

# 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. 50-57 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)

# THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS  
(MYSTAGOGY – 7 WEEKS)  
n. 7.4, 8, 9.5, 11, 244-251, Ap. III, n. 22-23

REMAINDER  
OF THE NEOPHYTE  
YEAR  
Ap. III, n. 24

## Name for the Newly Baptized During This Period

All who were baptized are called *neophytes* in this period, until the anniversary of their initiation.

## Length of This Period and Type of Formation for the Newly Baptized

“The final period extends through the whole Easter season and is devoted to the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. It is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.” (n. 7.4)

**Events During This Year**  
“The bishop...should arrange... to meet the recently baptized at least once a year and to preside at a celebration of the Eucharist with them.” (n. 251)

## ANNIVERSARY OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

“On the anniversary of their baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment.” (n. 250)

## PENTECOST

“To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday.” (n. 249)

### Pastoral Aspects

- ☒ “During the period immediately after baptism, the faithful should take part in the Masses for neophytes, welcome the neophytes with open arms in charity, and help them to feel more at home in the community of the baptized.” (n. 9.5)
- ☒ “This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through...doing the works of charity.” (n. 244)
- ☒ “To strengthen the neophytes...the community of the faithful, their godparents and their pastor should give them thoughtful and friendly help.” (n. 244)
- ☒ “[W]ith the help of their godparents [neophytes] should experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful.” (n. 246)

### Catechetical Aspects

- ☒ “This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel.” (n. 244)
- ☒ “The neophytes are, as the term ‘mystagogy’ suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned...Out of this experience...they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.” (n. 245)

### Liturgical Aspects

- ☒ “This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through... sharing in the Eucharist.” (n. 244)
- ☒ “The neophytes should begin the period of mystagogy by participating in the principal Sunday eucharist of the community throughout the Easter season...They should do this as a body in company with their godparents and those who have assisted in their Christian formation.” (Ap. III, n. 22)
- ☒ “[At the Masses for the neophytes], special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents.” (n. 248)



© 2005 Association for Catechumenal Ministry  
P.O. Box 127  
Clinton, MD 20735  
Phone: 301-203-1334  
Website: [www.acmrcia.org](http://www.acmrcia.org)  
Email: [office@acmrcia.org](mailto:office@acmrcia.org)

*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* © 1985  
International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL); National Statutes for the Catechumenate © 1988 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Used with permission.

## KEY

- “n.” A paragraph in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [“RCIA Text”].
- “Intro n.” A paragraph in the General Introduction to the RCIA Text.
- “Ap n.” A paragraph in Appendix I, II, or III of the RCIA Text.

## Formation During This Period for Those Who Have Completed Their Initiation or

### Those Who Were Received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

“These adults will complete their Christian formation and become fully integrated into the community by going through the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy with the newly baptized members of the Christian community.” (n. 410)