Responsibility of the Baptized

He is risen, Alleluia! Easter greetings of peace to you and your faith communities. Certainly, we are experiencing Easter in an unique way. The coronavirus pandemic has us asking how we can feast in this season of joy when we still feel like we are fasting. Many of our elect are still waiting for the waters of baptism, and we are waiting to be reunited with our parish families. People are out of work and others are finding a way to make ends meet. Our situation is changing hour by hour. Yet the resurrected Christ greets us with peace, a peace that assures us that all shall be well.

We can be confident that the elect will celebrate the sacraments of initiation, the baptized will renew their baptismal promises, and the Church will gather once again to celebrate the victory over this cross that we are communally carrying together.

This issue of Catechumeneon Quarterly discusses the People of God as the primary ministers of Christian initiation. Led by the efforts of the pastor, the baptized are expected to show themselves ready and able to spread the faith, ready to serve as mentors to those seeking Christ and the Church. In this time, we can step back, study, and reflect on this. I have always compared the parish initiation team to a group of animators. Their job is not to do all the work, teach all the sessions, and be present at everything with the catechumens. Their job ought to be animating the parishioners so that they are “fully prepared . . . to give help to those searching for Christ” (RCIA, 9).

Recently, LTP offered track 2 of our online training course *The Essentials of Christian Initiation.* Together with Donna Eschenauer, one of my key points was that few parish communities are taught the importance of their role in forming disciples. Few communities have explored our shared baptismal identity of priest, prophet, and king. Let’s look at this as an opportunity for growth in the next year. I am convinced that the parish’s initiation team should spend an equal amount of time forming the community as they do the catechumens and candidates. Need ideas for adult faith formation in your parish? Gather people together and explore their baptismal identity, role, and responsibilities. Start by unpacking *Apostolicam actuositatem* and *Christifidelis laici*. Under the leadership of our pastors, the laity can rise to the Church’s vision for the work entrusted to us by virtue of our baptism.

By the time we celebrate the Easter Vigil together on April 3, 2021, it is my prayer that all the baptized members of our community will have a fuller understanding of their role as Christian initiation ministers. There’s a lesson in everything.

Easter Peace,
Michael Ruzicki
Training and Events Manager

(*Note: This course will be offered again in Fall 2020, see www.TEOCI.org for details.*)
The People of God and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Forming and Re-forming the Life of the Church

Donna Eschenauer

(This article was first published in the September 2013 issue of Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation and has been edited for this issue of Catechumenon Quarterly.)

Our human vocation is to be in partnership with God to fashion even as we are being fashioned . . . Maria Harris.¹

In her groundbreaking book, Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church, Maria Harris views curriculum as the course of the Church’s life.² This inevitably flows from the realization of who we are as the baptized and confirmed—a people called to a particular way of being in the world. The Church is a people on a mission, sent to reveal the action and presence of God in all things, at all times. The Church is a people called to educate—to participate in the work of forming and re-forming; unfolding and discovering; empowering and reappropriating new insights for living more deeply in our time. Curriculum viewed in this way reflects a lifelong, life-wide journey through which the People of God embark on new and exhilarating experiences that continually beckon us to enter more deeply into the reality of what it means to be a Catholic Christian in the world. The parish community carries out its baptismal vocation, in an important way, in and through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

On March 13, 2013, newly elected Pope Francis invited those gathered at St. Peter’s Square to pray for him. This gesture deeply impacted not only those present but multitudes around the world. From an ecclesial perspective, this action was a true acknowledgment of the Church as the People of God. From a liturgical perspective, this action was the expression of a praying Church.

The Year of Faith (October 11, 2012, to November 24, 2013) anticipated an opportunity to reflect on both the beauty and the impact of the documents of the Second Vatican Council that, among other things, highlighted the Church’s identity and responsibility to her apostolic and pastoral mission. As the Year of Faith approaches its end, reflection on the words echoed throughout the periods and steps of the initiation journey of faith, lavishly spelled out in ritual language, merits our attention. I concur with Lawrence Mick, who in 1989 pointed out, “The RCIA offers the best hope we have of becoming a renewed and vibrant Church, the kind of Church envisioned by the Second Vatican Council and, I believe, the kind of Church that the Lord calls us to be.”³ It is with these sentiments that this article focuses on the role of the parish community in and through the rites of Christian initiation.

Since it is my contention that a complete understanding of part I of the RCIA is key, my observations are comparative to this; however, the same development of thought applies to part II: Rites for Particular Circumstances.

I wholeheartedly acknowledge that much has been written about the role of the community in the RCIA since the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. However, pastoral practice can sometimes eclipse the high importance of the parish community as the context for initiation. Surprisingly, even at the present time, problematic to the implementation of the RCIA is that far too many continue to see it as a parish program. I have observed much inconstancy and lack of attention to the language that is appropriate to best liturgical practice in regard to the implementation of the RCIA. It is evident that, in many cases, we have yet to experience the deep ramifications and the blessing of careful interpretation and well-defined implementation of the rite. Regarding the preeminent role of the parish community, Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States states, “Participants in the survey indicate while ‘good’ progress has been made in grounding the RCIA process within their respective parish communities, they express a desire that even more parishioners be invited to accompany initiates on their journey to deeper faith. Pastors and parish leaders are challenged to evaluate their implementation of the RCIA in view of its ability to engage the wider parish community.”⁴ Therefore, today, more than ever, pastoral practice warrants deeper appreciation for the parish’s role in initiation and, in turn, greater engagement in the formation process. The rationale for engaging the parish community in the initiation process can be found by exploring the historical, ecclesial, and liturgical nature of the Church.

A Historical Perspective

Ancient practice is the backdrop to the contemporary catechumenate. At its peak, during the fourth century, the catechumenate was a time for catechumens (people under instruction) to share in the life of the Christian community. Those accepted into the catechumenate studied, prayed, and participated in active service...
to others with members of the community. In other words, catechumens learned a new way of being in the world from those who lived the Gospel in the everyday experiences of their lives. The early Christian community took their lifestyle seriously; therefore, they were the richest resource and practical context for preparation for initiation.

Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, celebrated the risen Christ among his people. The Paschal Mystery, the unique pattern of death and resurrection, therefore became the hopeful message that gave identity to the Christian community. The oldest form of catechesis occurred during the homily when the Christian community gathered on Sunday. Significantly, it was through the gathered assembly that faith was handed on. This historical context indicates that catechesis was directed toward the nurture of conversion and rebirth in faith for a paschal way of living.

By 1200, infant Baptism became the norm, and the three-year catechumenate process was reduced to a shorter period taking place prior to Easter. With this shift, the profound relationship between liturgy and catechesis began to diminish. This separation became visibly apparent after the Reformation. Since the Second Vatican Council, however, the relationship between catechesis and liturgy has been reclaimed and strengthened and is most clearly seen in the restored RCIA. Significantly, the RCIA states: “The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. . . . A suitable catechesis is provided . . . planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word” (RCIA, 75). This shift once again makes the Sunday assembly the context for the catechumenate.

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tion of the catechumen. In and through the rituals that mark the stages of the catechumen’s journey, that is, the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, the rites within the catechumenate proper, the rites celebrated during the period of purification and enlightenment, the sacraments of initiation celebrated at the Easter Vigil, and the Masses for neophytes, the assembly is never a passive audience watching the ritual action. More accurately, it is in and through these celebrations that the Church’s self-understanding is made manifest. The liturgy, the ritual prayer of the faith community, is the expression of a praying Church and in turn manifests the Church’s faith. The RCIA has the potential to provide a rich framework for articulating this at a deep level. The gathered assembly, the baptized, actualizes the rich meaning of lex orandi, lex credendi.

Evangelization: Proclaiming the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ

Preliminary to the Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is the precatechumenate stage, which is of great importance (RCIA, 36). During this stage, people inquire about belonging to the Church. In an unhurried period of time (RCIA, 43), the faith community evangelizes by living its faith well and by proclaiming a God that lives in and through Jesus Christ in the Church. Inquirers merit the attention and support of various parish groups, for example, families, priests, deacons, and catechists (RCIA, 38).

Having demonstrated initial faith and a sense of Church and prayer, the inquirer expresses a desire to enter more deeply into a relationship with God and the Church. The Church recognizes this desire and celebrates it ritually. In this regard, the RCIA states:

The rite that is called the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens is of utmost importance. Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates who have completed the period of the pre-catechumenate declare their attention to the Church and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members. God showers his grace on the candidates, since the celebration manifests their desire publicly and marks their reception and first consecration by the Church. (RCIA, 41)

A close look at the above assertion illustrates that we cannot dismiss the importance of this major step in the lives of those who need to be shown how (by the community) to prayerfully discern the decision to become a catechumen. Through baptized members of the Church sharing their faith stories in the precatechumenate stage, the inquirer’s desire to know Christ intimately is expressed publicly, for the first time in this rite. In other words, becoming a catechumen is a major step for the inquirer and for the Church. Definitively, the Code of Canon Law states: “Catechumens are linked with the Church in a special way since, moved by the Holy Spirit, they are expressing an explicit desire to be incorporated in the Church. By this very desire, as well as by the life of faith, hope and charity which they lead, they are joined to the Church which already cherishes them as its own” (c. 206). Implicit within this reality is the responsibility of all the baptized to be invested in the entire process of adult initiation from the pre-catechumenate period through mystagogy.

Forming and Re-forming the Life of the Church: Pastoral Implications

For the past twenty-five years, parishes have been working diligently to implement the RCIA, and for the most part it has proved to be a rich experience for the parish community. Yet, in some dioceses, the RCIA has yet to be fully implemented or properly understood. Reasons for this vary; however, in the end, a parish that neglects to renew its initiation policy neglects to renew its own self-understanding and potential for faith development. Appropriate implementation of the RCIA undoubtedly has the potential to transform every aspect of the parish, especially with regard to its catechetical and liturgical practices.

The director of the catechumenate, with a select group of trained members of the parish (RCIA team), is responsible for the overt implementation of the RCIA. And, while this is a tremendous task that demands liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral skill, it is imperative that the parish at large also develop an understanding of their role and responsibility to the catechumenate. There is often the temptation for the RCIA team to take possession of the rite. It must be emphasized that there is no room for any type of territorial mentality with the RCIA. It is imperative that the assembly be made aware of its role in initiation ministry.

In order for the parish to understand and embrace its role in the RCIA, first, parishioners need to understand their role in the liturgy in general. In addition, the pastoral staff needs to enthusiastically understand and express genuine interest in a broader vision for the initiation of new members. The tone is set here. When pastors, priests, deacons, music directors, religious educators, faith formators, and social ministry coordinators, to name a few, work together to carry out a sound vision for initiation, the meaning of Baptism in relationship to Confirmation and Eucharist will be the momentum for a vibrant faith community. Each member of the pastoral staff needs to make the effort to infuse this vision into every aspect of parish life. This is certainly not about the RCIA taking over; it is about recognizing the true meaning of Church, mission, and discipleship. The nature of the Church is to be missionary, and, as Avery Cardinal Dulles aptly stated:

The external mission of the Church can never be separated from its inner life. In the early centuries, the Church expanded not so much because of concerted missionary efforts as through its power of attraction as a contrast society. Seeing the mutual love and support of the Christians, and the high moral standards they observed, the pagans sought entrance into the Church. If the same is not happening today, this is largely because the Church no longer appears conspicuously as the community of disciples, transformed by its participation in the new creation.

A parish that lives out its mission well will draw new members. In my pastoral experience, I have found that inquirers came to
a particular parish because of the way they were treated, or the way people in the community conducted themselves. A parish that is aware of its self-identity is prepared to hand on its values and way of life.

A neglected area of attention is the importance of Order in the Church. The RCIA reintroduced the Order of Catechumens. Thereby, we can now recognize the Order of the Faithful, the Order of Presbyter, and the Order of Deacons. People need to hear this. It is fundamental to the life of the Church and the understanding of membership.

There are many innovative ways through which the role of the parish community in the RCIA is made known. One powerful way is that, at every Mass where catechumens are present, the priest references and makes connections to the catechumenate in his homily or introductory remarks. The weekly dismissal, when appropriately understood, poses an opportunity to help catechumens and the baptized gain a deeper sense of identity. In one parish in which I am familiar, the catechumens gather and are seated in a prominent place among the assembly every Sunday. In turn, the dismissal of the catechumens is a regular occurrence every Sunday. The ecclesial significance of the dismissal is explained through a recurring bulletin announcement, listed in the worship aid, and accompanied by a familiar sung acclamation. Repeatedly, catechumens articulate a strong sense of prayer and support as they processed through a caring community.

All of the rites that take the catechumen through the process of initiation include the assembly. The key is to prepare well and not neglect this important, seemingly subtle inclusion. Successful articulation of the role of the assembly is demonstrated by this recent occurrence: on Holy Saturday morning, after the preparatory rites, a parishioner, unknown to one of the elect, approached him and mentioned how inspired she was by his presence every Sunday and she couldn’t wait for him to be initiated that night at the Easter Vigil.

Conclusion

The parish that invests time, care, reflection, and personnel for the implementation of the RCIA makes an investment for the life of the Church. Every facet of the rite provides an opportunity to strengthen who we are as a people called and gifted by God. The theology and ecclesiology woven throughout the RCIA holds the potential to not only form catechumens but re-form the baptized, so that they can recover, in our time, a deeper sense of living out a baptismal spirituality. Recovery of a baptismal spirituality, as a vocation to be lived, is vital for our time. It recognizes the baptized as God’s light in a darkened world. Entrance into the waters of Baptism is entrance into communion with God and one another.

Inclusive, collaborative implementation of the RCIA is reflective of an art form. Expert pastoral practice and prayerful contemplation are comparable to any artistic work. This calls us to relinquish the clear-cut and trust in the power of God’s presence and action within the parish community. The RCIA sets in motion a people, re-formed and renewed, for the work of evangelization. Let us be passionate and filled with vigor so that the rites of initiation never fall into misuse or become a dreaded addition to Sunday Mass. Rather, may the parish community continue to grow and mature in their desire to be the life-giving force for those who thirst for the living God—active and present in all of life.

Notes

2. Ibid., chapter 1.

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A Pastor’s Role on the Initiation Team

Fr. Stephen Wilbricht, csc

In thinking and writing about the role of a pastor in the ministry of initiation, I like to refer to the encounter between Jesus and the sick man lying by the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. When Jesus asks him if he wants to be well, the sick man’s reply is that he has no one to help him into the water after it has been stirred up. Jesus commands him to stand up and walk, and immediately the sick man is cured (John 5:2–9). What strikes me most is the behind-the-scenes-role of the one responsible for “stirring up” the water. This is what I liken to the role of a pastor on the initiation team.

Perhaps I might better explain this image. Before the pastor has any direct role in the initiation team, he is responsible for fostering the tone of the parish. Hopefully, this tone is one of hospitality and openness. It is the pastor’s job to call the Christian community to the task of evangelization. He ought to make certain that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is not seen as a parish program, but as the process of conversion that occurs daily within the community of the faithful. Thus, in preaching and in social engagement, the pastor encourages everyone to participate in the project of making new disciples. In creating this kind of environment for evangelization, the water is stirred up.

When it comes to the pastor's presence on the catechumenal team, the first and foremost role he might serve is to remind them not to become overly territorial. It is very tempting for the team to form catechumens into a tight-knit family that exists apart from the parish community. Due to the personal nature of opening hearts, which takes place with adult catechesis, the initiation group can easily isolate itself. The pastor ought to be sensitive to this dilemma and be creatively proposing ways to intertwine the lives of catechumens with the lives of all parishioners. Christianity is about apprenticeship. The broader the exposure to the diverse ways of praying, of studying, and of performing works of charity the more rounded will be the experience of those seeking new life in Christ.

Another role that the pastor plays within the catechumenal team is connected to his being the head liturgist of the parish. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is designed to be lived out liturgically within the parish; it ritually enacts the drama of conversion for all to behold. Therefore, on the team, the pastor might discuss how to approach a homily for the upcoming week to connect it to initiation. Furthermore, the pastor will want to propose taking rituals, such as blessings and anointings, out of the “classroom” into the midst of the parish, inviting parishioners to “full, conscious, and active participation” in these liturgical rites. He will want to ensure that these rituals are celebrated well and as fully as possible.

Finally, the pastor must see that the water remains “stirred up” long after Easter for the work of mystagogy. It is unfortunately quite common for initiation teams to see their work as finished when neophytes celebrate the Easter sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. The pastor must lull a tired team out of its exhaustion in order to continue the formation of the newly-baptized and to never stop calling men and women to Christ through the preaching and living out of the Gospel.

I’ve worked in various ministerial settings over the years, but I am currently in a smaller parish (around 600 families) and I am struggling to recruit team members. Are there creative ways for me to invite others to share in this ministry? Do I need a team, or should I just continue in this ministry by myself? It’s hard in smaller parishes.

—Paul, J.

The coordinator of initiation ministry, as well as an initiation team, is vital to full implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The team, in collaboration with the coordinator, represents the parish community, which is the primary minister for initiation: “[T]he initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized” (RCIA, 9). In light of this responsibility, initiation ministry should not be the sole responsibility of any one person. In a small parish, a core team that would include the coordinator, a priest, and/or a deacon, and two or three faithful parishioners could be formed.

The core team is a group of people who are excited about their faith and are willing to share their story of living the Christian life. In addition, they can take on the responsibility to introduce inquirers, catechumens, candidates, and neophytes to the parish community.

Before creating your core team, you might want first to create awareness about the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in your parish. As the coordinator, include short articles about the rite in the bulletin, on the website, or through social media. Introduce the parish to the different periods and steps of the rite. Disciples Making Disciples from Liturgy Training Publications is a great resource to help with the responsibility of formation. When you are ready to celebrate a particular rite, make the parish aware of it the week before, and emphasize the important role parishioners play in this prayer of the Church. Also, when you have inquirers, make parishioners aware that there are people who are coming to the parish because they are interested in how the Catholic faith is lived out in this community.

Recruiting others to become involved in initiation ministry is often a challenge. In my experience, recruiting through announcements or bulletin appeals is not particularly helpful. Ideally, the call to ministry should be an ongoing aspect of parish life. Announcements and bulletin articles can be dedicated to helping the parish understand the call to ministry in general. As the coordinator, try to get to know people through different parish activities. In that way you will be able to invite others to come and see what initiation ministry is about. You can even do this informally over a cup of coffee. Keep in mind that personal invitation gives people a sense of confidence and belonging.

Developing a new team can be very exciting. To form the core team, begin with your pastor or parish priest. Help him to understand full implementation of the RCIA. Then invite one or two parishioners to learn about the rite; introduce them to the rite and, very importantly, create enthusiasm for the relevance of the initiation process for the entire parish. Guide for Training Initiation Ministers: An Introduction to the RCIA (see below) provides you with all the information necessary to help others to understand initiation ministry. Once this small group becomes familiar with the rite, they may be able to recommend others who may be interested; in which case, invite them to learn about initiation ministry.

Developing and training the initiation team is an ongoing process. As the coordinator you can consistently work, little by little, to build the team. In this way, the responsibility is not on any one person. In time, you will have a team minister to people throughout the different periods of the rite. The secret to successful recruitment and formation is prayer, hospitality, and presence to each other.

Searching for best practices? Email training@ltp.org if you have a question that you would like answered by one of the Catechumeneon team members.
For Your Ministry

Guide for Training Initiation Ministers: An Introduction to the RCIA

Michael Ruzicki

This practical guide provides parish leaders with the tools needed for facilitating and training all those involved with the adult Christian initiation process. Designed as a companion to An Introduction to the RCIA: The Vision of Christian Initiation by Ronald J. Lewinski, the enclosed training sessions explore the vision, theology, and purpose of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in a lively, interactive, and faith-filled way. Supplemental resources are available for download online, and the enclosed DVD includes thirteen videos that will deepen and enlighten participants’ understanding of the RCIA process.

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“By following the sessions outlined in this text, passionate volunteers are moved from mere interest to informed and engaged leadership. The baptized and unbaptized alike are drawn deeper into the wisdom of the Church and the rich traditions of initiation.”

—Rachel Doll O’Mahoney
Former Campus Minister for Faith Formation,
Seattle University
Seattle, Washington

“No longer does an RCIA director need to spend hours preparing for the training of team members. This guide has it all and more! The video presentations, from experts around the country, make it easy for even a novice director to facilitate a session. Covering all the periods and stages of the RCIA process, directors can be certain that their team will have the formation and confidence to journey with those seeking initiation.”

—Tish Scargill
Director of Catechetical Ministries,
Diocese of Monterey
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Session 1

The Vision of the RCIA

Leader's Outline

Preparation

Leader
- Read pages iv–viii and 1–11 in EIRCIA.
- Read PRCIA or RCIA, 1–35.
- Read the articles “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age” by Gloria Scoyola, “Where Do They Belong? Teens in the RCIA” by Rita Burns Senseman, and “The RCIA and the Hispanic Community: Challenge and Opportunity” by Richard Vega. PDFs of the articles can be downloaded from www.LTP.org/EIRCIAG. Click on session 1 to access the files.
- Preview the following videos found on the enclosed DVD for session 1: “The Vision of Christian Initiation,” “The Role of Liturgy and Catechesis in the Process of Initiation,” and “The Process of Initiation for the Unbaptized.”
- Make sure participants have been given their reading assignments before this session occurs. Email the Participants’ Outline for session 1 found on www.LTP.org/EIRCIAG.

Participants
- Read pages iv–viii and 1–11 in EIRCIA.
- Recommended: Read PRCIA or RCIA, 1–35.

Materials Needed
- Beverages, finger food, snacks
- Plates, napkins, cups, and necessary utensils
- Name tags
- Copies of EIRCIA and either PRCIA or RCIA
- Printed copies of the Participants’ Outline for session 1 (available from www.LTP.org /EIRCIAG)
- Computer with DVD-ROM, external speakers, projector, and screen or TV and DVD player
- Printed copies of the opening and closing prayer (available from www.LTP.org /EIRCIAG) and necessary ritual binders or the Lectionary for Years A and C; hymnals or worship aids for participants
- Prayerful environment in place
- Notebook, pencils, and pens for participants
Training Session

Welcome

The training sessions should begin with social time. Ensure that new participants have a chance to meet everyone. Include food and beverages. Give out name tags and distribute the Participants’ Outline to those who have yet to receive them. Welcome the participants and thank them for taking part in this training session, then introduce today’s topic with the following text:

Today we begin our exploration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, often abbreviated as the RCIA.¹ A simple definition or explanation of the RCIA is that it is “the official rite of the Roman Catholic Church that includes the norms, directives, and ritual celebrations for initiating unbaptized adults and children who have reached catechetical age into Christ and incorporating them into the Church.”² The RCIA involves a number of stages (periods) and steps (public rituals) for initiating new Christians. The RCIA also provides adapted rituals for receiving into the Catholic Church those who have been baptized in other Christian denominations, initiating those who are in danger of dying, and other special circumstances. These adapted rites are all based on the Church’s vision of Christian initiation for the unbaptized as experienced in the rites specific to their needs. The RCIA is published in both a ritual format and a study edition. (Leaders should show participants both copies.)

Although the RCIA may be new to some Catholics, especially those who remember the rituals and processes of the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council, this way of initiating Catholics is actually an ancient practice dating back to the early centuries of the Church. The reforms called for by the Second Vatican Council restored this process and reestablished the vision for how Christian initiation is to take place in parish life. Christian initiation ministry, or catechumenal ministry, is the responsibility of all the baptized. At the end of the Mass, we are commanded to “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” by our words and actions (The Roman Missal). In response, we go forth to bring the message of Christ to a world in need of his love and mercy. Simply put, this is what it means to evangelize: to bring the Gospel of Christ to every corner of the earth.

Opening Prayer

Let us begin our session with prayer. Please take a moment of silence and recognize that we are in the presence of God. (Use the following directions if the opening prayer is not printed and placed in ritual binders.)

Sign of the Cross

The leader makes the Sign of the Cross on himself/herself while saying:

In the name of the Father, . . .

Psalm

Sing the responsorial musical setting of Psalm 96 (“Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations”) that is commonly used in your parish. The psalm is found in the Lectionary, #66C

¹. Throughout this book, the majority of references to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults are abbreviated as RCIA and PRCLA. RCIA refers to the hardbound ritual editions available from various publishers and used by presiders in the actual liturgical celebration. PRCLA refers to the study edition of the rite published by Liturgy Training Publications. Those leading and participating in these training sessions may use either the ritual or study edition—all versions include the full text.

As we heard during today’s opening prayer (see Matthew 28:16–20), Jesus commissions his disciples to spread the Good News, to evangelize. This is our purpose, our reason for being Church. Evangelization involves the following (this list is also found on the Participants’ Outline):

- To preach and teach
- To be the channel of the gift of grace
- To reconcile sinners with God
- To perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass

? What does it mean to preach and teach?

? How do we preach and teach? Is it just through homilies and classes? Are there other ways?

? In what ways are we a channel of God’s grace? How does our parish community participate in communicating this gift to others and to ourselves?

? In addition to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, how are sinners reconciled to God? What is needed for this to happen?

? Does our parish’s celebration of the Eucharist inspire and intentionally send people out on mission in response to Christ’s command to spread his Good News?

The Church’s very identity is evangelization: to preach the Good News to every nation on earth. Spreading the faith to those who do not know Christ or the Church is our vocation. By God’s invitation, through Christ’s command, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we live out our baptismal call by proclaiming the Good News and invite and accompany those who are called to the sacraments of initiation.

**Exploring the Vision of the RCIA**

We have just explored what it means to evangelize. It is our primary purpose as Church to make new Christians—to baptize. This is called the catechumenal process. Before we discuss the Church’s vision for the initiation process as articulated in the RCIA, we will first watch a video about the process for the unbaptized. Before watching the video, turn to pages 90 and 91 in *An Introduction to the RCIA*. The chart found on these pages displays the periods and the steps that make up the catechumenal process: a blend of formation, catechesis, and liturgical celebrations. While you watch the video, please write down questions or new insights you might have about these rites.

**Video 1** Play the video, “The Process of Initiation for the Unbaptized,” found on the enclosed DVD. Leaders should engage the participants with discussion about the video. Begin by addressing initial reactions, and then move to specific points highlighted in the video.

? What did you hear in the video that was new, exciting, or challenging?

? Did the video raise any questions for you?

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3. The four aspects of evangelization are found in EN. 14.
Session 4

The Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

Participants’ Outline

Preparation

- Read pages 22–32 in An Introduction to the RCIA.
- Recommended: Read the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 91, 36–40, 42, 252–259; National Statutes for the Catechumenate, 1 (found in appendix III of the ritual text).

Materials Needed

- Copies of An Introduction to the RCIA and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (ritual book or study edition)
- Participants’ Outline
- Notebook, pencils, or pens

Training Session

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Psalm: Responsorial Psalm 63 (“My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.”)

Scripture: John 12:44–50 (“I came into the world as light.”)

Reflection

The leader or a volunteer may read the reflection aloud, or it may be read in silence.

Christ Jesus came to save, not condemn. He is the light that breaks through the darkness. We the Church—the baptized faithful—proclaim that light by our words and how we live. When there is darkness of greed and arrogance, the Church shows generosity and humility. When we experience hatred and prejudice, the Church extends love and acceptance. When the world encounters disease and war, the Church works for healing and peace. The Church, the Body of Christ, not only prays for the light of Christ to shine brightly in the world, but it is our responsibility, through Baptism, to be this light in the world.

Those who do not know Christ, his message, or the Church, are watching us. Whether by the works of Catholic Charities across the globe or by the humble ways our parishioners serve each other and our local community, we are being watched. The baptized live the Gospel message by the way they live their lives—and that message, the message of Christ, is attractive to people. Those who have been inspired by our witness may come to the Church seeking to know more and to develop a relationship with Jesus through the Catholic faith tradition. It is our role to welcome them, answer their questions, and continue to model for them what it means to be a Christian disciple.

As we prayed in Psalm 63, God’s kindness is greater than any other good in the world. Throughout all of history and throughout our own lives, we have experienced the goodness of God. Time and time again, we recount these stories and share them with our future generations. During the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, we share stories of how our thirst is quenched by the love of God. We invite inquirers to reflect on the power and glory of God’s light in their lives and in the world.

Silence

Prayer

Sign of the Cross

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Training and Events Calendar

**Online Course**

The Essentials of Christian Initiation
All classes take place from 8:00–9:30 PM ET.

**Track Two: The Initiation Team:**
Recruiting, Training, and Ministry

October 19–November 30, 2020
This will help new and veteran ministers consider the role of a parish team, help them reflect on recruiting and maintaining a team, as well as the role formation plays in developing a team.

**Track One: An Introduction to the RCIA**
February 1–March 8, 2021
This course provides an introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and serves as a foundation to implementing the vision of Christian initiation ministry in a parish setting.

For more information or to register, visit www.TEOCI.org

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**In-Person Training**

**Diocesan Events**

With our diocesan partners, we are closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person events may be rescheduled.

**August 7–8, 2020**
Diocese of Richmond

**August 28–29, 2020**
Diocese of San Diego

To register for any of these events, please visit https://catechumeneon.org/events.

Contact us at training@LTP.org if you are interested in hosting a workshop, institute, or retreat.

**National Events**

July 2021
Chicago, IL

National Gathering on Christian Initiation™
Theme: The RCIA Adapted for Children
www.NGCI.org
In-Person Training Opportunities

With Catechumeneon, LTP offers assistance to parishes and dioceses as they seek to train and form ministers around Christian initiation. We invite you to consider hosting one of our training events to help your catechumenal ministers and parish leaders deepen their understanding and vision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

These pages provide an overview of the in-person and virtual training that you can host in your parish, diocese, or region.

For more information, contact us at training@ltp.org or call 773-579-4900, ext. 3536.

1-Day Workshops

Whether you are interested in a basic overview or a detailed explanation of specific topics, work with us to sponsor a one-day RCIA workshop. Workshops can be presented in English and/or Spanish.

**Topics include:**
- The Principles of Initiation Ministry
- An Overview of the RCIA: The Steps and Periods
- RCIA and Baptized Candidates
- The Vision of the RCIA Adapted for Children
- Implementing and Sustaining the Year-Round Catechumenate
- Diocesan Workshop for Deacons
- Diocesan Workshop for Priests
- Other intermediate and advanced topics available upon request

2-Day Institutes

The two-day institutes are intensive training events with five presentations each day. These institutes are foundational in nature and are designed for those who have limited experience or training in the RCIA. Experienced ministers are always welcome to join, share their knowledge and experience, and serve as mentors to others in ministry.

**Topics include:**
- The Principles of Initiation Ministry
- An Overview of the RCIA
- Collaborate with LTP to create customized institute topics

3-Day Retreats

The RCIA is a spiritual journey for both the catechumens and the parish community. It is an extended time of prayer and formation during which the unbaptized candidates are apprenticed in faith to the baptized faithful. Conducted in a retreat-like manner, this training event will offer participants an experiential understanding of the RCIA as they walk through its periods and rites. Together they will participate in catechesis, ritual celebration, and apostolic witness adapted from the vision of the RCIA.
Virtual Training Opportunities

**Virtual Workshops™**

Virtual Workshops™ offer engaging and professional training and formation for liturgical ministers, catechists, and parish staffs. Participants gather virtually for 90 minutes of training, dialogue, and reflection. All Virtual Workshops™ utilize several multimedia components at once, including live video, short films, presentation slides, chat boxes, handouts/downloads, discussion boards, and polls.

LTP offers the opportunity for your parish, diocese, or region to contract a closed session of any of our Virtual Workshops™.

**Participation models include:**
- Individual participation from home computer or mobile device
- Group participation with several people gathered from a parish meeting room or select satellite sites around the diocese
- Hybrid model that blends both of these options

**Topics include:**
- An Introduction to the RCIA: Exploring the Process and the Vision
- Developing Your Parish’s Initiation Ministry Team
- The Vision of the RCIA Adapted for Children
- Preparing the Liturgies of the RCIA
- Involving the Parish Community in the RCIA
- Effective Catechesis in the RCIA: Forming Disciples through Adult Learning Methods

For more information on any of these offerings, visit [www.Catechumeneon.org](http://www.Catechumeneon.org)

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**Virtual Formation Retreats**

These virtual gatherings will provide spiritual and practical formation while helping participants deepen their understanding of their ministry. Envisioned to be held on a Saturday morning, a diocese or clusters of parishes may bring participants together in various host sites. For those who are unable to attend in person because of distance or other circumstances, they can attend virtually from their home computer or mobile device.

**Retreats for:**
- Sponsors and Godparents
- Parish Leaders

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**Virtual Workshops™ for Clergy**

In collaboration with the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC), LTP has developed a series of Virtual Workshops™ specifically designed for the ongoing formation of priests.

Choose from a list of workshops or create one that works for your diocese. You determine the date and time, and LTP will provide the technical assistance and promotional material needed to make your virtual training experience a success.

**Virtual Workshops™ for Priests include:**
- An Overview of the RCIA: Exploring the Vision
- The Priest as Shepherd of Christian Initiation
- Revitalizing Your Parish’s Initiation Ministry Team
- Preparing and Presiding: The Rites of Christian Initiation
- Pastoral Counseling and Discernment in the RCIA
- Marriage, Annulments, and Other Canonical Issues in the RCIA Process