may use it in emergencies. For the latter reason it includes the celebration of confirmation, at which a lay person does not preside.

Danger of death: This liturgy is intended for those, whether catechumens or not, who are in danger of death but still able to hear and respond to the questions involved in this rite, and able to participate in it generally. They
must give evidence of their conversion to Christ, and promise that they will complete their postbaptismal catechesis if they recover from their illness.

At the point of death: It is recognized that if a person is at the point of death (in contrast to being merely in danger of death), the very short form of baptism may be used. One simply pours water and says the trinitarian formula; if possible the creed is said as well. This liturgy is alluded to but not described in this book. It is considered in more detail in the rite of baptism for children in danger of death when no priest or deacon is available.

Shape of the liturgy: The semi-emergency liturgy presented here consists of introductory rites, liturgy of the word, celebration of baptism, celebration of confirmation (by a priest), celebration of viaticum, and concluding rites.

The introductory rites contain a short opening dialogue and an affirmation by the godparent and witnesses.

For the liturgy of the word there is simply a Gospel reading, intercessions for the candidate, and a prayer over the candidate.

The celebration of baptism begins with the renunciation of sin and profession of faith, followed by the baptism itself. If the celebrant is a deacon, the anointing after baptism follows; a priest confirms instead. If blessed water can be obtained, it may be used. Otherwise ordinary water is used.

Communion as viaticum is given after baptism (or confirmation). There is an invitation to prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the usual communion rite, and a prayer after communion.

Conclusion: A variety of concluding rites are provided, depending on whether the liturgy has included confirmation or viaticum.

Rites for Baptized Persons

Two kinds of liturgy for the baptized: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults contains two kinds of liturgies for baptized persons. One is for those who were baptized in the Catholic Church but who never received adequate postbaptismal catechesis, and did not celebrate first eucharist. Usually, they also have not been confirmed.

Becoming a Catholic Christian: The second type of liturgy is for persons who were baptized in other Christian Churches and who now desire to become Catholics. They may or may not have received postbaptismal catechesis.

The completion of Christian initiation by uncatechized Catholics involves the renewal of baptismal promises, the sacrament of confirmation if this has not already been celebrated, and first eucharist.

Reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church involves the profession of faith using the Nicene creed, the sacrament of confirmation if this has not already been celebrated, and first eucharist. It also includes a profession of Catholic faith and act of reception.
Preparation is required: Both categories of baptized persons require preparation before they celebrate the completion of initiation or reception. Uncatechized Catholics should receive a thorough catechesis in the Christian faith, according to their individual needs. Candidates for reception who are also uncatechized will need the same type of catechetical preparation. Other candidates for reception may not require further catechesis in the Christian faith, but may need instruction in the Catholic expression of that faith. Penitential services and the sacrament of penance are suggested elements of the preparation of all candidates.

Adapted RCIA liturgies: Pastoral experience in North America over the last ten years has shown that an adapted, RCIA-like rite is suitable and beneficial in the preparation of uncatechized but baptized persons. Candidates for reception who are already catechized may still benefit from an adaptation of the Lenten phase of the RCIA. Some phases of such an adapted process may coincide with the RCIA itself, that is, with the regular initiation of unbaptized persons.

Common celebrations: The following all may be celebrated at the same Easter vigil liturgy: the celebration of all three sacraments of initiation by unbaptized persons, the celebration of confirmation and first eucharist by Catholics who are completing their Christian initiation, and the celebration of confirmation, first eucharist and other rites by those being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Blessings and questions: This kind of pastoral experience has had its blessings, but has also revealed problems and raised serious questions. It has become clear that special sensitivity needs to be expressed in three areas. The significance of baptism, and hence the distinction between baptized and unbaptized persons needs to be respected. In addition, there needs to be a sensitivity to ecumenical realities. The validity of baptism in other Churches needs to be respected, and the tensions that may accompany change in Church membership should be taken into account. Finally, there needs to be sensitivity to the individuality of each candidate, especially those who desire to be received.

Rites for use in Canada: New liturgies presented in the 1987 Canadian edition of RCIA make an effort to express these sensitivities, and should be helpful in pastoral practice.

Baptism

Respect for baptism: The liturgical book states clearly that uncatechized adults have a status different from that of catechumens, even though they may not yet have actually heard the message of Christ. Because of their baptism they are already members of the Church and children of God.

Baptism cannot be repeated: Some reflections of the Congregation for Divine Worship¹ emphasize the point even more strongly, reminding us that baptism cannot be repeated. Because one is baptized, membership in Christ

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¹ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, "Reflections on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Chapter 4" (8 March 1973). Notitiae 9 (1973) 274-278. [Documents on the Liturgy 302]
and in the Church cannot be lost, even if the baptized person is not brought up as a Christian or does not live up to the responsibilities of baptism.

**Few conditional baptisms:** Finally, the introductory notes to the rite of reception point out that baptism cannot be repeated and that baptisms celebrated in other Churches should not be questioned without serious reason. Conditional baptism should be rare.

**Baptism is not magic,** however. If one was baptized in the faith of the Church as an infant, one must later learn to live that baptism personally. At some point in later life, the baptized person needs to accept Christ's call, profess his or her faith and deepen it, and express it in a charitable and ministerial Christian life. This requires catechesis and learning to live as a member of the Church community.

**Candidates, not catechumens:** This is simply Christian growing up. It is not a catechumenate, and it is inappropriate to use the terms catechumen and elect for baptized persons; they have already been chosen by God in baptism.

**Everything is based on baptism:** The further conversion which uncatechized adults require is based on the baptism they have already received; they need to develop the effects of their baptism.

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**Uncatechized Catholics**

**Preparation of uncatechized adults:** Chapter 4 of part II of the 1987 edition of *RCIA* provides general directions regarding the preparation of uncatechized adults for confirmation and eucharist. These pastoral guidelines have been enfleshed and made concrete in appendix 3: other rites for use in Canada. This appendix has also been influenced by the previously mentioned 1973 reflections of the Congregation for Divine Worship.

**An adapted RCIA** that uncatechized Catholics might undertake would look like the following.

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**Welcome**

**The rite of welcoming candidates** for confirmation and eucharist replaces but is parallel to the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens. It is desirable that this liturgy be celebrated during a community eucharist, but not at the same eucharist at which the rite of acceptance is celebrated.

**Not at the church door:** Because the candidates are already baptized, they are seated in the church among the faithful. After the regular greeting of the community by the presider, the first part of the rite of welcoming begins.

**Shape of the liturgy:** The rite of welcoming is very close in structure to the rite of acceptance. It consists of two parts, receiving the candidates, and the liturgy of the word.
Receiving the Candidates

Greeting and dialogue: The celebrant greets the candidates in a friendly way, announces their names to the community, and then engages in a brief dialogue regarding their intentions. Though texts are given, both the celebrant and the candidates may use their own words. The model response of the candidate speaks of coming closer to Jesus, rather than coming to know him for the first time.

Declaration of intention: An address followed by a question entitled candidates' declaration of intention is parallel to the candidates' first acceptance of the gospel in the rite of acceptance. The address refers to the fact that the candidates are already baptized, and speaks of following Jesus more closely and coming to the fullness of truth. The question asks if the candidates are ready to deepen what was begun in their baptism. To show that the process is communal and not simply individual, candidates are asked if they are ready to join the Church community in a life of prayer and service.

The affirmation by the sponsors and the assembly is similar in form to that in the rite of acceptance. Sponsors are asked to help them “complete this journey.” A question to the community and concluding collect follow.

The signing of the candidates with the cross is also included. As an option, candidates may be presented with a cross or crucifix.

Invitation to the word of God: Finally, the candidates are invited to listen to the word of God with the community.

Word of God

Liturgy of the word: The second part of the rite of welcoming is the liturgy of the word. The readings and homily proceed as usual. Candidates may then be given a bible or New Testament, and a litany of intercession for them follows. A final prayer over the candidates speaks of their being called to become full members of the Church. God is asked to give them joy and hope, and to strengthen and help them grow in Christ’s service.

No dismissal: In these and subsequent liturgies, if the eucharist is to follow, the baptized Catholics are invited to stay with the community, even through they cannot share communion.

Formation

The period of Christian formation replaces but is parallel to the period of the catechumenate. Again, it contains catechesis, learning to live and minister like Christians through the example and support of members of the community, and liturgical rites.

A gradual process: The preparation of uncatechized adults requires a considerable time, during which the faith they received in baptism grows and takes deep root through the formation they receive. Catechesis and other non-liturgical aspects of their formation may resemble that of real catechumens; however, the fact that they are already baptized needs always to be taken into account. Their catechesis is postbaptismal, not prebaptismal.
Liturgies of the word are to be celebrated during the period of Christian formation, just as they are during the period of the catechumenate. The structures of the two liturgies of the word are somewhat different, however. That for the period of Christian formation begins with a greeting and prayer following the opening song. A period of silence follows the readings rather than a homily. Finally, litanies of intercession are suggested. In both cases the liturgy concludes with prayers and blessings.

Prayers for strength: In place of the minor exorcisms of the period of the catechumenate, prayers for strength are substituted. These recognize the baptized status of the candidates.

Lenten Renewal

The rite of calling candidates to Lenten renewal replaces but is parallel to the rite of election or enrollment of names. This liturgy is preferably celebrated during Mass, but not at the same Mass at which the rite of election or enrollment of names is celebrated. It is best celebrated on Sunday (or another day) at the beginning of Lent, but not on Ash Wednesday.

Shape of the liturgy: The structure of the rite of calling candidates to Lenten renewal is essentially the same as that of the rite of election or enrollment of names. After the readings and homily, there is a presentation of the candidates, in which it is noted that they have already been baptized.

Affirmation by the sponsors: Two forms of the affirmation by the sponsors and the assembly are given. It is of interest that renewal of baptismal promises at the Easter vigil is mentioned as part of the completion of Christian initiation in addition to celebrating the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist.

An act of recognition replaces the invitation and enrollment of names of the rite of election or enrollment of names. The community is said to recognize the candidates' desire to complete their initiation. The candidates are invited to be “one with us during Lent, and they are assured of the assembly’s prayers and example.

A litany of intercession and concluding prayer follow.

Presentations

Presentations of the creed and of the Lord's Prayer similar to those of the period of purification and enlightenment are also suggested for the period of Lenten renewal.

The presentation of the creed is recommended for the third week of Lent, and the presentation of the Lord’s Prayer for the fifth week of Lent. Both are to be celebrated in the presence of the community, but preferably outside Mass. It is thus implied that these presentation will not be celebrated during the same liturgy at which the presentations are made to the elect.

The structures of these presentations are the same as those for the elect, and the scripture readings suggested are identical. However, the addresses prior to the presentation of the creed and the prayers that conclude both
presentations are entirely different than those used during the normative RCIA. The concluding prayers especially recall that the candidates are already baptized.

Penance

It is suggested that baptized persons celebrate both penitential services and the sacrament of penance during the period of Lenten renewal.

Penitential services (or penance services — the terms are used interchangeably) are recommended during Lent for baptized Catholics who are completing their initiation. These replace the scrutinies celebrated with the elect. By their nature they do not take place within Mass and are thereby separated from the scrutinies.

Preparation for the sacrament of penance: In addition to the usual spiritual effects sought in such services, the text states that they will help candidates prepare for the sacrament of penance. It is pointed out that the baptism which the candidates have already celebrated needs to be kept in mind. Original sin should not be mentioned, but rather personal sin and temptation.

Suggestions for penance services: An outline is given for such a penitential service, and references are made to additional resources.

Sacrament of penance: Celebration of the sacrament of penance is recommended for baptized but uncatechized Catholics, “according to their individual consciences.” Either the rite of reconciliation of several penitents with individual confession and absolution or the rite of reconciliation of individual penitents may be used.

Penance and baptism: The rationale stated for celebrating the sacrament of penance is of interest. It is said that in the early Church the sacrament of penance was regarded as a “second baptism.” It is then concluded that the sacrament of penance “may occupy a place similar to the sacrament of baptism for the elect.”

Creed and lighted candle: Candidates are encouraged to recite the creed before or after the sacrament of penance. In addition, “it is appropriate” to present candidates with lighted baptismal candles afterwards. However, other rites associated with baptism, such as the white garment, ephphetha, or anointings, are not to be used; see footnote 1.

Sacraments of Initiation

Finally, notes at the beginning of Appendix 3 state that the completion of initiation of baptized Catholics “may take place during the Easter vigil.”

After Easter

The additional formation experienced during the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy is also applicable to baptized persons who have completed their initiation at Easter. At this point these persons need not be distinguished from those who were unbaptized and celebrated all three sacraments of initiation at Easter.
Candidates for Reception

Into the full communion of the Catholic Church: Chapter 5 of part II of the 1987 edition of RCIA provides the rite of reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Appendix 1, celebration at the Easter vigil of the sacraments of initiation and of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church, is also relevant. Finally, the other rites for use in Canada presented in appendix 3 also are intended for use in the preparation of candidates for reception as well as for use by uncatechized Catholics.

Change in title: The title of this rite has been changed from reception of baptized Christians into full communion with the Catholic Church (1974) to reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church (1987). This change was made to be more faithful to the original Latin text. Two theological points are at stake. The first is that according to Vatican II, all Christians baptized in other Churches or ecclesial bodies are in some way already in communion with the Catholic Church. The old title implied that this was not so, and that such persons were moving from a state of no communion to communion with the Catholic Church. The emphasis in the new title is that this communion is now full, rather than incomplete. The second point is that the new title better describes the Catholic Church as a communion; the older version had a more institutional flavor.

The liturgy of reception is very sensitive ecumenically. It is composed so “that no greater burden than necessary” is required, and “any appearance of triumphalism” is to be avoided. No “abjuration of heresy” is required, but only a profession of faith. It may be best to celebrate it with only a few friends and relatives in attendance, and in no way should candidates for reception be equated with catechumens.

Preparation for reception: Candidates for reception are to receive both doctrinal and spiritual preparation that is appropriate to their needs. The rite seems to assume that they are catechized, but need to learn about the Catholic Church. They may worship with the Catholic community during the period of preparation, but may not share the eucharist.

Sacrament of penance: The preparation of candidates for reception includes the sacrament of penance.

Reception should take place during Mass, and its high point is eucharistic communion; confirmation will also be celebrated.

Confirmation: The only confirmation in other Churches that is accepted by the Catholic Church is that celebrated by the Eastern Churches; there it is usually called chrismation. Though other Churches may have liturgies by the name of confirmation, they are not considered equivalent to Catholic confirmation.

Eastern Christians: Candidates who are Eastern Christians need not celebrate the rite of reception, but simply make a profession of Catholic faith. This consists of the recitation of the Nicene creed and a brief additional statement to the effect that the person believes and professes what the Catholic Church “believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God.” The Catholic Church accepts not only the baptism of Eastern Christians, but
also their confirmation and eucharist. It seems unfortunate, however, that so little significance is given to the sharing of eucharist for the first time with the local Church community.

**Eucharistic communion**: The most important part of the rite of reception is the sharing of eucharistic communion with the local Church community. The theological status of eucharistic celebrations in other Churches is not brought up; the only point that is made is that the newly received have not previously shared the Catholic eucharist as members of the Catholic Church. Eucharistic communion follows the celebration of confirmation, and the profession of the Nicene creed. The profession of Catholic faith and act of reception are relatively minor elements, and should not be inflated.

**Reception at the Easter Vigil**: Appendix 1 gives a suggested order of service when reception is celebrated at the Easter Vigil together with the sacraments of initiation. In order to minimize repetition of the creed, candidates for reception profess their faith using the baptismal form of the Apostles’ creed, and do so together with the community at large as it renews its baptismal faith. Furthermore, this profession of faith is inserted between the end of the baptismal liturgy and the celebration of confirmation and is followed immediately by the act of reception. Thus the order is baptism, renewal of baptismal promises, celebration of reception, celebration of confirmation, and the liturgy of the eucharist.

**Rites for use in Canada**, already discussed in connection with the completion of initiation of uncatechized Catholics, are applied as well to the preparation of candidates for reception. When used for candidates for reception, they differ only the following respects from their use for uncatechized Catholics who are completing their Christian initiation.

**Affirmation by sponsors**: In the rite of welcoming candidates for confirmation and eucharist, there is a separate affirmation by the sponsors for candidates for reception. It asks if the sponsors are ready to help them as they prepare to be received.

**Dismissal**: Candidates for reception are dismissed at the end of the liturgy of the word (if eucharist follows), whereas uncatechized Catholics are not dismissed.

**At the beginning of Lent**: When candidates are presented in the rite of calling candidates to Lenten renewal, there is a small variation in the text depending on whether uncatechized Catholics or candidates or reception (or both) are involved.

**Time for the celebration of reception**: Appendix 3 recommends that reception be celebrated during the Easter season, whereas appendix 1 permits this at the Easter vigil.

**Reflections**

**Helpful rites in appendix 3**: The other rites for use in Canada presented in appendix 3 of the new liturgical book are quite suitable to accompany and carry out the postbaptismal catechetical preparation of uncatechized Catholics who desire to complete their Christian initiation. These rites are models, and are to be adapted as required.
Respect for baptism: They respect the fact that uncatechized Catholics have already been baptized, and are already members of the Church. The texts given are very sensitive on this point.

Full membership? One reservation that may be expressed has to do with the use of the phrase "full membership" or the equivalent. This is used seven times in these rites. The concept of full membership and hence of less-than-full membership in the Church is not mentioned in the RCIA itself or in the rite of reception; it appears only in appendix 3. In fact the RCIA states clearly that uncatechized Catholics are nonetheless members of the Church. There are ways in which this phrase is justifiable and can be understood correctly. Nevertheless, its use also implies a dangerous division of baptized persons into those who are full members and those who are just members. Some Protestant Churches have used this distinction for some time, and are realizing that it undercuts baptism. They are now trying to avoid the use of the term full membership. We should not fall into this trap either.

Sacrament of penance? A second reservation has to do with the rationale given for including the sacrament of penance in the process of preparation. This rationale is drawn from the 1973 Roman document referred to earlier. It ignores the fact that the meaning and practice of baptism have changed drastically between the fourth and fifth centuries and the present, and that the phrase "second baptism" as applied to fourth century penance is a pious or spiritual usage, not a phrase used with theological intent. Though the practice of the sacrament of penance as part of the preparation of candidates may be quite justifiable, it is important to remember that it is not one of the sacraments of initiation. Associating the creed and paschal candle with the sacrament of penance seems a questionable practice.

Uncatechized candidates for reception: The other rites for use in Canada are suitable for use with some candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. That is, they are suitable if such persons are uncatechized.

Catechized candidates for reception: However it may be questioned whether they really are suitable for catechized candidates for reception. In this regard it may be recalled that one basis for using the abbreviated rite of Christian initiation of adults in exceptional circumstances is if candidates are well prepared spiritually. Well prepared candidates for reception might also simply receive the rite of reception without celebrating any of the rites of appendix 3.

Dismissal of candidates for reception: Finally, one may ask if baptisms celebrated in other Churches are adequately respected if candidates for reception are dismissed in the course of other rites for use in Canada, whereas uncatechized Catholics are not dismissed.
Brief Notes
Our Next Issue

The millenium of the Christian faith in the Ukraine and among Ukrainian people around the world is being celebrated this year.

The next issue of the Bulletin will describe some of the rich liturgical heritage of the Ukrainian Church for those of other liturgical traditions. It will try to help Western Christians participate intelligibly in Ukrainian liturgies.

A Canadian Institute in Pastoral Liturgy


Audience: This Institute is intended for people working in liturgies in parish, school, or community, and offers topics which will help them to understand their role better and carry it out more effectively. Parish liturgy committee members, planners, ministers, musicians, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and others interested in the Church's worship can benefit from this type of learning.

Topics planned for 1988:

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Recognition: The Institute is arranged so that students may return in subsequent summers for other topics. A certificate will be developed for successful completion of an appropriate variety of topics. Fuller details will be available upon registration.
Practical approach: The sessions offer in 1988 will blend theory and practice in a way that adults can learn comfortably, and be equipped to bring this learning into the worship life of their parish or community. Eucharist and daily prayer will be encouraged as an opportunity for deepening of worship and prayer during the Institute.

Registration: Students may register for one to four courses. No previous university studies are required. These courses may be taken for academic credit, as arranged with the Faculty of Theology.


For further details and registration forms, contact:

Summer Institute in Pastoral Liturgy
Faculty of Theology
Saint Paul University
223 Main Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 1C4

Summer School for Liturgical Musicians

The Ontario Liturgical Conference is sponsoring a Summer School for Liturgical Musicians at St. Michael's College, Toronto, August 7-11, 1988. This four-day program of lectures, seminars, interaction, and celebrations is designed for all pastoral musicians and those who serve in leadership roles in parish and school communities.

The 1988 School offers courses on Sunday eucharist, Holy Week, RCIA, and liturgy planning. Focus sessions include repertoire for parish choirs, sight singing, proclamation, music for the RCIA, and choral direction techniques.

Music and arts sessions are planned for organists, guitarists, choir members, cantors and liturgical dancers.

Keynote speaker is Dr. Mary Malone. There will be an evening performance of The Annunciation by The Inner Stage company of Toronto, and presentations on the spirituality of the liturgical musician.

For further information, contact:

Summer School for Liturgical Musicians
Ontario Liturgical Conference
700 King Street West
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 1C7