

# The Catechumenal Process

## Periods of Formation and Liturgical Steps

"The steps lead to periods of inquiry and growth; alternatively the periods may also be seen as preparing for the ensuing step." (n. 7)

## EVANGELIZATION...

n. 7.1; cf. n. 36-40

### The Journey of the Unbaptized Person

"The rite of Christian initiation...is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully." (n. 1)

"The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place." (n. 5)

*For the guidelines related to this group of people, see Part I of the RCIA Text, n. 36-251 and Ap. III, n. 1-24.*

### Explanation of This Period

"Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the preceding period...is of great importance. It is a time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all. Thus those who are not yet Christians, their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to him." (n. 36)

### The Responsibilities of the Church in the Catechumenal Process

"The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously." (n. 4)

"[T]he people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. Therefore the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ." (n. 9)

"In the various circumstances of daily life...the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities. Hence the entire community must help the candidates and the catechumens throughout the process of initiation." (n. 9)

### The Role of the Church in This Period

"During the period of evangelization and precatechumenate, the faithful should remember that for the Church and its members the supreme purpose of the apostolate is that Christ's message is made known to the world by word and deed and that his grace is communicated. They should therefore show themselves ready to give the candidates evidence of the spirit of the Christian community and to welcome them into their homes, into personal conversation, and into community gatherings." (n. 9.1, cf. n. 38)

### The Journey of the Baptized, Uncatechized Person

This refers to those "adults who were baptized as infants either as Roman Catholics or as members of another Christian community but did not receive further catechetical formation nor, consequently, the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist." (n. 400)

*For the guidelines related to this group of people, see Part II, Section 4 of the RCIA Text, n. 400-472 and Ap. III, n. 25-29.*

### Length of Formation for This Group

"As in the case of catechumens, the preparation of these adults requires a considerable time, during which the faith infused in baptism must grow in them and take deep root through the pastoral formation they receive." (n. 401, cf. n. 36)

### The Journey of the Baptized, Catechized Person Who Is Not Catholic

"[The] doctrinal and spiritual preparation [of those who have already been baptized in another Church or ecclesial community]...should be determined according to the individual case." (Ap. III, n. 30)

*For the guidelines related to this group of people, see Ap. III, n. 30-37 and Part II, Section 5 of the RCIA Text, n. 475-486.*

### Length of Formation for This Group

"Those baptized Christians who have lived as Christians and need only instruction in the Catholic tradition and a degree of probation within the Catholic community should not be asked to undergo a full program parallel to the catechumenate." (Ap. III, n. 31)

## ... AND PRECATECHUMENATE

n. 36-40, Ap. III, n.1

### Name for the Unbaptized Person During This Period

The unbaptized person can be called an *inquirer* (cf. n. 39), or a *candidate* for acceptance into the order of catechumens. (cf. n. 38)

### Length of This Period and Type of Formation

"The first period consists of inquiry on the part of the candidates and of evangelization and the precatechumenate on the part of the Church." (n. 7.1)

\*During this period, the RCIA Text, and therefore this chart use the term "candidate" for a person who is a "candidate for the Order of Catechumens."

#### Pastoral Aspects

- "The [catechumens] are to receive help and attention so that with a purified and clearer intention they may cooperate with God's grace. Opportunities should be provided for them to meet families and other groups of Christians." (n. 38)
- "A sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission." (n. 10)
- "In preparation for the Rite of Acceptance, inquirers should show...
  - Evidence of...an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ;
  - Evidence of the first stirrings of repentance;
  - A start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer;
  - A sense of the Church;
  - Some experience of the company and spirit of Christians through contact with a priest or with members of the community." (n. 42)

#### Catechetical Aspects

- "During this period, priests and deacons, catechists and other laypersons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the Gospel." (n. 38)
- "From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love." (n. 37)

#### Liturgical Aspects

- There are no liturgical rites in this period because inquirers have not yet entered into a formal relationship with the Church through the Rite of Acceptance.
- "...pastors should help those taking part in [this period] with prayers suited to them..." (n. 40)

### Type of Formation for the Baptized, Uncatechized Adult

"Even though uncatechized adults have not yet heard the message of the mystery of Christ, their status differs from that of catechumens, since by baptism they have already become members of the Church and children of God. Hence their conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop." (n. 400)

"A program of training, catechesis suited to their needs, contact with the community of the faithful, and participation in certain liturgical rites are needed in order to strengthen them in the Christian life." (n. 401)

### Type of Formation for the Baptized, Catechized Christian Who is Not Catholic

"The baptized Christian is to receive both doctrinal and spiritual preparation, adapted to individual pastoral requirements, for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The candidate should learn to deepen an inner adherence to the Church, where he or she will find the fullness of his or her baptism." (n. 477)

## RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

n. 6.1, 18, 28, 41-74

- "The prerequisite for making this first step is that the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates." (n. 42)
- This rite may be celebrated two or three times per year. (cf. n. 18.3)
- "God showers his grace on the candidates." (n. 41)
- "[T]he rite of acceptance... is of the utmost importance ...[T]he candidates who have completed the period of the precatechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church, in turn... accepts them as persons who intend to become its members." (n. 41) They "are accepted as catechumens by the Church." (n. 6.1)

### Elements of the Rite of Acceptance

n. 48-74

- Receiving the Candidates (n. 48-50)
- Candidates' First Acceptance of the Gospel (n. 52)
- Signing of the Candidates with the Cross (n. 54)
- Presentation of a Bible (*optional*) (n. 64)
- Presentation of a Cross (*optional*) (n. 74)
- Blessing of Candidates (n. 431) and Dismissal (n. 432)

### Following the Rite of Acceptance

- "The names of the catechumens are to be duly inscribed in the register of catechumens." (n. 46)

### The Combined Rites

The Combined Rite of Acceptance and Rite of Welcoming can be found in Ap. I, n. 505-529

## RITE OF WELCOMING

n. 405, 411-415

- "[A]dults are welcomed into the community and acknowledge themselves to be part of it because they have already been marked with the seal of baptism." (n. 405, cf. n. 412)

### Elements of the Rite of Welcoming

n. 416-433, Ap. III, n. 25, n. 31

- Candidates' Declaration of Intent (n. 418-419)
- Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly (n. 420)
- Signing of the Candidates with the Cross (n. 421)
- Presentation of a Bible (*optional*) (n. 428)
- Blessing of Candidates (n. 431) and Dismissal (n. 432)