



HOPE



*“Go, therefore,
make disciples of
all nations; baptise
them in the name
of the Father and
of the Son and of
the Holy Spirit,
and teach them
to observe all the
commands I gave
you. Know that
I am with you
always until the
end of time.”*

Matthew 28:19-20

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS



DIOCESAN PRAYER

// GOD OUR FATHER
*open the horizons
of our minds and hearts
so that we can see
what hope your call holds for us.*

*Pour out the overflowing gifts
of your Spirit
so that we, your Church,
may become a people
of hope for our world.*

*We ask you this,
through Jesus Christ Our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.*

OUR LADY
Woman of Hope, pray for us

ST PETER
Rock of Hope, pray for us

ST PAUL
Apostle of Hope, pray for us //

FRONT COVER: The picture, by Catherine Roperto,
is of the Baptismal Font at Clifton Cathedral.

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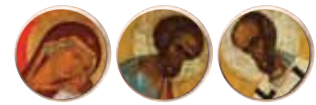
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INTRODUCTION

In November 2008 Bishop Declan presented a new pastoral plan for our diocese entitled 'Called to be a People of Hope'. This was the culmination of a consultative process which involved deaneries, parishes and individuals in prayer and discussion for many months.

In the section on Mission, pastoral councils were invited to help people grow in confidence and knowledge in sharing their faith with others especially those who seek to join the Church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the way in which we welcome and share with others our faith and our way of life as Catholics. This booklet has been produced in response to the call to pastoral councils to develop an RCIA team and offers practical first steps for setting about the task.

'Making it Work in your Parish' builds on our 'Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults' which was launched in the Autumn of 2009. This and other resources can be obtained from the Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation at Alexander House.

The Diocesan RCIA Team offers many training opportunities throughout the year, details of which are circulated to parishes. The Team is always available to provide more direct help to parishes, if required.

“The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the way in which we welcome and share with others our faith and our way of life as Catholics. The RCIA is not a programme but the process by which we engage with others who seek the face of Christ. It involves the whole parish and is the responsibility of all the Baptised.”¹

From the diocesan pastoral guidelines, 'Called to be a People of Hope', we read:

PASTORAL GUIDELINES

Parishes are called to help people grow in confidence and knowledge in sharing their faith with others especially those who seek to join the Church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is in the section on Mission because its primary focus is those who do not know Christ and are yet to be baptised. The RCIA can be sensitively adapted for those who have already been baptised and who seek full communion with the Church, but the distinction between the baptised and those not baptised should always be clear.

PARISH ACTION

Pastoral council to develop a Parish RCIA Team.

- Study the 'Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults'.
- Consider how the Rites of Initiation are currently celebrated liturgically in your parish.

¹ Diocesan Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Introduction, Bishop Declan Lang

SECTION I - THE PROCESS

WHAT IS THE RCIA AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The RCIA is the Church's way of welcoming new members. The mission of the Church to evangelise all nations means that there is a steady stream of adults coming to learn more about Jesus Christ and, perhaps, to become his followers.

The Rite offers a process through which Enquirers are helped to find out more about the Catholic faith and our way of life, and to complete a period of formation leading to the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

This Rite is the exemplar and rule for all Christian initiation and is the normative way for adults to be welcomed into the Church through Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. It is the strong wish of our Bishop that the Rite is used in all the parishes of the diocese.

“Father Simon was in a dilemma. All around him parishes had introduced the RCIA, but he had continued to receive converts into the Church personally. He rather enjoyed this aspect of his ministry and some of those whom he had instructed had become close friends. Could he really hand over this important task to a few lay people in the parish, none of whom had received any proper theological training, and what role would be left for him to play?”

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INITIATION OF ADULTS?

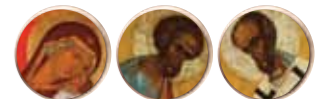
The Rite is quite clear that initiation is a gradual process that takes place in the heart of the parish community. It describes this process as a spiritual journey. It goes on to say that the community should understand and show by its concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptised. The whole community is called to help and support the Candidates through this process.

Clearly, the parish pastoral council has an important role to play in helping the community to carry out its responsibility. A good first step would be for the members of the council to find out more about this Rite of the Church for themselves. In response to 'Called to be a People of Hope' the Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation has produced resources about RCIA to support pastoral councils.

The whole community may not be involved in the actual preparation of the Candidates but their participation and involvement are expressed and made visible when the Rites of the Church are richly celebrated. As the introduction to the 'Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults' reminds us:

“when these celebrations do not happen or are reduced to a bare minimum, both the people being welcomed and the parish community are deprived.”

A second step might be for the pastoral council to appoint a parish coordinator for the RCIA with the task of forming a plan for the introduction of the Rite, to assess what actions and resources are needed, and to take overall and continuing responsibility for its implementation within the very life and faith of the community.



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None of the members of the parish pastoral council knew much about the RCIA. One had a friend in a neighbouring parish who was involved and another had once been to a service in the Cathedral which had something to do with it. Mostly, they thought that it was simply another organisation for the laity. Now Father Simon had produced a leaflet from the diocese suggesting that pastoral councils should be involved in introducing it into the parish. //

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?

To enable the parish community to fulfil its responsibility for initiation it will be necessary to gather together a small team to undertake the various ministries proposed in the Rite.

In most parishes there will already be a welcoming ministry in place for Sundays and other major gatherings. This ministry will need to be extended to encompass the meetings of the RCIA group so as to ensure that a warm and friendly welcome is given to the Enquirers week by week.

Meetings of the group are normally led by a Catechist, priest, deacon or religious working in the parish.

Throughout the process, individual members of the parish act as sponsors for the Candidates, accompanying them at the meetings and at liturgical gatherings.

Since a Rite is being celebrated, there is plenty of scope for the parish liturgists and musicians to be involved throughout the various stages of the process.

More information about these ministries and details of the training and support available can be obtained from our Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation at Alexander House.

“

Cathy and Anne had run the First Holy Communion preparation classes for the past two years. They had both felt apprehensive about the task at first, but had a good programme to follow and gradually they became more confident as time went by. When the First Holy Communion Sunday came around they were really proud of the children and many of the parents had made a point of thanking them for devoting their time and energy for the benefit of the children. When they were asked if they would be willing to join the parish RCIA team, many of their earlier doubts and fears returned! //

WHAT RESOURCES WILL BE REQUIRED?

The Rite makes it clear that the process of initiation rests upon two key factors:

- the Word of God
- and the liturgical life of the community.

The whole mystery of Jesus Christ is unfolded in the course of the liturgical year.

A copy of the Rite and a Lectionary are essential resources for every initiation team along with the *'Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults'* and the Lectionary Based Catechesis (for the three-year cycle), produced by our Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation, as well as other materials.

There are also several commercially produced guides available which support the parish process, giving material and ideas which can be used in the preparation for meetings and, importantly, suggest ways for celebrating the liturgies which form a key part of the Rite.

Information on what is available can be found in the resources section.

HOW DOES THE PARISH MAKE A START?

Perhaps the most important step in introducing the Rite is to make the whole community aware of what it is and why it is being started. Use all of the communication channels available – the homily, newsletter, parish website and parish meetings. Resources for prayers of the faithful, newsletter items and handouts are available further on in this booklet.

Many elements of the Rite will already be present in normal day-to-day parish life. Welcoming, Celebrations of the Word, prayer, music and liturgy will all be familiar. What might be new is the understanding that the whole community has a responsibility for the evangelisation and formation of those who come seeking to share their faith and way of life.

It is important to promote the RCIA in an attractive and creative way. This produces two results: the first is that it can prompt some parish members to come forward offering their skills, talents and support to the parish RCIA team. Secondly, it can be the encouragement for those who feel drawn towards our communities to take first steps towards becoming a Catholic.

It is important to follow up the promotion with an information evening. Parishioners can be encouraged to invite anyone they know, and who may have shown an interest in the Catholic Church, to “come and see” what is being offered in the RCIA process. It might be less daunting if those parishioners who invite and encourage were to offer to accompany the interested to that first meeting. Great attention needs to be paid to the planning and style of this meeting, ensuring that the venue is comfortable and that the atmosphere friendly and informal with hospitality offered to those who come. A clear, brief, presentation of the Rite of the Church, should be given explaining what form it will take, and giving details of the preparation. This meeting also provides an opportunity to introduce the team as well as taking contact details from those who come. A sample form is available in this booklet.

“

Rosie, Collin and Beth had heard that a meeting was to be held in the parish for anyone wishing to find out more about the Catholic Church. The people in the parish were quite friendly and the invitation sounded welcoming. Now all they had to do was to pluck up the courage to go. Who, they wondered, might be prepared to help them to take this step? //

WORKING WITH GROUPS

A small group is a place where:

- questions can be asked
- people listen
- conversation can be entered into
- judgements are not made
- there is flexibility
- people journey together
- confidentiality is respected
- people are accepted
- there is an openness to grow spiritually,
- and people share faith.

THE GROUP LEADER

It is important that care be given to “appointing” someone who will lead and take responsibility for the RCIA group. It doesn’t always have to be the priest. This person should be someone who:

- is friendly and welcoming
- witnesses to their faith and the love of God
- is able to listen and share their faith
- can encourage and facilitate sharing within the group
- can be sensitive to the needs of others and the relationship between members
- is able to respect the feelings and opinions of others
- is generally interested in other people
- has an understanding of the Church’s faith and teaching
- has confidence
- can keep the group focussed and unified,
- and who is well able to use resources effectively.

Of course, the ideal person may be hard to find! However, these are skills and qualities that can be developed and acquired by someone who is open to personal growth and developing their own skills and abilities.

The energy of any group is increased when there is good leadership and where that group knows:

- that it is a safe place to be
- they are encouraged to be open and to share
- they are allowed to be themselves – free to participate or free to remain silent
- there is a sensitivity to their needs and a respect of each other’s contribution,
- and there is a willingness to listen.

The energy of the group is sapped when the leader:

- is the centre and focus of the group
- talks too much
- manipulates the group
- allows the group to feel directionless
- is confrontational in word, gesture or attitude
- is overly anxious or stressed
- criticises, moralises or makes judgements,

or when the composition of the group is unbalanced because of those who:

- dominate the conversation
- criticise and judge
- know it all and want to correct others
- are oversensitive and take offence
- are argumentative.

EXAMPLE MEETINGS

What is offered here are samples of how two parish communities enter into the practicalities of their RCIA process. They are given as a personal reflection, and as overview and suggestion only.

“ Parish 1

In our parish we call the RCIA process our ‘Journey in Faith’.

Before the session begins we have a cup of tea or coffee. This gives people time to relax a little after the pressures of the day. It also gives them time to socialise a little and to ask any questions they might have.

At the start of each session we light a candle in front of the open Bible or Lectionary and start with a prayer and we end the session with a prayer.

We begin our new programme very gently trying to give a bit of background to the things we do as Catholics. Our first session starts with the Gospel of St John (John 1:35-37) which describes how two followers of St John the Baptist see Jesus and want to find out more about Him. Jesus invites them to: ‘Come and see’. Using this as a model we invite all present - team and enquirers - to journey together as we explore what faith means to us individually.

During these early sessions we talk in general terms about some Catholic ways and practices and we have a guided tour of the church with opportunity for questions as we go.

After about four or five weeks we begin to use Lectionary Based Catechesis. We listen to the Gospel for the following Sunday. The Gospel is proclaimed twice quite slowly with quiet reflection time after each reading. We then invite those who want to, to articulate what it is that has stayed with them from the reading – a word, a feeling or a thought. After a short time reflecting on the Word of God, we break up into groups of four or five people for discussion.

We emphasise that no one is under any pressure to share in the group. We also stress that whatever is shared should be treated with confidence and respect. At this point they are given a copy of the reading with a question that should help to get their sharing started, for example: ‘How is Jesus calling me through the Gospel I have just heard?’

We always observe the agreed finishing time, so the whole group is brought together after about 25 minutes and we invite feedback from what has come out of the discussions.

The group leader begins to bring the evening together by reflecting on something of the Church’s teaching and practice drawn from the readings. Some of these things may have come out in the discussion already. We find it is good to have a handout for the group members to take away with them.”

“ Parish 2

Our RCIA sessions are held on Thursday evenings at 7.30, usually in the Lady Chapel of our church, and are always based around the readings, particularly the Gospel we will be hearing the following Sunday. We have a team of four Catechists and each is responsible for preparing some aspect of the evening. We rotate the tasks around the group.

Before we start, someone will have prepared a focal point for the evening. This might be as simple as a candle or a crucifix, or might use other items that symbolise the theme for the week, perhaps a bible, water, bread, or an appropriate picture or statue. Another team member will have the responsibility of providing the refreshments. We all help with setting the seats out in a circle, getting the missals from the back of church (for the Gospel reading) and greeting our Candidates and Catechumens as they arrive.

One team member will have prepared our opening and closing prayers. These often include some of the readings from Mass and it is a rare week that we do not use the psalm. Any prayers, poems or readings can be used



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at the Catechist's discretion. The opening liturgy usually lasts between 10 and 15 minutes. We come to the Gospel. The person who has prepared this has asked one of the group to read the passage. After two or three minutes of silence it is read a second time, followed by an invitation for anyone to say a word or two that has particularly spoken to them. After a while, the team member gives a short catechesis on the readings we have heard. This may, of course, simply include the context of the reading or aspects which might not be obvious to those who are not so familiar with the Scriptures.

Another team member will have prepared a talk on an aspect of faith suggested by the readings. This is the longest part of the evening lasting maybe 40 minutes. This is not a lecture, because other Catechists may and do interject with points of their own, and we encourage comments and questions from the whole group. This is important as, while we do not want to put anyone under pressure, we need to be sure that all are engaging in the process. We are always alive to the fact that the questions we receive at this stage can be more important than the points we are trying to put across. It is not unusual for quite a lot of prepared material to be discarded and left for another week!

At about 8.30 we break for refreshments. This social event is an important part of the evening as it gives us a chance to speak individually or together with the group and gauge the reactions, particularly of those who have been quiet so far. We come back together as a whole group for any concluding points, and then have a five minute or so closing prayer. We try to finish as close to 9.00 as possible. //

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTATION

There is no single way of introducing the RCIA in a parish. Each parish is different in the way it works, in the way it celebrates, in the size and layout of its buildings and in the gifts and strengths of its clergy and people. The way that the Rite is used in a particular parish will reflect what feels appropriate and comfortable in its own situation and, even more importantly, what will be right for those who come seeking to join the community.

The Rite is a process rather than a programme, and transformation - rather than information - is the objective. Whilst remembering that the teachings of the Church are neither flexible nor negotiable, the ways in which they are introduced are many and varied. Teams should feel free to adapt and fashion the resources and methods that are used to suit the needs of their particular group. What is appropriate for a group of Enquirers in a large city parish may not be suitable in situations where there are only one or two Enquirers in a small, rural setting. It is important to choose resources carefully. No one book will 'adequately' take a group through the year. It is more likely that groups will dip into a wide range of resources to help flesh out the programme of catechesis. No group should be afraid to make use of their resources; what may be lacking or deficient in one programme may well be more adequately addressed in another. This is where good planning and good preparation are essential.

It is always worth drawing on the experience of neighbouring parishes with well-established groups. They will have faced many of the problems and questions that arise from starting up an RCIA group and will be only too pleased to share their experience with someone else.

SECTION II - THE RITES

HOW ARE THE RITES CELEBRATED?

The three main liturgical celebrations within the RCIA mark the transition from one period to another in the journey of faith of adults coming into the Church.

- **The Rite of Acceptance or Welcome** takes place in the parish and marks the decision of Enquirers to enter the Catechumenate or period of formation.
- **The Rite of Election or Enrolment** takes place in the Cathedral at the beginning of Lent and is presided over by the Bishop. It brings to a close the lengthy period of formation of the Catechumens' minds and hearts, and marks the final period of a more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation.
- **The Rites of Initiation** are celebrated at the Easter Vigil, the most important feast in the liturgical year. The celebration of the Rites at the Vigil bring out the paschal character of Baptism and our entering into new life with the Risen Christ.

All of these important rites are celebrated publicly in the presence of the community. They need careful and sensitive preparation if their impact and significance is not to be lost. Once again as is stated in our *'Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults'* when these celebrations do not happen, or are reduced to a bare minimum, both the people being welcomed and the parish community are deprived.



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THE RITE OF ELECTION

The Liturgy of the Rite of Election is celebrated in two parts:

- **The Presentation of the Candidates**
those who are already baptised (Candidates) and who will be received into full communion with the Church at Easter,
- **The Presentation of the Catechumens**
the Elect (Catechumens) who will be baptised at Easter.

Presentation of the Candidates

When the Bishop has welcomed everybody and said the opening prayer, the Rite begins with the first reading and the psalm. The Candidates' names are called and they stand up in their places with their sponsors. The Candidates move to the centre aisle with their sponsors. They sign their names in the Book of the Elect and are welcomed individually by the Bishop. The Candidates then return to their places among the community of the baptised.

Presentation of the Catechumens

After the reading of the Gospel and the homily, the names of those to be baptised (Catechumens) are called out. They stand in their places with their godparents beside them. They are invited to come forward with their godparents. They inscribe their names in the Book of the Elect and are welcomed by the Bishop. The Catechumens remain on the Sanctuary.

The RCIA also prescribes other liturgies for public celebration such as the Scrutinies and Presentations. It calls for Liturgies of the Word to be celebrated frequently, and, if desired, offers minor rites – blessings, anointings and exorcisms - to be used at appropriate times throughout the process. These rites are not just for the benefit of the Candidates alone, but enable the community to recognise and celebrate its essential role in the initiation process as well as engaging the whole community to reflect upon its own journey of faith and continual conversion.

HOW WILL THE RCIA AFFECT THE PARISH?

The Church today is beset with programmes; some last for a few weeks, others for months or even years. The RCIA is not just another programme. The act of reaching out with the Gospel and inviting men and women to a new way of life through Baptism and sharing the Eucharist with them is the very life and mission of the Church. When new members are initiated, the Church experiences change and growth, and is prompted to examine and reflect upon its own practice and priorities. New members of the Church family rightly have an expectation of our love and support along their journey. They learn from us just what it means to share the faith of a living and worshipping community. This presumes that the community values its own Baptism and sacramental life, and that its faith and witness is strong. This, then, is the challenge of the RCIA.

THE PROCESS AS GIVEN IN THE RITE



The Rite includes four distinct periods of preparation:

- **The Pre-Catechumenate**
- **The Catechumenate**
- **The Period of Enlightenment and Purification**
- **The Mystagogy or Post-Catechumenate**

These periods of preparation are linked by three Liturgical Rites:

- **The Rite of Acceptance or Welcome**
- **The Rite of Election**
- **The Rites of Initiation at the Easter Vigil**



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THE PRE-CATECHUMENATE



“This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for enquiry and introduction to gospel values, an opportunity for the beginning of faith.”²

This period is a time to get to know one another, with God at the heart of the journey. It is a time to discover more about the Christian way of living within the Catholic Church. This period is open-ended with no commitment or obligation being asked of the Enquirers at this stage. The whole parish community reaches out in welcome, hospitality and friendship. It is an opportunity to listen to the Scriptures, for personal stories to be shared, and to listen to each other, while reflecting upon God’s presence in our lives and in our world. In this way we come to know the person of Jesus Christ, revealed to us in the gospels.

The RCIA group provides a safe environment for raising questions even at this stage. Through these questions, the team will come to know more about the background and culture of the Enquirers and understand their expectations and their needs. In this way, relationships are formed and community is built up.

Towards the end of this period, the Candidates and Catechumens should be asked to complete a form giving personal details, including their marital status (this may allow any marital irregularities which may affect initiation to be identified at this initial stage) and, if relevant, the date and place of Baptism.

Fervent, practising members of the parish are asked to be sponsors (those who accompany) on this faith journey. On reaching the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance, each Candidate and Catechumen will need a sponsor. Eventually the Catechumens will need a godparent, who can be the sponsor or, if preferred, another person.

PREPARATION FOR THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE

“Assembling publicly for the first time, the Candidates who have completed the period of the pre-Catechumenate declare their intention to the Church, and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members.”³

In many parishes this Rite is celebrated on the First Sunday of Advent. It is important that the date and the time of the celebration are planned with the parish priest. Careful planning and study of the Rite is essential to facilitate a worthy and enriching celebration. This is also an ideal opportunity to bring together some of the other ministries in the parish: the music and liturgical ministries will need bringing together in anticipation of this Sunday liturgy. Not only is it important that the Rite be explained to Candidates and Catechumens but also catechesis may need to be given to the whole parish community so as to enable them to fully participate in the Rite of Acceptance. During that particular Sunday liturgy it may be appropriate to present a crucifix or some other suitable symbol to each person being welcomed.

THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR AND GODPARENT

What is a Sponsor?

A sponsor is a companion on the ‘Journey in Faith’. There may be the misconception that a sponsor has to be a Catechist or a teacher. This is not the case. Parishioners who are making a genuine effort to live out their faith in daily life are ideal for this role.

The sponsor does not have to “know all the answers” - but rather provide the sounding board off which the Enquirer may bounce their thoughts and worries as they Journey in Faith together.

Who can be a Sponsor?

The sponsor must be a confirmed, practising adult Catholic of at least 16 years of age who is an active member of the community, has a balanced spirituality and who is familiar with the contemporary concerns and direction of the Church. A parent of the person to be baptised may not be a sponsor. The sponsor of a Catechumen may act as a godparent from the Rite of Election onwards.

When should the Sponsor begin the task?

The unbaptised Enquirer should have a sponsor by the time of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (which normally takes place on the First Sunday in Advent). The Baptised Enquirer should have a sponsor by the time of the Rite of Welcome for Candidates for Reception into full communion with the Catholic Church.



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² RCIA, Introduction

³ RCIA, para 41

The Role of the Sponsor

- The sponsor links the Catechumen and Candidate with the wider parish community.
- They help the Catechumen and Candidate to experience the spirit and belief of the community.
- They enable the Catechumen and Candidate to sense the practical life and concerns of the local community of faith.
- They show by example how to live the Gospel in their daily life.

Tasks and Responsibilities of the Sponsor

The sponsor should attend the formal meetings of the Journey in Faith group wherever possible. This shows support and encouragement to Candidates. They should keep in regular contact with the Catechumen or Candidate, offer encouragement and listen to their faith and doubts, sustaining them in moments of anxiety and hesitancy. The sponsor should be able to pray with the Catechumen or Candidate and introduce them to other members of the community. The sponsor will be someone familiar with parish structure and how different groups within the parish function and so, therefore, is well able to invite their Candidate or Catechumen to parish activities so as to enhance the spirit of welcome and belonging.

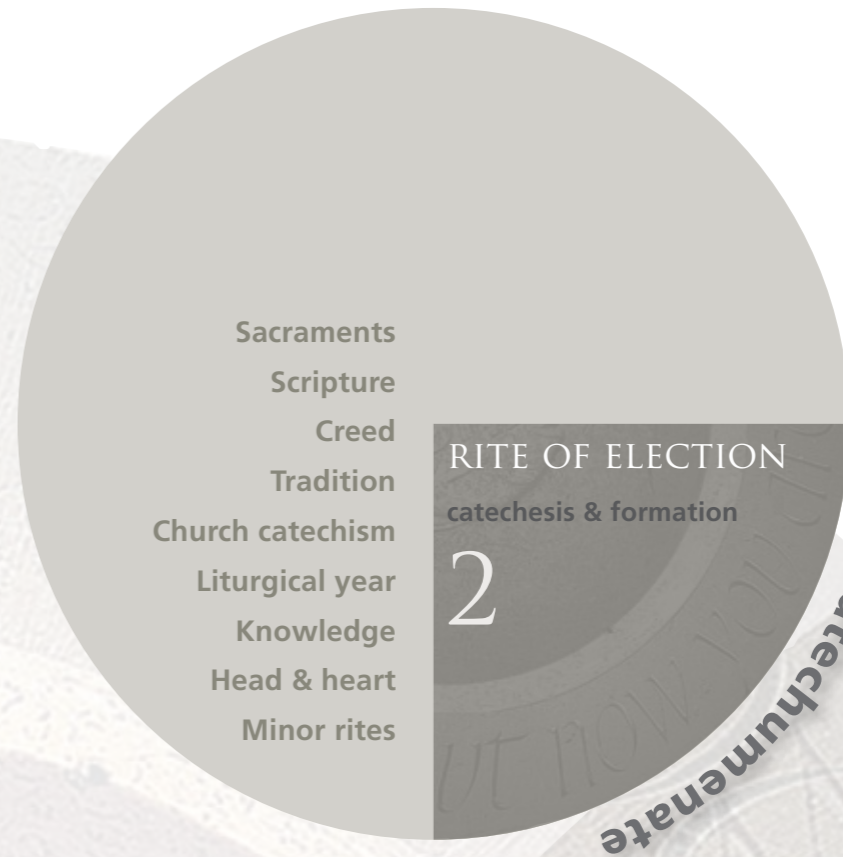
The sponsor is someone who seeks to be a friend and a companion, a guide and a role model throughout the initiation process and beyond. By being a companion the sponsor can introduce the Candidate or Catechumen into the liturgical life of the parish, especially as they journey through the Rites of Initiation. The relationship that is built during the process of initiation is one that will hopefully continue beyond Baptism or Reception. The sponsor accepts a certain responsibility for their Candidate or Catechumen encouraging them to fully embrace the mystagogical period in their ongoing journey of faith.

Selection and Training of Sponsors

The whole community bears responsibility to sponsor those seeking to enter the life of the Catholic Church. The sponsor is primarily the representative of the community. A personal friend of the Catechumen or Candidate may also stand as a sponsor providing that they are able to meet the requirements of such a role. Qualities of hospitality, prayerfulness, generosity, respect, flexibility and an ability to listen and share are ideally present in the sponsor. It is not necessary to have had previous experience – just a willingness to share time and faith with others.

It should be clear from what has been said that ideally sponsors deserve formation and training. How each parish enables this to happen will very much depend upon individual circumstances. Sponsors need to understand something of the process of conversion, the life-long journey of faith, the Catechumenal process, and the vision of the Rite. Sponsors also need to be familiar with the structure of the Rite, the ministries within the parish community and be familiar with the role and responsibilities of being a sponsor. Sponsors will also need to be prepared for their liturgical involvement.

THE CATECHUMENATE



THE PERIOD OF CATECHESIS

“The Catechumenate is an extended period during which the Candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian way of life.”

During this period there is an opportunity to be guided by the liturgical year, the great feasts and the traditions of the Church. This is a formal period of catechesis and the beliefs of the Catholic community, as found in the Creed, need to be explored. This period is also an opportunity for Candidates and Catechumens to ask their questions. This gradual accumulation of knowledge is not simply an academic exercise. By reflecting on what is discovered, by listening with their hearts as well as with their ears, the Candidates and Catechumens draw closer to God. They become changed people and their lives take a new direction.

Sponsors and godparents take a key role in this process, supporting the Candidates and Catechumens and encouraging them as they prepare for sacramental initiation. The reading of the Scriptures and reflection upon the Catechism of the Catholic Church will be a constant reference, supplemented by other useful material during this period of catechesis.

Learning about our faith is a life-long journey and will continue beyond the RCIA process. Candidates and Catechumens should be met ‘where they are’ at this particular point in their journey and material and content should be adapted to their particular needs.



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⁴ Vatican II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, para 14

MINOR RITES FOR CATECHUMENS DURING THIS PERIOD

Celebrations of the Word

*/// Celebrations of the Word may be held in connection with catechetical meetings of the Catechumens, so that these will occur in the context of prayer. ///*⁵

Reflecting on the Scriptures, especially the passages in the Lectionary, implants in the hearts of the Catechumens the teachings they are receiving throughout the Catechumenate. They will begin to see this teaching lived within the Christian community.

Minor exorcisms and blessings

*/// The minor exorcisms have been composed in the form of petitions directly addressed to God. They draw attention to the real nature of Christian life. ///*⁶

*/// The blessings of the Catechumens are a sign of God's love and the Church's tender care. ///*⁷

The exorcisms are prayers asking for God's help as the Catechumens grow in their awareness of their deepening relationship with the Lord and their responsiveness to his call. They are prayers seeking God's strength and his grace, drawing them away from sin into the light of his truth and love. The blessings are the Church's way of giving courage, joy and peace to those who are journeying and are to be used in a similar way. The prayers can be used during the group meetings or when the whole community is gathered.

PREPARATION FOR THE RITE OF ELECTION OR THE ENROLMENT OF NAMES

*/// On the basis of the testimony of godparents, sponsors and Catechists and of the Catechumens' reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement towards the Sacraments of Initiation. Thus the Church makes its "election" that is, the choice and admission of those Catechumens who have dispositions that make them fit to take part in the next major celebration, in the Sacraments of Initiation. ///*⁸

What needs to be done in anticipation of the Rite of Election?

- Explain the purpose of the Rite and the practical details both to Catechumens and Candidates. A distinction needs to be made between those preparing for Baptism and those preparing for Reception.

The Rite is celebrated in our diocese by the Bishop on the First Saturday of Lent at 11.00 am in the Cathedral.

- Discern with the Candidates and Catechumens whether they are ready to take this next important step. It is a formal request to be baptised or received into full communion with the Church.
- Baptismal certificates or details of Baptism for Candidates to be received need to be obtained.

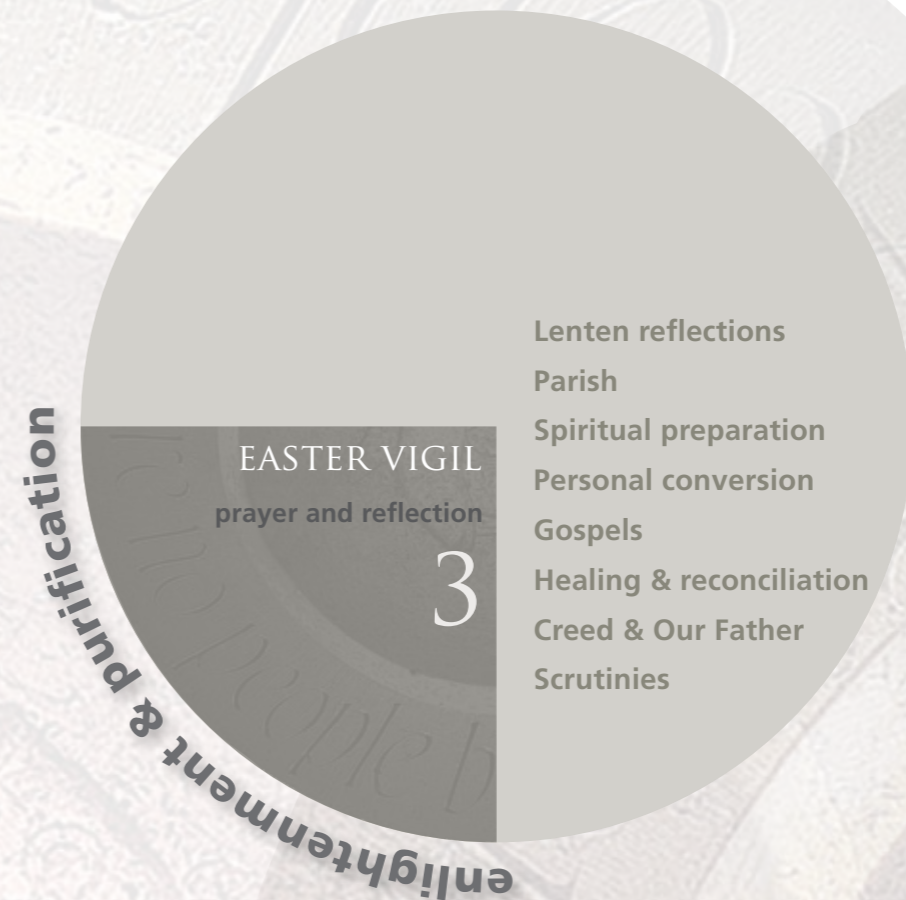


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- Application forms received from our Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation need to be completed and returned giving names of the Catechumens and Candidates taking part in the Rite of Election. If Candidates and Catechumens are not taking part in the Rite of Election then the appropriate application form needs to be submitted to the Bishop.
- Preparation of the Candidates and Catechumens for the Rite of Election is important. You will receive a sample Order of Service with the application forms sent to all parishes.
- It is good to inform the parish, through the newsletter and the prayers of intercession, before the Rite of Election, asking for prayers and support for the Candidates and Catechumens.

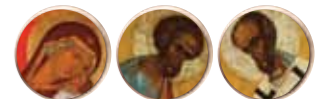
THE PERIOD OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND PURIFICATION



THE PERIOD OF PRAYER AND REFLECTION

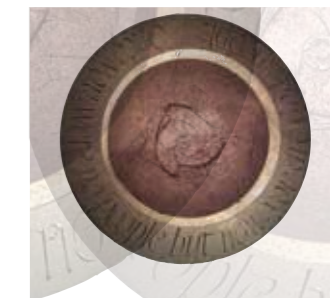
*/// This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the Elect as they search their own consciences and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the Elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ our Saviour. ///*⁹

⁵ RCIA, para 84
⁶ RCIA, para 90
⁷ RCIA, para 95
⁸ RCIA, para 106
⁹ RCIA, para 126



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This period falls within the season of Lent when the whole community is preparing for the celebration of the paschal mystery. The Candidates and Catechumens participate in the spiritual renewal of the whole parish, whilst continuing to meet within their own group.

It is a period of prayer and reflection on the Scriptures, especially the Gospel stories that are to be found in the lenten readings of Year A – the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus. It is through these stories the Catechumens, especially, can prepare for Baptism at the Easter Vigil and the Candidates reflect on their own baptismal calling and life of faith. This period is a time, reflecting on the aspects of the Candidates' and Catechumens' lives which block their path to God, which leads to healing, reconciliation and personal conversion - a process in which the whole parish is engaged.

MINOR RITES FOR CATECHUMENS

The Scrutinies

*“The scrutinies are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, and then heal all that is weak, defective or sinful in the hearts of the Elect, to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good ... These rites, therefore should complete the conversion of the Elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.”*¹⁰

The Scrutinies are celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent (reflecting the Gospel readings of Year A). If possible, these Scrutinies should take place during the Sunday Liturgy.

The Scrutinies consist of prayers for the Elect, followed by a prayer of exorcism. These take place after the homily. It is then strongly recommended that the Elect are dismissed from the assembly during the Liturgy of the Eucharist - in which they cannot fully participate - and, with their Catechists, continue to explore and pray the Scriptures. This may not always be possible, or appropriate, but the Rite envisages that they are dismissed only to allow for deeper catechesis and preparation for the Triduum. In the early Church the dismissal after the Liturgy of the Word was common and some parishes follow this practice still. It is a powerful symbol even if it is used only during these three Sundays of Lent.

The Presentations

*“Thus, with the Catechumenal formation of the Elect completed, the Church lovingly entrusts to them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church's faith and prayer.”*¹¹

These Presentations can be made towards the end of the Catechumenate period or at the time of the Scrutinies.

- The Creed is a summary of the faith the Church professes and which the Elect will shortly be professing as their own belief. They are encouraged to commit the Creed to memory. As the Rite reminds us: “The words are few but the mysteries they contain are great”.
- The Lord's Prayer, using the words: “Jesus teaches his followers to pray”, the celebrant reaffirms God as our loving Father and reminds the Catechumens that, through Baptism, they are sons and daughters of this loving Father.

PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE RITES OF INITIATION

*“The third step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Through this final step the Elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God.”*¹²

What needs to be done?

The RCIA team, the Catechumens and Candidates, and the celebrant need to come together to look at the practical details of the Easter Vigil rites. It is useful to liaise with the musical ministries of the parish, to outline the implications within the celebration of the Baptisms and Receptions taking place. Ideally this should be done before Lent begins, when liturgies are being put together.

Within the group, place the Easter Vigil within the context of the entire Holy Week liturgy. The Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation offers a reflection day in March for RCIA teams and their Candidates and Catechumens looking forward to the Easter Vigil – the story of salvation told through the Scriptures, the Liturgy, and the symbols that are used.

Preparation as an RCIA group for the Easter Vigil liturgy as it is celebrated in your parish, is encouraged and, of course, practise in the church the practical details of the ceremony. People will be nervous and if they know where they are to stand, and what it is they are to say, they will be more relaxed.

Catechumens will need a white garment of some sort.

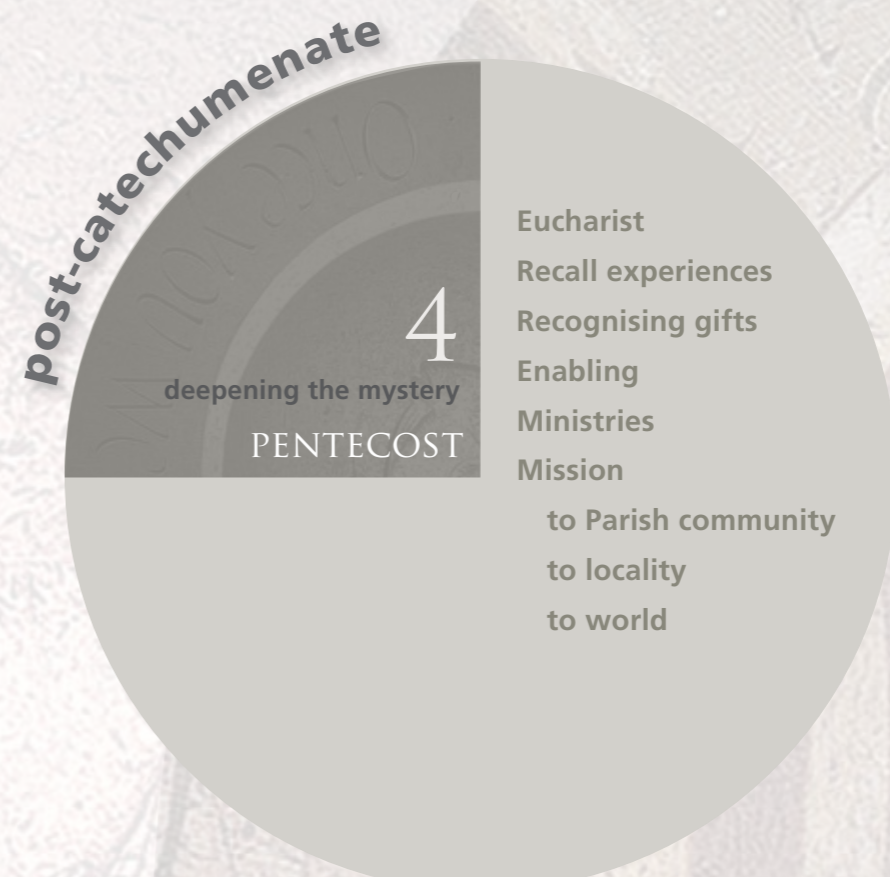
Consideration should also be given to continuing the celebration with refreshments after the liturgy.

¹⁰ RCIA, para 128

¹¹ RCIA, para 134

¹² RCIA, para 198

POST-BAPTISMAL PERIOD



MYSTAGOGY - DEEPENING THE MYSTERY

“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 in meditation on the Gospel, in sharing in the Eucharist and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents and their parish priest should give them thoughtful and friendly help.”¹³

The Rite envisages that catechesis does not stop after the celebration of Baptism and Reception, but continues beyond Easter. The mystical period is an opportunity for the group to continue to meet and to reflect on the Word of God as offered in the Lectionary for the Easter Season. It is also an opportunity to re-explore the sacramental life of the Church in which the neophytes (the newly Baptised) and newly received Catholics can now fully participate, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The gifts of the neophytes are recognised and affirmed and they are enabled and encouraged to use those gifts within the community. The neophytes and those received at Easter should be welcomed into parish groups and ministries, including those addressing the wider community of local, national and international needs. There is a strong encouragement that the ongoing support of our new members continues most especially from their sponsors and their godparents.

The formal period of the RCIA group usually ends at Pentecost. If formation and faith development continues within the parish, those newly Baptised and newly received might be encouraged to take part in them.

13 RCIA, para 234

SECTION III - RESOURCES

A sample leaflet follows for you to photocopy and fill in your parish details and use in your own programme. Fold along the outside markers to make a third A4 gatefold leaflet, with the 'Act of Faith' wrapping beneath the cover. For best quality results download the leaflet from cliftondiocese.com

Outside cover

<p>OUR FAITH</p> <p>I firmly believe that there is one God, and that in this one God there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; that the Son took to himself the nature of man, from the Virgin's womb, by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that in this our human nature He was crucified and died for us; that afterwards He rose again, and ascended into heaven; from thence He shall come to repay the just with everlasting glory, and the wicked with everlasting punishment. Moreover, I believe whatsoever else the Catholic Church proposes to be believed; and this because God, who is the Sovereign Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed all these things to this His one true Church.</p> <p>AMEN</p>	<p>ABOUT YOU</p> <p>name _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>address _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>tel _____</p> <p>email _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>PARISH OF</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>a journey in FAITH</p>
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Inside contents

<p>RCIA</p> <p>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</p> <p>Would you like to know more about the Catholic Faith?</p>	<p>THE JOURNEY STARTS HERE</p> <p>Enquirers: informal meetings with no obligation, held in the church, led by lay persons.</p> <p>What do Catholics believe? Why do Catholics go to Mass? Why pray? What is the role of the laity? Why is the Eucharist so important?</p> <p>Once a week over a cup of tea, we meet and discuss with one another the Catholic faith. If you would like to continue your journey with a view to entering the Catholic Church or to learning more about your faith, then complete the form on the reverse and hand it in to the parish office.</p>	<p>THE JOURNEY CONTINUES</p> <p>From late September through Easter until Pentecost, weekly meetings are held, at _____</p> <p>on _____</p> <p>at _____</p> <p>The groups are small, confidential and friendly without pressure. You learn in depth the Catholic faith, read the Scriptures and pray together. This leads, if it is your wish, to Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation. If you would like to know more about the RCIA programme, please contact _____</p> <p>on _____</p> <p>or the Parish Priest.</p>
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I firmly believe that there is one God, and that in this one God there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; that the Son took to himself the nature of man, from the Virgin's womb, by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that in this our human nature He was crucified and died for us; that afterwards He rose again, and ascended into heaven; from thence He shall come to repay the just with everlasting glory, and the wicked with everlasting punishment. Moreover, I believe whatsoever else the Catholic Church proposes to be believed; and this because God, who is the Sovereign Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed all these things to this His one true Church.
AMEN

name _____

address _____

tel _____

email _____



a journey in

FAITH

RCIA

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Would you like to know more about the Catholic Faith?

THE JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Enquirers: informal meetings with no obligation, held in the church, led by lay persons.

What do Catholics believe?

Why do Catholics go to Mass?

Why pray?

What is the role of the laity?

Why is the Eucharist so important?

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SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ENTRIES

Below you will find some ideas for newsletter entries that keep the parish informed about the nature of the 'Journey in Faith' group and how to invite them to be a welcoming parish. They follow the rhythm of the Church's year and are more detailed at the principle times of celebrating the Rites of Christian Initiation.

This offering is given by way of sharing the practice of one parish community. These ideas are in no way prescriptive but rather a series of suggestions which you may find useful as a springboard from which to develop your own newsletter entries.

September

Why do we have to belong to a Church to truly follow Christ?

When Jesus invites us to: "Come and see" he doesn't show us how to 'go it alone'. He talks about loving our neighbour as ourselves and being united in one body. He also asks us to pray together (as well as alone at times). We need the Church to help us find Christ in ourselves and in each other and to enable us as a community to reach out to others. So if you know someone who might be curious about the Church why not invite them to come to the church hall on ... at ... where they will be sure of a **warm welcome** as they join with a few others to explore the **importance of journeying in faith together**. For further information ...

October

As the autumn takes a hold and the thought of winter looms over the horizon, we are reminded of change. In our lives as a whole we are aware of much change and growth and if we look at the part that faith plays in all this, we realise that it is our **living, growing relationship with God that is active in bringing about that change**. If you know someone who might be curious about the Church why not invite them to come to the church hall on ... at ... where they will be sure of a **warm welcome** as they join with a few others to explore the **importance of journeying in faith together**. For further information ...

November

As we celebrate All Saints' Day the Church keeps the Saints before our eyes – not only to hold them up as an example to us – but also to help us to appreciate that **our union with them strengthens our union with Christ**. They are not just happy memories in the Church or plaster images on pedestals, but men and women who have faithfully followed Christ and who give us the inspiration to struggle on with renewed courage on our own faith journey. This month we ask for their prayers for those who are thinking about or who are already seeking to find out more about the Church. If you know someone who might like to find out more why not invite them to come to the church hall on ... at ... where they will be sure of a **warm welcome** as they join with a few others to explore the **importance of journeying in faith together**. For further information ...

December

for inclusion on the Sunday before the Rite of Acceptance

After his Resurrection from the dead, Jesus commanded his disciples: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all the commandments I gave you." (Mt 28:19-20).

These words were taken to heart by the men and women of the early Church and the teaching and initiation of converts into the Christian community, culminating in the Easter celebrations of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, came to be one of the glories of the Church.

Since the Second Vatican Council the Popes have encouraged the Bishops worldwide to restore the adult Catechumenate to its rightful place in the life of our communities. It is a gradual process which takes place within the community of the faithful involving regular 'Journey in Faith' meetings and a series of liturgies and ritual steps through which enquiring adults can become full members of the Church.

The first step: The Rite of Acceptance offers the Enquirer the opportunity to declare publicly to the Church the **intention** to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ and the Church in turn **accepts** the individual as one who **intends** to become a member.

There are ... adults in our parish who will be taking this first step at Mass next Sunday. Please keep ... in your prayers, that the Church will help them on their 'Journey in Faith' and strengthen them with God's blessing.

January

As we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, let us recall why we make the sign of the cross when we bless ourselves with holy water at the church entrance. This is meant to be both a **reminder** of our own Baptism – when there is a renunciation of Satan and the Profession of Faith – and also a **visual expression** of faith in the Trinity as we silently pray: "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". If you know someone who might like to find out more about Baptism why not invite them to come to the church hall on ... at ... where they will be sure of a **warm welcome** as they join with a few others to explore the **importance of journeying in faith together**. For further information ...

February

For inclusion on the Sunday before the Rite of Election

... adults from our parish's 'Journey in Faith' group will be gathering in Clifton Cathedral with many other adults from all over the diocese to publicly declare their spiritual commitment and call to continuing conversion. Bishop Declan, as shepherd of our diocesan family, will call the Catechumens (the unbaptised) – in the name of Christ – to the Easter Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, and so invite them into the Catholic Church, and those already baptised into full participation in the sacramental life of the Church. There, the priests, Catechists, family and friends affirm their desire and testify to their readiness and sincerity. It is a wonderful gathering at which all are welcome. Please keep ... in your prayers as we approach the Rite of Election and ask that their faith be further deepened in these final weeks leading up to the Easter Vigil.

March

During this lenten period of recollection, repentance, purification, deeper faith and continuing prayer life, the 'Journey in Faith' group will be **exploring the desire for forgiveness and how the Catholic Church offers a means of reconciliation** through the Sacrament of Penance. Our Enquirers have already asked us lots of questions around **various moral issues** and you may feel you want to join the group next ... day evening to listen to various points of view as well as the Church's teaching on this important area. If you are not a Catholic or know of someone who isn't but would be interested in coming along next week, do come and join us in the church hall.

April

A number of people have said that what drew them to the Catholic Church was the **Eucharist**. As we reflect on recognising Jesus in the breaking of the bread, think for a moment whether there is someone you could invite to Mass, to explore what else the Catholic faith might hold for them by coming to the 'Journey in Faith' group. If you want to find out more about the Eucharist come along to the church hall on ...



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March/April

For inclusion on the Sunday before Easter

At last we have reached the final step that ... will be taking at the Easter Vigil next weekend. Just as in the days of the early Church – after an initial period of teaching and preparation – adults were received into the Christian community through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Here in our parish, along with Catholic communities all over the world, we will be receiving our own adults into full participation in the Sacramental life of the Catholic Church. Let us praise God and give thanks for ... who is called along with each of us to be a sign of the Risen Life of Jesus this Easter.

May

Traditionally the month of May is regarded as a time for Catholics to **reflect upon the life of Mary**. She it was who brought her son Jesus to us. Maybe this month you can bring someone you know closer to Jesus? One way might be to invite them to Mass and to explore through the 'Journey in Faith' group what else the Catholic faith might hold for them. The Group meets on ...

June

As we journey on through the Church's year and approach the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul we explore some of their **teaching and mission** and look at the **implications for today's Church**. In the Journey in Faith group we consider what we must do to live lives faithful to the Gospel and how we are called to spread the Word. If someone you know would like to find out more, why not bring them along to the church hall ...

July

As Pope John Paul II said: '

Of paramount importance in the mystery of the Church is the fact that Christ is alive in his people ... and because Christ is living, his love, above all is kept alive in the Church ... and the mystery of a love received from the Father and given back to the Father is the legacy of all Christ's disciples: 'By this love you have for one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.' //¹⁴

14 Address to the Bishops of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei on their 'Ad Limina' Visit. 23 May 1980

What might this mean for you this month? Well, maybe you have a friend, neighbour or colleague who has noticed something about your lifestyle which attracts them and they are curious about your faith? You could invite them along to Mass or the 'Journey in Faith' group which meets in the church hall...

August

Most of us will go on some sort of journey, whether just the odd day out here and there, or a week or two away this month. The 'Journey in Faith' group is clearly one which values the opportunity to journey together and invites you to encourage anyone you know who is not baptised or was baptised in another denomination and who is curious to find out more about the Catholic faith to come along to the 'Journey in Faith' meetings this autumn which start on ... in the church hall.

SAMPLE INTERCESSIONS

With small numbers of Catechumens and Candidates, it would be more personal to mention them by name in the Intercessions, having distinguished initially who is Candidate and who is Catechumen. From the Rite of Election to the Easter Vigil and beyond similar adaptations will need to be made.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Include the following intercessions at all Masses once each month so that the entire parish community might keep the initiation participants in their prayers.

ENQUIRY That those who wish to learn about the Catholic faith may be welcomed by our parish and see in each of us a witness of the Christian life, we pray to the Lord

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE That N ... may be supported with our prayer as they accept the cross of Christ and embark upon their journey of faith, we pray to the Lord ...

October

That N ... may grow in their love for the Lord by gathering with us for prayer, in care for others, and diligent study of the faith, we pray to the Lord ...

November

That N ... may be guided by their sponsors and Catechists as they study and begin to live what they have learnt, we pray to the Lord ...

Advent

That N ... will prepare their hearts for the Lord's coming by diligent prayer, study, and works of charity, we pray to the Lord ...

Christmas

That N ... may be filled with the light of faith by the coming of the Word among us, we pray to the Lord ...

Baptism of Our Lord

That the Catechumens may long for the waters of Baptism, and the Candidates continue to grow in faithfulness to their baptismal covenant, we pray to the Lord ...

January

That N ... may find what they seek in Christ and choose to follow him, we pray to the Lord ...

February

That those preparing for the Easter Sacraments may continue to hear the Lord speak to their hearts, we pray to the Lord ...

March

That N ... acknowledge their need for the Lord, and learn to trust in his healing and forgiveness, we pray to the Lord ...

Palm Sunday

That Christ, through his passion, will teach N ... self-denial, strengthen them against evil, and increase their hope, we pray to the Lord ...

Easter Vigil

That those baptised in the waters of new life, and those received into the full communion of the Church may remain ever close to Christ through the Spirit at work in them, we pray to the Lord ...

Easter Sunday

That those who were reborn in Baptism and made one with us at the Eucharistic table at the Easter Vigil may share the glory of Christ's resurrection and bring new life to the Church, we pray to the Lord ...

May

That those who have been baptised or received into the full communion of the Church may grow in a deeper knowledge of the Lord as they celebrate the Eucharist, we pray to the Lord ...



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ENQUIRER INFORMATION FORM

Information is held in confidence and is not shared without your permission

Date

Surname

Christian names

Maiden name (if applicable)

Marital status

Date of birth

Place of birth

Address

Post code

Phone

Mobile

Email

What, if any, is your present religion?

Have you ever been baptised? Yes No Not sure

If you answered 'Yes' to the above, please provide the following information.
In which denomination were you baptised?

Date or your approximate age when you were baptised

Place of Baptism (name of church and denomination)

Address of church, if known:

It is the decision of the RCIA Team when this form is presented to the Enquirers.
For high quality version this form can be downloaded from cliftondiocese.com

VARIOUS METHODS

LECTIONARY BASED CATECHESIS

The written word of God in the Scriptures is the basis of all faith formation. Lectionary Based Catechesis gives a firm foundation to the Christian Initiation of Adults. Each of the gospels offers us a particular lens through which we understand our faith.

In his inaugural homily Pope Benedict XVI said that:

“My real programme... is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by him, so that he himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history.”

This quotation indicates four central facets in any programme of Christian catechesis.

First, the Gospel of Christ has been entrusted to us and we have a responsibility to pass it on in its fullness and not simply to teach our own ideas or to promote our own agenda. Every Catechist should be able to repeat the words of Jesus **'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me'**. JOHN 7:16.

Secondly, in order to know what the Lord has revealed, we are called to “listen to the word and the will of the Lord”. One of the central ways to listen to the word of the Lord is through the Scriptures.

Thirdly, we listen to the word together “with the whole Church”. The Church has been listening to and pondering on the word for two thousand years. As we listen to the word we join ourselves with the wisdom of the whole living tradition of the Church. The holiness of the saints, the teaching office of the Church, as well as our local faith community, opens for us the meaning of the Scriptures.

Fourthly, if we open ourselves to his word we will be guided by his living presence.

Lectionary Based Catechesis, then, offers a simple way of sharing our Catholic faith by embracing this approach. It proposes a weekly faith-sharing experience based upon the readings, most especially the gospel, of the approaching Sunday. Each session begins by **listening** to the gospel and **reflecting** together on the word that the Lord is speaking to us individually and as a community. Each session suggests ways in which the teaching of the Church is rooted in Scripture and so makes connections between the Word of God and our Catholic faith, especially as taught in the *'Catechism of the Catholic Church'*.

Lectionary Based Catechesis begins after the Enquirer has already become part of the 'household' of the Church, and so is familiar with other members of the Church community and already has a sponsor to guide them. **Before beginning this form of catechesis, everyone in the group, including the Enquirers, should have some formation in prayer and an awareness of what the Bible is** - the written and inspired testimony of the history of salvation, and the story of God continually reaching out in love to a people he calls his own. There should be awareness that the Scriptures offer us a strong foundation for understanding the mysteries of faith, and so help us to see God's hand in our lives more clearly.

Lectionary Based Catechesis is very simple. After the opening prayer the group listens to the Gospel and then prays in silence as we allow the word to echo within us. Having listened to the Gospel a second time people are free to articulate what has struck them about the reading. At this stage there is no discussion but the group listens to each person. There is a discussion about what is being revealed to us



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through these readings and through what we have heard. It is important to remember that while all should have the opportunity to speak, nobody is compelled to do so.

At this stage the group may begin to explore the Church's teaching which is founded in the Gospel. Each reflection in the Lectionary Based Catechesis produced by our Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation makes connections with specific sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and with the writings of the saints and other notable sources. **However it cannot be emphasised strongly enough that these are only suggestions and something quite different might emerge from the group discussion.**

The following is a suggested form which Lectionary Based Catechesis might take in a group.

1. opening prayer

We pray together to make ourselves aware of the presence of Christ.

2. we listen to the text

The chosen scripture passage is read aloud.

3. a period of silent prayer

We pause in silence.

And in silence we become aware of our initial understanding of the text.

Did a word touch you in a particular way?

What feelings did you have?

What mood did the text inspire in you?

4. the scripture passage is read a second time

5. we share what we have in our hearts

Help each other by sharing personal insights.

What did you 'hear'?

There is no need to share if you do not want to.

There is no discussion at this point.

6. we search together

Examine in the light of the scripture

– your life

– your neighbourhood

– current events

Does it involve change?

Which teachings of the Church are rooted in the reading?

What is new in your understanding?

7. we pray together

A prepared closing prayer is read together.

Alternatively if the group wishes, spontaneous prayers could be invited.

SUGGESTED TOPICS

It is important to realise that not every aspect of Catholic doctrine and teaching is going to be covered during the RCIA process. **Learning and growing in our faith is a lifelong process.** Our Candidates and Catechumens need the essentials of Catholic teaching - enough to satisfy their search for understanding and meaning at that particular stage in their journey. In this way they will be able to make an informed commitment to the Church.

Keeping a check list of Catholic teachings is a constant point of reference throughout the RCIA process. It is strongly recommended throughout the RCIA process that Scripture is used when and where possible as the primary source of all teaching. The Sunday readings of the Lectionary provide a good framework.

It is unlikely that all the teachings of our faith will be covered by the Lectionary alone during the Catechumenate as we know it. Other resources should be consulted and used.

WHAT DOES THE GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS SAY?

From the chapter on 'The Nature, Object and the Duties of Catechesis':

*“The profession of faith inherent in Baptism is eminently Trinitarian. The Church baptises **“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** MATT 28:19, the Triune God to whom the Christian entrusts his life. Initiatory catechesis – both before and after the reception of Baptism – prepares for this decisive undertaking. Continuing catechesis helps to mature this profession of faith, to proclaim it in the Eucharist and to renew the commitments which it entails. It is important that catechesis should unite well the confession of Christological faith “Jesus is Lord” with the Trinitarian confession, “I believe in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit,” in such a way that there are not two modes of expressing the Christian faith. He who is converted to Jesus Christ and recognises him as Lord through the primary proclamation of the Gospel begins a process which, aided by catechesis, necessarily leads to explicit confession of the Trinity.”¹⁵*

“The confession of faith is complete only in reference to the Church. All the baptised individually proclaim the Credo, for no action can be more personal than this. However, they recite it in the Church and through the Church, because they do so as members of the Church. In fusing his confession of faith with that of the Church, the Christian is incorporated into her mission: to be the “universal sacrament of salvation” for the life of the world.”¹⁶



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¹⁵ Directory of Catechesis, para 82

¹⁶ *ibid*, para 83

“The duties of catechesis correspond to education of the different dimensions of faith, for catechesis is integral Christian formation, “open to all the other factors of Christian life”. In virtue of its own internal dynamic, the faith demands to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer. Catechesis must cultivate each of these dimensions. The faith, however, is lived out by the Christian community and proclaimed in mission: it is a shared and proclaimed faith. These dimensions must also be encouraged by catechesis.”¹⁷

A SUGGESTED CHECKLIST

The Mystery of God, Trinity

- God – Father and Creator
- God the Son – Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, true God and true man, Saviour and Redeemer, Risen Christ, source of life and hope
- God the Holy Spirit – the abiding presence of God in the Church and in the life of each Christian

The Church

- The people of God, the living Body of Christ
- A community that worships together and supports each other in fellowship: the Eucharist and the Liturgical Year
- A community that ministers to the spiritual and pastoral needs of its members and the wider community
- Membership of the Church is experienced through the Universal Church and the local Church, diocese and parish

The Sacraments

- Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation
- Healing: Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick
- Vocation: Marriage, Ordination

Faith Development

- The Scriptures: An introduction to the Old and New Testaments
- The Spiritual life: The Our Father, Prayer and the liturgical life of the Church
- Christian discipleship: The call to follow Christ and the challenge of conversion
- Christian living: The principles of Catholic moral and social teaching, especially issues of particular interest to the group
- Catholic traditions: Devotions, traditions and Catholic culture: Mary and the saints, feasts and festivals.

¹⁷ General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for Clergy - CTS 1997) para 84

RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults:

the Church's Rites of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
Geoffrey Chapman Publications 1987

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Geoffrey Chapman Publications 1994

General Directory for Catechesis

Catholic Truth Society 1997

The National RCIA Network

The RCIA Network supports people who have leadership roles in parishes and dioceses in the RCIA process
www.rcia.org.uk

Other resources are listed on page 27 of our 'Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults'

DIOCESAN RESOURCES

Diocesan RCIA Team

The team helps parishes set up and run the RCIA

RCIA Guidelines

Guide to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults produced in the summer 2009

Lectionary Based Catechesis

A Guide for RCIA Groups

Practical guides which connect the liturgical year (A, B and C) with the teaching of the Catechism in RCIA groups

These resources are available from our Department for Adult Education and Evangelisation 0117 902 5595 and cliftondiocese.com



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GLOSSARY

- Absolution** The ritual action which completes the Sacrament of Penance. It includes the formal declaration by a priest or bishop, acting in persona Christi (in the person of Christ) that a penitent's sins are forgiven.
- Baptism** The first Sacrament of Christian Initiation incorporating new members into the Church and into the mystery of Jesus Christ.
- Bishop** The fullness of the ministerial priesthood resides in the office of a bishop. As successor to the apostles, a diocesan bishop is the sign and minister of unity within the diocese and a sign of communion between the diocese, the local Church, and the universal Church.
- Candidate** A person baptised in another Christian tradition, who is preparing for reception into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- Catechesis** The instruction and spiritual formation of Catechumens, neophytes (see below) and those persons who seek full communion with the Catholic Church.
- Catechism (of the Catholic Church)**
A systematic presentation of Catholic doctrine covering the profession of faith, the sacraments of faith, the life of faith, and the prayer of the believer.
- Catechist** One who instructs and forms the Enquirer in the teachings and way of life of the community of believers – the Church.
- Catechumen** A person who is not baptised and who wishes to become a Catholic and who is following the RCIA process of instruction.
- Catechumenate** The process by which the Catholic Church brings unbaptised children and adults to Christian initiation. Also, the period of time during which an unbaptised person prepares for Christian initiation. It is a period of deeper exploration of the Christian faith – an apprenticeship - through the reading of scripture, prayer, worship and ministry in daily life.
- Chrism** A mixture of oil and sweet balsam or perfume which is blended and consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass and used to anoint the newly baptised and newly ordained priests and bishops. Chrism is also used in the consecration of churches and altars. What is anointed with Chrism is set apart, consecrated to be likened to Christ.
- Confirmation** The second Sacrament of Initiation, which complements Baptism. Confirmation is celebrated by an anointing with the oil of Chrism and the laying on of hands.

- Conversion** Repentance for sin, a turning away, a change of heart, and an embracing of a life that leads towards Christ and his gospel.
- Deacon** The ministry of the deacon finds its roots in the Acts of the Apostles where seven men were called to assist the apostles in the task of 'practically' living out the Gospel message in their care of widows, the hungry and the needy. They are ordained as ministers of the Word, of the Eucharist, and of Charity. Although they tend to be assigned to work in a parish, deacons are ordained for the diocese. The diaconate, like the priesthood, is open only to men. Their ministry is one of service, reflecting in a real way the Christ who reaches out in love and service to his people. Their ministry reminds us of the need to serve Christ in those around us.
- Doctrine** The formal teachings of the Church.
- Dogma** A truth revealed by God and defined by the Church.
- Easter** The greatest of all Christian celebrations, Easter commemorates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- Easter tide** A 50-day liturgical season of celebration lasting from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday.
- Ecumenism** The work for unity between the different Christian churches.
- Elect** Catechumens who have been found ready by the community of faith to take part in the next celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation on their journey to full communion with the Catholic Church. The Catechumens become the Elect through their participation in the Rite of Election.
- Enlightenment** A time of real spiritual preparation, the period of purification during Lent when the Elect are involved in the final stage of preparation for celebrating the Rites of Initiation.
- Enquirer** A person who sincerely seeks to know Christ more deeply and to learn about the faith of the Church so as to be welcomed into the life of the community.
- Enrolment** The Rite of inscribing into the Book of the Elect (at the Rite of Election) the names of those Catechumens called to continue their journey of formation towards the Sacraments of Initiation.
- Exorcisms** These prayers form part of the RCIA, most especially taking place during the Rites of Scrutiny, during the Season of Lent. The exorcisms are prayers of the community asking for strength to be given to those preparing for baptism in all that they do to turn away from evil and sin, and walk towards the light of Christ and his truth.



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Eucharist A word meaning 'Thanksgiving'. Mass is commonly referred to as The Sacrament of the Eucharist. Our thanksgiving is focused on thanking God for the gift of salvation he has freely given to us through the saving death and resurrection of Christ, his Son.

Evangelisation The way in which the Church proclaims the Gospel in word or in deed.

Fasting In Lent, one of the characteristics of the season along with prayer and almsgiving. We find fasting being practised in the Old Testament as an act of penance and a way of showing a desire for conversion. We go without food, not to starve ourselves, but as a physical way of training and reminding ourselves that there are aspects of our lives that we need to 'fast' from. Our physical hunger through fasting can also serve to remind us that we hunger for what the Lord can offer us to sustain us. There are two days of fasting in the Church's year – Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Catholics – in good health and between the ages of 18 and 59 (inclusive) - are obliged to fast in a modified way: one full meal and two other small meals may be eaten.

Godparent The person who accompanies the Catechumen (the one preparing for Baptism) during the rites and period of election, initiation and mystagogy. The sponsor is someone who supports and encourages a person journeying towards Confirmation and Reception into full communion with the Church. Both act as 'mentors' to those they walk with towards the sacraments.

Grace The free gift of God's love and help enabling us to know the immensity of his goodness and care.

Holy Day of Obligation

A day in the Church's calendar year celebrating a specific event which carries with it the Sunday obligation to attend Mass. There are now only four days: St Peter and St Paul: 29 June, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 15 August (when Our Lady was assumed, body and soul, into heaven) All Saints: 1 November; and Christmas Day.

The Feast of the Epiphany (the Manifestation of Christ to the world, when the Magi brought gifts to the infant Jesus) is moved to the Sunday nearest the 6 January, the Ascension (the celebration of Christ's ascension to eternal glory in heaven, forty days after his resurrection) is celebrated in place of the Seventh Sunday after Easter, and Corpus Christi (the celebration of our faith that the food and drink given to us in Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ) is celebrated on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday.

Holy Oils The three oils collectively known as the Holy Oils are used in the celebration of the Sacraments of Initia-

tion, the Sacrament of Ordination to Priesthood and Bishop, and the celebration of the Sacrament of the Sick. The Oil of the Sick and Catechumens are blessed by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass; the Oil of Chrism is consecrated by the Bishop at that same Mass during Holy Week. These three oils symbolise the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit of grace. In the Sacrament of the Sick, the person is anointed seeking God's comfort, strength, protection and hope of healing. In Baptism the Oil of Catechumens is used to strengthen the one to be baptised along their journey towards new life from the font. The Oil of Chrism – used in Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination – reminds us of the great outpouring of the Spirit upon the one anointed for the life of grace and holiness to which they are called. Whoever is anointed with the Oil of Chrism is called to resemble the likeness of Christ and radiate his image in everything they are called to be.

Incarnation The mystery of the Word of God, the second Person of the Trinity, taking on our human flesh and becoming a man.

Infallibility The dogma of the Church that helps us understand a particular aspect of the Pope's teaching office. The Pope speaks infallibly when he teaches on a matter of faith or morals, speaking and teaching as successor to the apostle Peter, and speaking in communion with the College of Bishops. Whatever is taught *ex cathedra* (from the chair) becomes a dogma of faith for the whole Church. The last infallible declaration was made in 1950 by Pope Pius XII when he proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Initiation The process by which a person enters the faith life of the Church. This process extends from the person's first enquiry through to the period of Mystagogy and beyond.

Laitie – the People of God

From the Greek word 'laos' – people. Used to describe those members of the body of the faithful, the People of God, who are not members of the ordained clergy.

Lectionary The book containing the assigned Scripture readings for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word during the Eucharist and other sacraments.

Lectionary Based Catechesis

A catechetical method for learning the foundation of faith and doctrine by studying and reflecting on the Scriptures as they are arranged for the liturgy over a three-year cycle. The focus is usually the Gospels as these contain many of the important teachings of Jesus, often in the form of parables.



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Lent The season from Ash Wednesday to the Easter Triduum, marked by prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The First Sunday (or Saturday) of Lent sees the Rite of Election taking place in the Cathedral when the faithful and the Elect mark the beginning of the final, more intense preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation.

Liturgical Year Begins on the First Sunday of Advent, which usually occurs around the beginning of December or the end of November, and ends on the Feast of Christ the King. As the earth cycles annually through its seasons, so the Church celebrates the mystery of Christ through the seasons of the liturgical year – always the same, yet ever new and renewing. It is marked by special seasons – Advent, Christmas, Lent, The Triduum, Easter, and Ordinary Time.

Liturgy The public worship of the Church. The Eucharist is often referred to as 'The Liturgy' or 'Divine Liturgy'.

Liturgy of the Word

The part of the Mass beginning after the Opening Prayer to the General Intercessions. When a priest is not available to celebrate Mass, a Liturgy of the Word may be celebrated, led by a deacon or lay person. The Liturgy of the Word comprises (on Sundays) a reading from the Old Testament, a psalm, a reading from one of the apostolic letters, and the Gospel. On weekdays there is usually just one reading, a psalm and a Gospel reading. The Liturgy of the Word is concluded by the Intercessions – our Christian response to the Word shown through our concern for the needs of others, the Church and the world.

Mass The most commonly used word for the celebration of the Eucharist. The word 'Mass' finds its origin in the dismissal of the Mass in Latin, 'Ite missa est'. The word Mass helps us to understand that we come together for our celebration of the Eucharist so that we might be sent out to be the Body of Christ to our world.

Ministry Ministry in the Church is about humble service. The model for all ministry is Christ himself who came to serve, not to be served. A minister puts themselves and their own concerns aside in order to serve the community.

Mystagogy The period of time following Initiation, usually during the Easter season, which centres on catechesis in the meaning and experience of the mysteries of baptismal faith.

Neophyte A newly baptised person.

Parables The stories Jesus told which illustrate some of his most important teachings.

Paschal Triduum The three days of Maundy Thursday, commemorating the Lord's Supper on the night before he suffered, Good Friday, commemorating the Lord's Passion, Holy Saturday and the Great Easter Vigil. The Easter Vigil – when Catechumens are baptised and initiated into the life of Christ and into the community of faith, and where Candidates are received into full communion with the Church – takes place late on Holy Saturday night, looking towards the dawn of Easter Sunday. These three celebrations combined form one liturgy. During these days Christians celebrate the Passover of Israel from slavery to freedom, the Passover of Jesus Christ from death to life, our own Passover from sin to grace and the world's Passover from darkness to light.

Pentecost Literally means 50 days. It commemorates the day when the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon Our Lady and the Apostles in the form of flames 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus.

Post-Catechumenate (see **Mystagogy**)

Pre-Catechumenate

The period of enquiry prior to acceptance into the order of Catechumens; the time of initial evangelisation.

Presentations The rites during the period of enlightenment and purification through which the Church passes on to the Elect the Creed and the Our Father, the most cherished documents of the Church, and the traditions they represent: the way Christians believe and the way Christians pray.

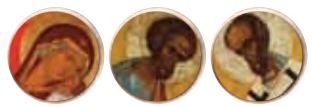
Priest A man who is ordained to minister within the Church. Through ordination, he is called and anointed by the Church to minister to God's Pilgrim People and to proclaim Christ by the manner of his life. A priest is ordained to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to celebrate the Eucharist and the other Sacraments, and to exercise a role of leadership within the Church. He is called to lead, to teach and to sanctify.

Purification (see **Enlightenment**)

RCIA The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the process through which interested adults are gradually introduced to the Roman Catholic faith and way of life.

Reconciliation The Sacrament of Penance is the Sacrament in which sins are declared forgiven and absolution granted. It was previously known as confession.

Redemption Being delivered from evil through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



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Religious A man or woman who has consecrated his or her life to prayer, obedience, chastity, and poverty. Religious often live in community under the inspiration of their particular founder and following a rule of life.

Revelation God's disclosure of himself to humanity. The greatest revelation of God is Jesus Christ.

Rite of Acceptance

One of the liturgies associated with the process of RCIA during which the Candidates, accompanied by their sponsors, are welcomed into the Order of Catechumens and the journey of preparation towards the Sacraments of Initiation.

Rite of Election

The process of selecting those Catechumens who are considered ready to take part in the next celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. The celebration of the Rite of Election ordinarily takes place on the First Sunday of Lent (in this diocese it is the first Saturday in Lent). In this Rite, the bishop, or his delegate, declares in the name of the Church that particular Catechumens are ready and chosen for the sacraments at Easter. During this celebration, the names of the Elect are written in the Book of the Elect. The Rite also welcomes those who are to be welcomed into full communion with the Church at Easter.

Rosary

A form of prayer, traditionally ascribed to Saint Dominic, reflecting on the main events in the life of Jesus and Mary, his mother. In the traditional rosary there are twenty of these events, called 'mysteries', divided into four groups of five: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous. The prayers which go with each mystery are the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father. Rosary beads, grouped in tens, are used to help count the prayers.

Sacrament

There are seven Sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Marriage, Holy Orders and the Sacrament of the Sick. They are celebrations and signs of God's presence in our lives and also opportunities for us to receive the free gift of his grace to strengthen us in all the sacrament is calling us to be. Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders can only be received once.

Scrutinies

Rites celebrated with the Elect, usually at the liturgy on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, asking for the spirit of repentance, an understanding of sin and the experience of the true freedom of the children of God.

Sponsors (see **Godparents**)

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT



*/// COME HOLY SPIRIT
Spirit of love, Spirit of hope,
into our silence
come to us and bring us your peace;
rest in us that we may be tranquil and still;
speak to us as each heart needs to hear;
reveal to us things hidden and things longed for;
rejoice in us that we may praise and be glad;
pray in us that we may be one with you
and with each other.*



*Refresh and renew us from your
living springs of water.
Holy Spirit, dwell in us
that your light may shine through us,
and that in our hearts you will find
a welcome and a dwelling place. ///*

