

RCIA and the Christian Initiation of Children







What we hope to accomplish...

- ❖ A brief overview of the R.C.I.A.
- ❖ Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children
 - ❖ How to use R.C.I.A. for the formation of Children
 - ❖ Initiatory and Ongoing Catechesis (Mystagogy)
 - ❖ A walk through the process of RCIA with children



What is the R.C.I.A.?

- Paragraph One:

“The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts.”



What is the R.C.I.A.?

- “ ... a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful....
- ... by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.”
- ... a spiritual journey ... that varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place...”



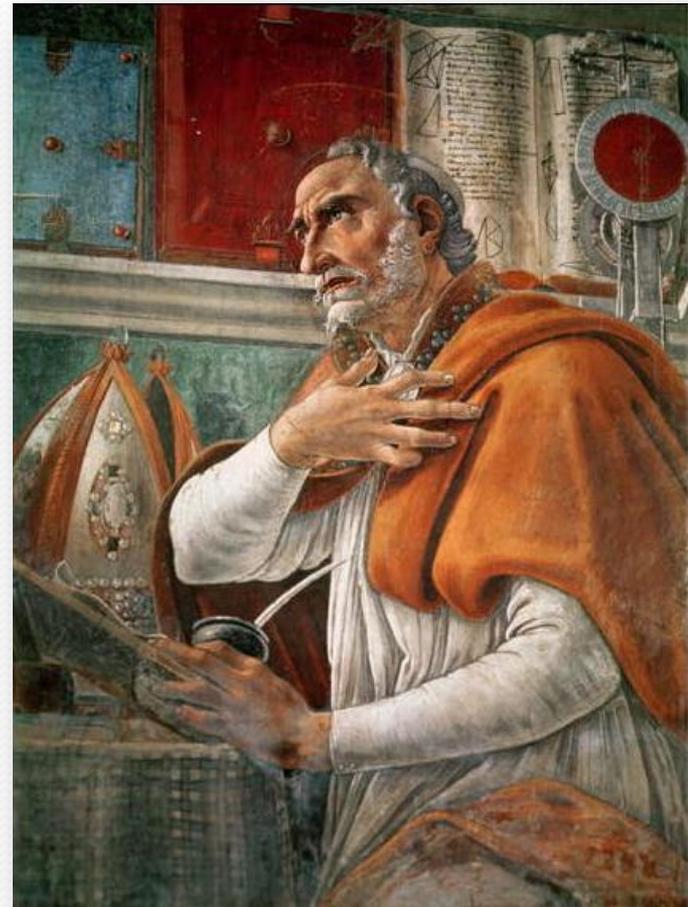
What is the R.C.I.A.?

- “RCIA” is the modern-day name for the ancient “catechumenate”, a catechetical system developed in the Early Church, the centuries following the Apostles.
- Restored at the Second Vatican Council and promulgated for use again in 1972

De Catechizandis Rudibus

“On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed”

“You have requested me, brother Deogratias, to send you in writing something which might be of service to you in the matter of catechizing the uninstructed. For you have informed me that in Carthage, where you hold the position of a deacon, persons who have to be taught the Christian faith from its very rudiments, are frequently brought to you by reason of your enjoying the reputation of possessing a rich gift in catechizing...” - St. Augustine



RCIA as a Liturgical Reality

The RCIA is a liturgical order consisting of:

RITES – “doorways” through which the candidates pass as they progress in conversion

PERIODS – stages along the process of initiation that prepare for the next step through catechesis and conversion





The Structure of the RCIA

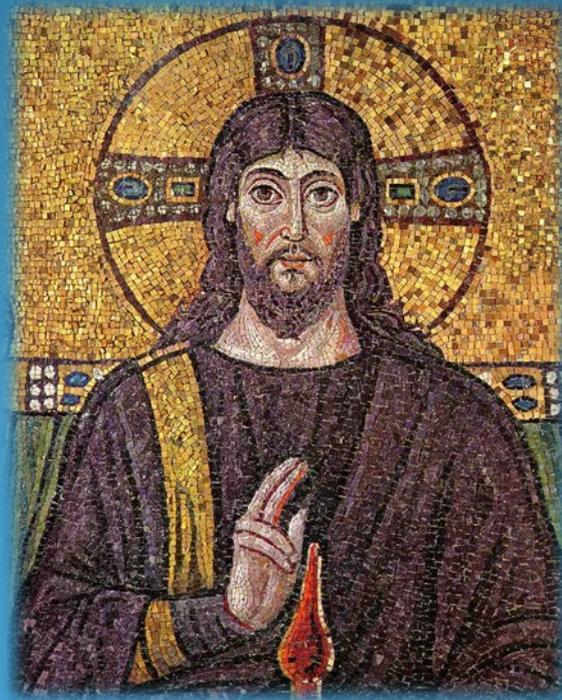
- Divided into 4 periods/stages:
 1. Evangelization/Pre-Catechumenate
 2. The Catechumenate
 3. Purification and Enlightenment
 4. Post-Baptismal Catechesis, or *Mystagogy*
- Containing 3 major liturgical rites:
 1. Rite of Acceptance Into the Order of Catechumens
 2. The Rite of Election
 3. The Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist



The 3 Pillars of RCIA & *Conversion*

1. **Catechetical** – One who is asking for faith (seeker) becomes the one who professes faith (believer)
2. **Liturgical** – One who is a recipient of the liturgical action of the Church (receiving the Sign of the Cross) becomes an active, conscious participant in the liturgy (full Eucharistic Communion)
3. **Pastoral** – From an earthly, self-centered orientation (sin) to intentional discipleship (seeking holiness)

Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children



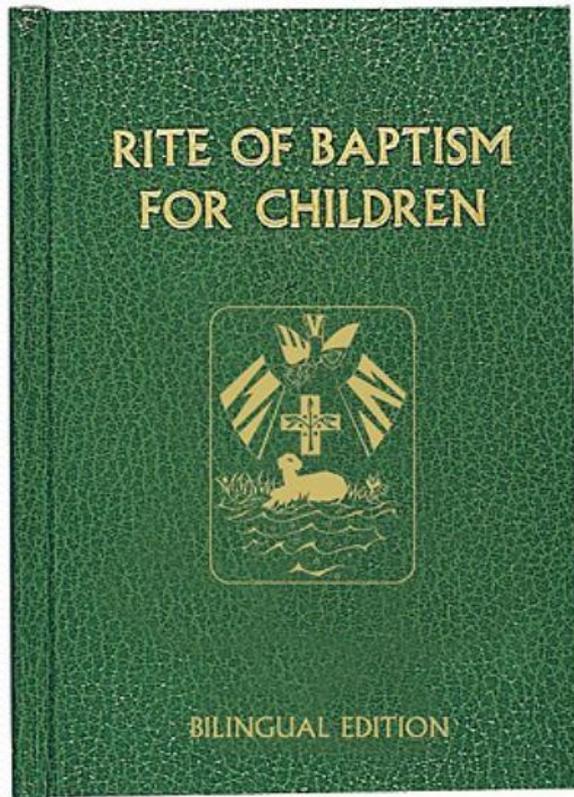


Case Study – Jane

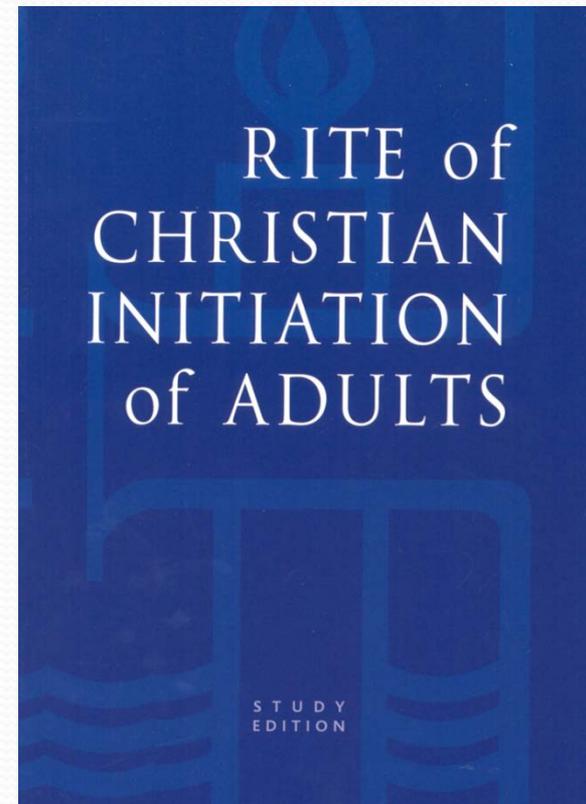
Jane is five years old and has recently started spending the weekends with her grandparents. She was never baptized and her parents don't take her to Church on Sundays. Her grandparents have started taking her and she has expressed an interest in becoming Catholic, like her grandmother.

Her parents contact the Church secretary and begin asking if this can be done, and how they should go about it...

Canon Law and Christian Initiation

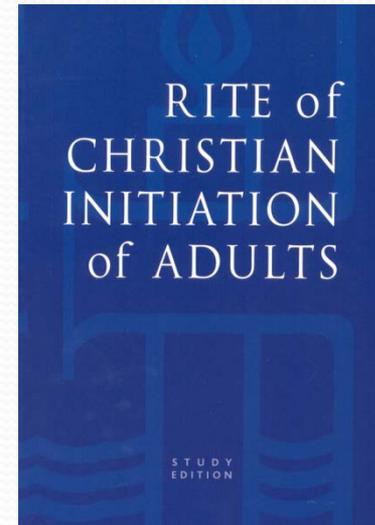
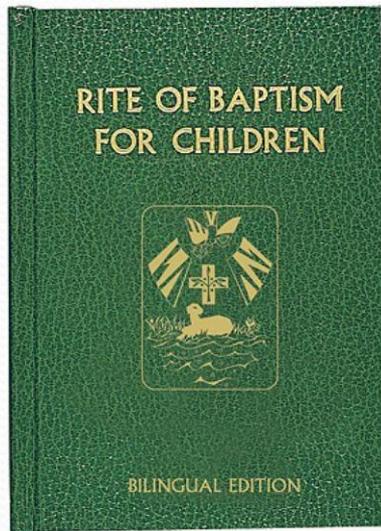


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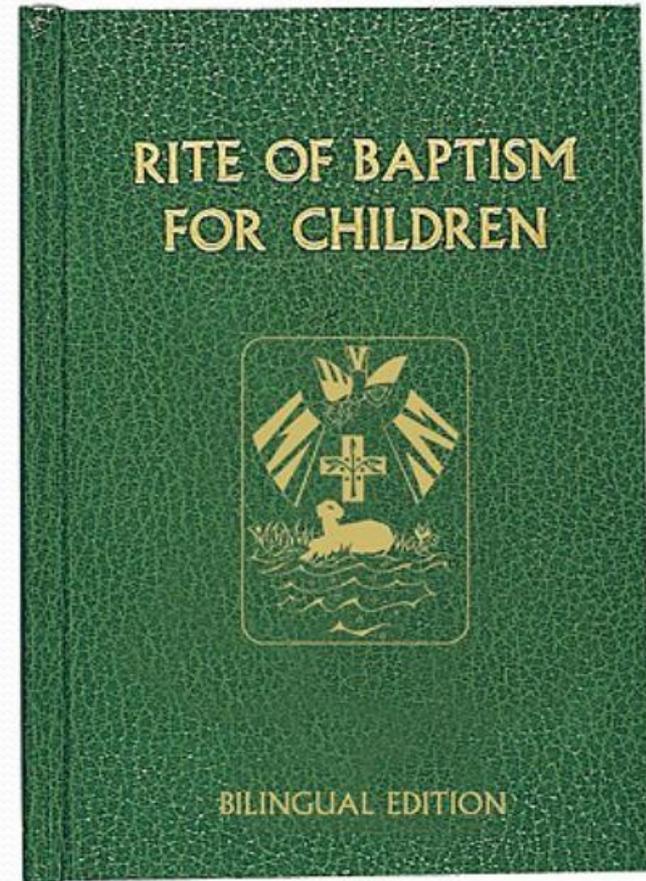
Canon Law and the Question of the Two Categories of Children/Minors

- Children under seven years old, and those who lack the use of reason.
- Children, 7 and older, who have the use of reason.



Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children

- “Children or infants are those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore cannot have or profess personal faith.”
 - Introduction, *Baptism of Children*, paragraph 1.





Case Study – Billy

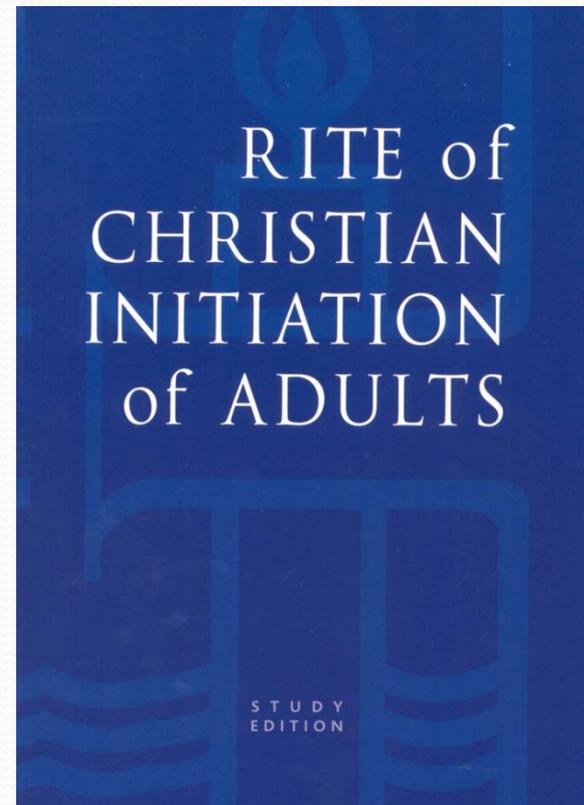
Billy is in the Second Grade at a Catholic School. He notices his friends are getting excited about their First Holy Communion in the Spring and he asks his parents what Holy Communion is and why they don't go to Church. Billy has never been baptized, but he wants to receive Holy Communion just like his classmates.

Billy's parents ask their son's teacher what they can do so that Billy can receive Communion, just like his classmates.

Canon Law and Christian Initiation

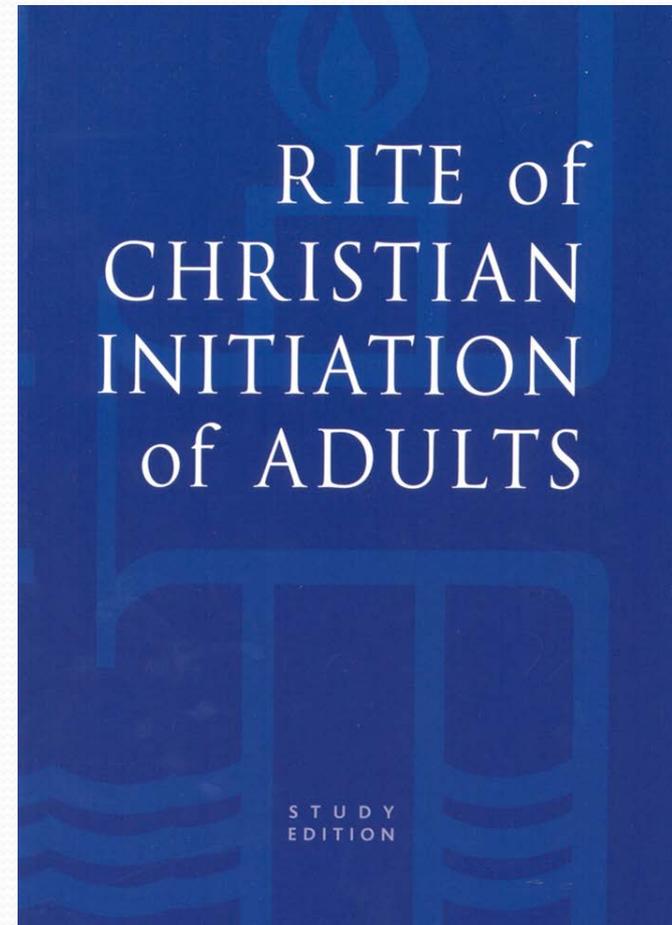


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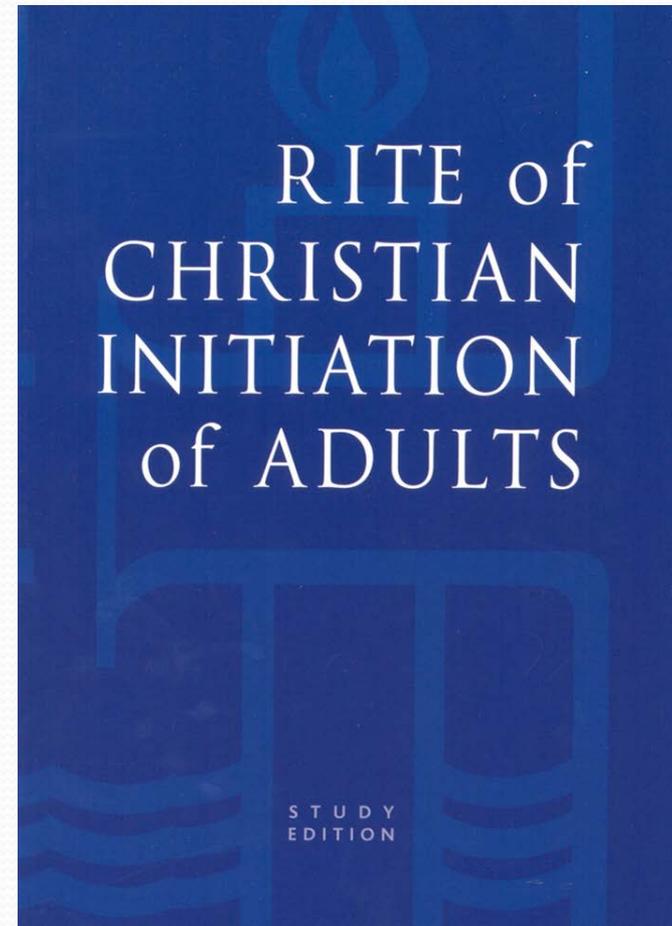
Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children

- “The prescripts of the canons on adult baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason.”
 - Canon 852, §1.



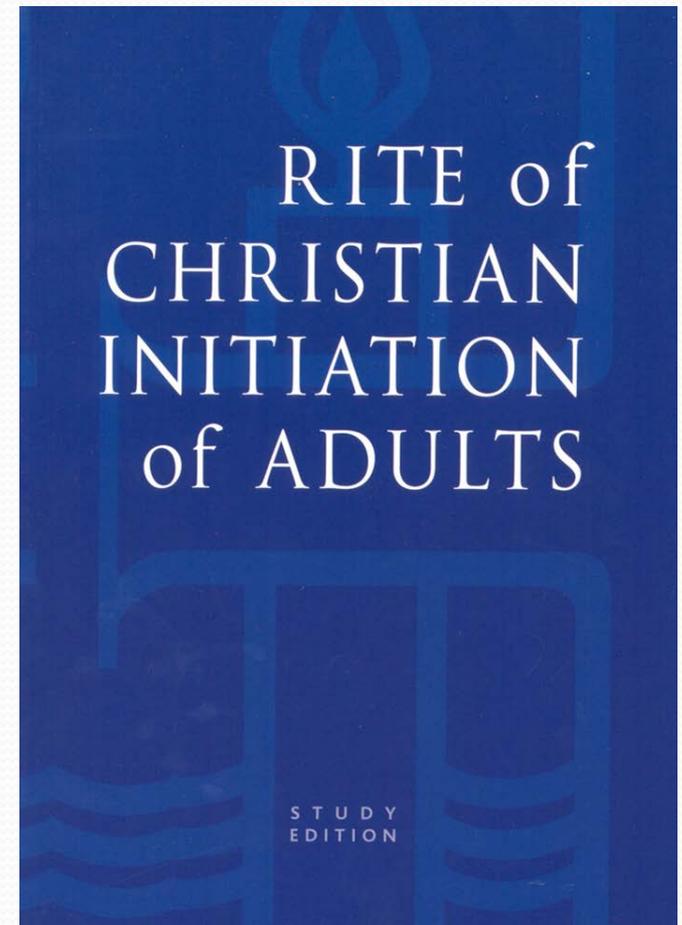
Canon Law and the Christian Initiation of Children

- With reference to Baptism, an adult is considered to be anyone seven or older with the use of reason
- Those who are 7 or older and have the use of reason are baptized according to the RCIA



“Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age”

- Part II, Chapter One, 252 – 330.
- “This form of the rite of Christian initiation is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age.”





National Statutes for the Catechumenate

- “Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults, their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens.”

- National Statutes for the Catechumenate, no. 18.



Case Study – Jade

Jade is 12 years old. Jade's father is a non-practicing Catholic, her mother is a Protestant (Methodist). When Jade was born her parents had her baptized in the Methodist church. They have moved now to a new town and really like the Catholic church down the street. Her father has started going back, and her mother and she have started going as well. Jade's mom would like to become Catholic, and Jade is also interested – because many of her friends at school are Catholics...



Baptized and catechized (non-Catholic) Children???

- Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.
- Children seeking full communion are also considered adults for purposes of Christian Initiation.
- Considered candidates – participate in liturgical rites, make a profession of faith, are received into the Church, are confirmed and receive the Eucharist at Easter Vigil or at a Sunday Mass during the Easter Season.



Baptized and catechized (non-Catholic) Children???

- The Baptism of most Christian churches is considered valid by the Catholic Church and is not repeated.
- This is a question of a baptized, non-Catholic who wishes to come into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age



RCIA, 252

“Such children are **capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith and of recognizing an obligation in conscience.** But they cannot yet be treated as adults because, **at this stage of their lives, they are dependent on their parents or guardians** and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings.”



Let the children come to me...

RCIA, 253

“The Christian initiation of these children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed, in proportion to their age, and the assistance of the education they need. **The process of initiation thus must be adapted both to their spiritual progress, that is to the children’s growth in faith, and to the catechetical instruction they receive.**”



Go and teach all nations...

Conversion



Repent and believe in the Gospel!

“...conversion that is **personal** and somewhat **developed**...”

- ❖ Look for signs of change in the family’s life, as well as in the individual child.
- ❖ A child is capable of conversion – this is the most important element of their formation – to develop a real, personal relationship with God and with the Church.
- ❖ Each will experience conversion differently, “depending on the many forms of God’s grace.”

Conversion



Children are capable of:

- Telling the difference between right and wrong, and admit when they have done something wrong.
- Forming intimate relationships, especially with Jesus.
- Telling the difference between regular bread and wine, and the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Learning to love and forgive, even their enemies.

Who do you say that I am?

Catechesis



The Christian initiation of these children requires ... the **assistance** of the **education** they need.

- ❖ Involve parents/guardians in the catechetical instruction.
- ❖ Regular RCIA sessions with other child catechumens and their peers
- ❖ In some cases, join their parish religious education program, especially if they are young.
- ❖ Consider the previous religious formation/education of each child catechumen

You shall love the Lord your God.

Catechesis



*With all your heart
and with all your mind...*

RCIA, 253

“Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years, if need be, before they receive the sacraments...”

RCIA, 254

“[they] belong to a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for confirmation and eucharist, their initiation progresses gradually and within the supportive setting of this group of companions...”

Catechesis



And with all your strength.

RCIA, 254

“It is to be hoped that the children will also receive as much **help** and **example** as possible **from their parents**, whose permission is required for their children to be initiated and to live the Christian life. The period of initiation will also provide a good opportunity **for the family to have contact with priests and catechists.**”

RCIA, 255

It is advantageous...to form a group of several children who are in the same situation, in order that by example they may help one another in their progress as catechumens.”

A process of Catechesis and Conversion

Set within the context of peers, parents and companions...



“...they are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings.”

“A Culture of Encounter”



Reaching out, fostering dialogue and friendship even outside the usual circles, and making a special point of encountering people who are neglected and ignored by the wider world.



Initiatory Catechesis

“Comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith... Includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a “complete Christian initiation,” which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith, in such a manner that the entire Person, at his deepest levels, feels enriched by the word of God.”

~ *General Directory for Catechesis, 67*



Initiatory Catechesis

“A basic and essential formation, centered on what constitutes the nucleus of Christian experience, the most fundamental certainties of the faith.”

~ *General Directory for Catechesis, 67*



Ongoing Catechesis or *Mystagogy*

Comprehensive,

complex,

ongoing and

LIFELONG CATECHESIS

A Walk through the RCIA with children

A series of
Periods and Rites
leading to the
Sacraments of Initiation





The Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

- “The Living God is faithfully and constantly proclaimed” (#36).
- The children will become acquainted with the all-loving God and Jesus Christ.
- Informal gathering of the family, where the family tells its stories and the Church tells the story of God’s love in the Christian community.



The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

- Marks the end of the first period and the beginning of the second, the catechumenate.
- Celebrates the initial conversion of the children and the first public witness of the candidates to the Church.
- The children declare their intention to become members of the Church, and the Church “marks their reception and first consecration” (#41).



The Period of the Catechumenate

- A time to deepen the child catechumen's initial conversion by means of "suitable pastoral formation" (#75).
- "Suitable catechesis based on the word of God and accomodated to the liturgical year" (#75.1).
- Familiarity with the Christian way of life through interaction with the community



The Period of the Catechumenate

- Liturgical rites, such as celebrations of the word of God, blessings, exorcisms and anointings.
- The Rite of Acceptance at the beginning of this period indicates that the Word of God will have prominence in the upcoming period of the catechumenate.
- Once the child has “undergone conversion in mind and in action” and has “developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching” (#120), the child takes the next step...



The Rite of Election

- Optional for children – but most parishes include children in this rite, which closes the period of the catechumenate and begins the “final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation” (#118).
- A celebration of God’s election, or choice, of the children as expressed through the voice of the Church (the Bishop).
- Acknowledges the conversion that has taken place and anticipates the continuing conversion that will take place in the third period...



The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- A time of “intense spiritual preparation” for the children and their families” (#138).
- Proximate preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, which coincides with LENT.
- The Scrutinies and the handing over of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer are the primary means of formation for the children during this season. A time for introspection and repentance.



Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

- The final step of initiation – the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- Takes place at the Easter Vigil, together with the adults (#305, National Statute 18).
- Children celebrate the fullness of sacramental initiation. Confirmation and Eucharist are not to be delayed.



Postbaptismal Catechesis

Mystagogy

- A time for the children to reflect upon the great mysteries celebrated during their journey to initiation.
- They come to deepen “their grasp of the paschal mystery” (#330, 224).
- Time of transition into the community of the faithful, and to be incorporated into the parish catechetical program with their peers.

