

Using the *Leader's Manual*

THIS *Leader's Manual* is part of the ON THE JOURNEY series of books intended to be used for the Order of Christian Initiation. This *Manual* is designed to be a practical help and a comprehensive guide for those in RCIA leadership, both clergy and laity. Together with its two main companions in the ON THE JOURNEY series—the *Catechist's Manual* and the *Participant's Book*—this *Leader's Manual* should enable a parish to successfully implement the liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral aspects of the Christian initiation process. Although this *Manual* may be used as a reference tool, it is intended to provide an RCIA leader with a much more systematic and thorough understanding of the catechumenal process if read in chapter order.

The Purpose of Section One: Main Text

The chapters in this *Manual's* main section provide an RCIA leader with a clear and thorough explanation of the practicalities of RCIA ministry. The chapters of the Introduction establish the foundation for understanding the necessity of each of the aspects of the RCIA process: liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral. This foundational material is followed by an in-depth and pragmatic set of chapters unpacking each of these aspects. The main section of the *Manual* concludes with a portrait of a new Catholic as a means to maintain focus on the evangelical goal of the entire endeavor.

The Purpose of Section Two: Appendices

The entire appendix section of this book is copyable, and is also provided on CD-ROM (found in the front pocket of this *Manual*) to allow for unlimited printing or downloading for modification to a parish's needs. The appendices contain all forms that would normally be used for participants, as well as other useful forms to assist RCIA leaders in recruiting and working with team members, godparents, and sponsors. These forms are designed to be appropriate for international use. In addition, the appendices provide a wealth of text and ideas for many different components of the RCIA process, such as letters, advertising, bulletin items, prayers, liturgy reminders, and retreats. These are things that facilitate the full implementation of the catechumenal process, but would ordinarily take an RCIA leader a great amount of time to develop.

Any of the material in these seven appendices may be modified in whatever way a parish RCIA leader deems appropriate. The CD-ROM contains only these seven appendices, not the entire *Leader's Manual*. The PDF documents on the disc are programmed to allow a user to highlight the text on-screen and move it to a hard drive, or simply to print a document with its formatting intact.

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The Purpose of Section Three: Seminar Handouts

The seminar handouts are not intended to be an integrated part of the preceding two sections of the *Leader's Manual*. Instead, they are provided for those

who take advantage of ACM's Team Training and Catechist Training Seminars, or who view them in a recorded format. These highly practical handouts are also used to complement ACM's RCIA distance-education module, which is designed for those who cannot attend ACM's live seminars or who do not have access to a recorded version. The twenty Team Training handouts provide a comprehensive and highly detailed walk through the three aspects (liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral) of the Christian initiation process. The seventeen Catechist Training handouts break down the work of the catechist into three parts—method, content, and themes for each of the periods of the RCIA process—providing an in-depth picture of what it means to teach for conversion, and how that teaching serves the liturgical and pastoral aspects of passing on the faith.

Both sets of handouts make significant use of sacred Scripture and relevant magisterial documents to illustrate points and develop themes, thereby remaining closely tied to the living sources that grant universal authority and ensure fidelity to the work of serving God's newest chosen ones in the life of each local church.

The RCIA Overview Chart

The foldout Overview Chart found in the front pocket of this *Manual* looks daunting at first, but the idea is to provide a picture of the whole process, from start to finish. Many parishes have found this chart valuable for training their RCIA teams. Across the top are the names of each of the periods of the RCIA process and the status of the participants, as well as terms used to identify them at any given stage. Notice that no timeframes are specified except for the period of purification and enlightenment, which normally coincides with Lent, and the neophyte year, normally extending from one Easter to the next. All of the references quoted in the chart are taken from the RCIA ritual book; as with all ecclesiastical documents, the numbering refers to paragraphs, not pages. Down the side, the journey of each possible type of participant is tracked (unbaptized in *green*, baptized uncatechized in *red*, and baptized catechized but not Catholic in *blue*), as well as the responsibilities of the Church in each period of the catechumenal process. The dark bars denote the major liturgical gateways of the process, and continue to use the color scheme, with the combining of red and blue to make *purple* in the case of baptized participants, since both of these categories of people

can go through the same gateways. Each period is divided into the three aspects: liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral. This has been done to make information in the guidelines of the ritual book more accessible, and to undo some of the confusion that arises when using it. When reading through this *Leader's Manual*, the Overview Chart should be kept open to aid in grasping the larger context of the particular subject at hand.

The Tabs for the RCIA Ritual Text

The RCIA ritual text is one of the Church's largest and most complex liturgical publications. Its English-language version is offered by a number of different publishing houses, sometimes with differing appendices. The tabs included in the front pocket of the *Leader's Manual* are designed to work with those versions of the text which are published in the United States. Although other versions are published in different countries, these tabs will be applicable to the main text of the book in all cases. The pagination will differ, and the tabs for the U.S. version of the appendices may not suit, but the vast majority of the tabs will be usable with any English-language edition. The result of applying these tabs is a significantly-greater ease in navigating the ritual text. ACM exists to foster the full implementation of the Christian initiation process. Successful implementation necessitates the extensive use of the ritual text by RCIA leaders, both clergy and laity. These tabs have been created to allow that most fundamental of texts to be more user-friendly.

As a final note to set the tone for the rest of this *Manual*, it is important to place this work in proper relation to its goal: helping those in RCIA leadership to be at the service of the Holy Spirit's work of conversion. The catechumenate seeks to impart an understanding of the Catholic faith in such a way as to transform the life of the catechumen or candidate. The RCIA process not only results in a change of status with respect to the Church, but also a change of status with respect to God. The process is intended to be life-changing. Conversion, seen as a progressive process, involves various stages of change. Simply stated, conversion involves a turning *from* something coupled with a turning *towards* something else. "The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ" (GDC 53). Whatever an inquirer's original reason for coming to RCIA, it is a good one—it is the reason God has used.

However, by the end of the RCIA process this original motivation must be cultivated, encouraged, and purified so that an inquirer can come to the conviction that he or she cannot imagine living the rest of his or her life outside of the Church.

A fully implemented catechumenate—making available the liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral aspects that the Church knows will bear fruit—is at the heart of the Church’s mission to evangelize, to teach, and to sanctify. It calls forth a significant and consistent effort from the clergy and laity directly involved, and an evangelical attitude within the welcoming par-

ish community. If undertaken, the personal investment implied in this *Leader’s Manual* places an RCIA leader in communion with all those down through the centuries whose sacrifice to prepare a Godly welcome for those as yet unknown allows them to echo the words of St. Paul: “For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you ... and for all who have not seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:1-3).