Formation in the RCIA: the Rites Catechumenate to Enlightenment

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What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

The **R.C.I.A.** *(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)* is a process whereby those **interested in learning** come together to learn about the scriptures and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and at the same time, **to discover** where **God** is present in their lives.
R.C.I.A. is a Process...

- The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.) is a process focus on conversion and a way to expand the faith of those seeking the living God.
- Many R.C.I.A. process are focus in the details of the process and we forget to pay attention to the conversion process.
- As a faith formation model, it should provide ways for a living “way of faith” to our catechumens and our parish community in general.
A Catechetical and Liturgical Process

- Goal of catechesis is to strengthen faith and to invite believers to risk on-going conversion.
- Is the process by which people become members of the Roman Catholic Church.
- It is experiential, grows out of life-experience
- Involves four tasks:
  - **Believing**: Building Community - *doctrinal*
  - **Living**: Reflection on stories and beliefs in relation to Jesus and God - *practical*
  - **Praying** together – *liturgical*
  - **Serving** others – *apostolic*
R.C.I.A.: is a *Conversion of Life*...

- A Faith which allows time for reflection, questioning, prayer, sharing story-telling, discussion, instruction and commitment.
- A process of religious conversion.
- An ecclesial and liturgical structure in which conversion of life takes place.
R.C.I.A.: A Conversion of Life

**Process**
- Evangelization & Pre-catechumenate
- Catechumenate
- Purification and Enlightenment
- Post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogia

**Ritual**
- Acceptance as catechumen
- Rite of Election
- Scrutinies
  - Reception of sacraments of initiation
**Where did it come from?**

- Prepared and approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship – January 6, 1972 by Pope Paul VI.
- Idea to establish the program started before Vatican II.
- Rite of Infant Baptism (1969)
- Rite of Confirmation (1971)
- R.C.I.A. (1972)
  - Interim English translation (1974)
  - Final English translation (1985)
- Made mandatory in the United States (1988)
Who attends?

The process is designed primarily for those adults who are:

- Un-baptized (those not baptized previously)
- Baptized in another tradition / religion
- Baptized Catholic, but with no further religious training or sacraments
Baptism of Adults

Canon 865, §1. For an adult to be baptized, the person must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, have been instructed sufficiently about the truths of the faith and Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian Life through the catechumenate. The adult is also to be urged to have sorrow for personal sins.
Baptism of Adults vs. Infants

- **Canon 852, §1.** 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.
- Children age 7 and above are treated as adults for baptism.
- So they are to be admitted to the catechumenate and confirmed with baptism.
Candidates ...

- The R.C.I.A. uses the word “candidate” to refer to both unbaptized and baptized people.
- A candidate is any person, “baptized or unbaptized, who is the focus of one of the rites, such as the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Election.”
- Often the word “candidate” is used to refer to someone who is completing their initiation or who is being received into the Catholic Church.
Liturgical Catechesis

- Liturgical catechesis places the liturgical celebration of rites at the center of initiation catechesis.
- The goal of sacramental or liturgical catechesis
  - is to dispose believers to risk conversion to Christ through participation in the Paschal Mystery,
  - set out in the liturgical assemblies.
Liturgical Catechesis

- The tasks of sacramental or liturgical catechesis are:
  - Implementing the four tasks of catechesis through:
    - Preparing believers to attend to the living Word which proclaims God’s purpose in Christ and which interprets the human situation
    - Preparing believers to open themselves to the power of the symbolic gestures and actions and words of praying community
    - Reflecting with believers on the power of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus present in the liturgical assembly.
A RITE is an established, ceremonious, usually religious act.

Rites in this sense fall into three major categories:

- **Rites of passage**, generally changing an individual's social status, such as marriage, baptism, or graduation.
- **Rites of worship**, where a community comes together to worship, such as Mass.
- **Rites of personal devotion**, where an individual worships, including prayer and pilgrimages such as Kalaupapa.
Meaning behind the Rite

• Meaning during the ritual
  • There are new meanings that arise in the celebration of the rite.
  • The rite both shapes and is shaped by this community in prayer.

• Meaning in Front of the Ritual
  • Ritual serves as a window through which we can see behind it, i.e. the intention of the creators of the ritual for use in public worship and also “in front of” it meaning emerges from the performance of the ritual.
Praenotanda – Introduction
Structure of Initiation of Adults

- Initiation is a journey in community.
- The community benefits from the initiation process because it deepens our awareness, and commitment to discipleship.
- The liturgical celebrations, need to happen in the midst of the community.
  - The candidates and catechumens will come to know God primarily by the way we live the gospel way of life (our example) and the care and concern we offer to them (relationships).
Community involvement...

- **R.C.I.A. n#6:**
  - Directs the community to accompany the catechumens through its liturgical prayer and to be with them when they cross over from one state to another in the conversion journey.

- **R.C.I.A. n#8:**
  - Reminds us of what is critical about initiation: it is concerned with immersion in the Paschal mystery.
  - **We are not about membership, we are about discipleship and a lifelong commitment of sharing in the Paschal Mystery.**
What does the Rite say?

• **R.C.I.A. n#36:**
  - Describes two key concepts: evangelization and the process of conversion.
  - Note that conversion is to the Lord and not the Church.

• **R.C.I.A. n#37:**
  - Defines the goal of this period of formation: the evangelization that leads to faith and initial conversion.

• **R.C.I.A. n#38:**
  - Agenda of the pre-catechumenate is threefold:
    - Suitable explanation of the gospel,
    - Spiritual support and,
    - Explicit connection with the community.
The First Phase: The Period of Inquiry (Pre-Catechumenate)

- The period of inquiry is a time for:
  - Asking questions about the Catholic faith
  - Building community within the group
  - Developing a trusting atmosphere
  - More importantly, it is a time for:
    - Examining God's presence in our lives, past and present
    - Learning about prayer
    - Fostering conversion
    - Developing or improving our relationship with God, experiences of trust
    - Getting to know the Church
The First Phase:
The Period of Inquiry (Pre-Catechumenate)

- At this point the group will discuss topics such as:
  - What brought you to R.C.I.A.
  - Divine Revelation
  - God, Trinity, Belonging
  - The Church & Ecclesiology
  - Church Scriptures
  - Sacraments
  - Faith

- The conclusion of this Phase leads onto the **Rite of Acceptance into the order of catechumens!!**
Discerning Readiness for the Rite of Acceptance

- Evidence of first faith
- Initial conversion
- Intent to change one’s life
- Intent to enter into relationship with God in Christ
- First stirring of repentance
- Beginnings of practice of prayer
- Sense of Church
- Some experience of the community
The First Rite: The Rite of Acceptance

- The Rite of Acceptance is the first rite of the R.C.I.A. process.
- It takes place within the context of a Sunday Mass.
- Those wishing to enter into the second phase of the R.C.I.A. (the Catechumenate or Study Period) make public commitment to accept the way of the cross.
Outline of Rite of Acceptance

- Receiving the candidate
- Greeting
- Opening Dialogue
- Candidates’ first “Acceptance of the Gospel”
- Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly
- Signing of the Forehead (other senses)
- Concluding prayer
- Invitation to the Celebration of the Word of God

Candidates and Catechumens now move onto the **Catechumenate (Study) Period**...
Second Phase: Period of Catechumenate

- What does the rite say?
- Period of catechumenate is a time of formation to bring to maturity the faith and conversion celebrated in the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens.
- The time frame is long: it is an extended period during which time there is a maturity of faith through catechesis, the Christian way of life, liturgical rites, and apostolic witness.
Goal of catechesis

- The appropriate acquaintance with dogma and precepts, an awareness of the breadth of Christian teaching, especially as it is expressed in the Creed (proclaimed in liturgy).
- The period of study (Catechumenate) is a time for:
  - "Breaking Open the Word" - reading and discussing the Sunday Gospel
  - Continuing to build community within the group
  - Getting more involved in parish activities, getting to know the parish community
  - Learning about the basic teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church
Goal of catechesis

More importantly, it is a time for:

- Continuing to examine God's presence in our lives, past and present
- Developing prayer life, entering into the communal worship of the parish
- Fostering conversion
- Developing or improving our relationship with God

The conclusion of this Phase leads onto the *Rite of Calling and the Rite of Election*...
Rites belonging to the Period of the Catechumenate

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Celebrations held especially for the catechumens
  - To implant in their hearts the teachings they are receiving
  - To give them instruction and experience in the different aspects and ways of prayer
  - To explain to them the signs, celebrations and seasons of the liturgy
  - To prepare them gradually to enter the worship assemble of the entire church
Participation at Sunday Mass

- This will help the catechumenate become accustomed to taking an active and practiced part in Sunday celebrations.
- After the Liturgy of the Word they should be dismissed.
- Celebrations held in connection with catechetical instruction.
Discerning Readiness for Election

- **Conversion in mind and in action:**
  - Has the catechumen come to know God in this community?
  - Has he or she responded to the Word both in prayer and in a life of service?

- **Sufficient acquaintance with the Christian teaching:**
  - Does he or she welcome the insights of the Catholic community in its teaching about how to follow the gospel?

- **Spirit of faith and charity:**
  - Does he or she seek God in prayer, with confidence and trust?
  - Is there growth in the individual’s capacity to give and receive love?
  - Is there personal relationship with God?
Discerning Readiness for Election

- Acknowledged attention to receive the sacraments:
  - Does he or she desire to contribute to the growth and development of this particular community?
  - Does he or she wish to be baptized?
  - Or if baptized: Does he or she desire to deepen the desire to be a child of God?
- We are inviting the catechumen to recognize God’s stirrings and the response of faith.
- Ultimately the decision rests in the hands of the community as represented by the pastor.
The Second Rite: The Rite of Calling

- The Rite of Calling is often celebrated in a parish the week before the Rite of Election.
- This rite offers the local community the opportunity to express its approval of the catechumens and to send them forth to the celebration of election assured of the parish’s care and support.
Outline of Rite of Sending

- After the homily in the celebration of the Word or Mass,
  - Presentation of the Catechumens
  - Affirmation by the Sponsors and the assembly
  - Intercession for the Catechumens
  - Prayer over the Catechumens
  - Dismissal
The Third Rite: The Rite of Election (1st Sunday of Lent)

- The Rite of Election is a celebration that is usually held at the Diocesan Cathedral.
- It is celebrated on the same day in many of the Dioceses around the world.
- Those wishing to be Baptized or Received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church come together.
The Third Rite: The Rite of Election (1\textsuperscript{st} Sunday of Lent)

R.C.I.A. n\#119

- This rite is called “Election” because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts.

- It is also called “Enrollment of names” because as a pledge of fidelity the candidates inscribe their names in the book that lists those who have been chosen for initiation.
The Third Rite: The Rite of Election (1st Sunday of Lent)

- Their names are publicly declared to all present.
- This signifies their intention to be initiated at the Easter Vigil.
- The Bishop joyfully welcomes those to be baptized as children of God, as well as those who have already been baptized but seek full communion with the Catholic Church.
- Candidates and Catechumens now move onto the Period of Purification and Enlightenment ...
Outline of the Rite of Election

- Liturgy of the Word
  - Homily
  - Presentation of the Catechumens
  - Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly
- Invitation and Enrollment of Names
- Act of Admission or Election
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Prayer over the Elect
- Dismissal of the Elect
The Third Phase: The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

• The period of purification and enlightenment is a time for:
  ➢ Repentance
  ➢ Coincides with the Lenten preparation for the Easter celebration
  ➢ Examining areas of sinfulness and weakness in our lives
  ➢ Asking for God's help in healing these areas
  ➢ Prayer, fasting and almsgiving
  ➢ Preparation for receiving the Sacraments of initiation
What does the Rite say?

- **R.C.I.A. n#138:**
  - Lent was the time of final, prayerful preparation for those whom the Church would baptize, confirm and celebrate Eucharist at the great Vigil of Easter.

- **R.C.I.A. n#139:**
  - This section highlights the important shift that occurs after the rite of election: the formal catechesis is completed and this is now a time for spiritual recollection.
Goal of catechesis

- The period of purification and enlightenment presumes such immersion in Catholic Tradition and the readiness to make the commitment of baptism.
- Now the focus is akin to a retreat.
- This is a time of prayer and reflection.
- The content of the catechesis for the first few weeks is the experience of election and the beginnings of this intense period of reflection, using the ritual text and the lectionary as the basis for reflection and prayer.
Rites belonging to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- **R.C.I.A. n°141** The Scrutinies, have as purpose to uncover, in order to heal all that is “weak, defective or sinful” and to bring out, in order to strengthen all that is “upright, strong, and good.”

- **R.C.I.A. n°143** Through the praying of the scrutinies, the elect grow in their understanding of the mystery of sin and also their desire for freedom from sin and salvation from Christ.

- **R.C.I.A. n°144** We only celebrate the scrutinies with the unbaptized.

- **R.C.I.A. n°146** The ritual text is clear: we celebrate three scrutinies, normally on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, which use the Lectionary texts of Year A. Theses texts cannot be changed.
Rites belonging to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- **R.C.I.A. n#147** The Presentation, expressions of the heart of the Church’s faith and prayer are intended to enlighten the elect.
  - The Creed with the sure light of faith and
  - The Lord’s Prayer with a realization of the spirit of adoption by which they will call God their Father.
- **R.C.I.A. n#148** The first presentation is the Creed, following the first scrutiny.
  - Elect are to commit the Creed to memory.
- **R.C.I.A. n#149** The second presentation is the Lord’s Prayer, following the third scrutiny
Goal of catechesis

• As mentioned earlier, we celebrate the scrutinies on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent.
• The scrutinies raise up and expose whatever keeps the transforming love of God from liberating all forms of oppression.
  • Some of those barriers are freely chosen, the result of personal sin.
  • Others are the result of systematic evil: racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination and oppression.
• The focus of the scrutinies is toward life, toward freedom, toward salvation.
Preparing for the Scrutinies

- The best preparation for the celebration of the scrutinies is to help the elect identify and name their areas of strength and weakness in relationship to life with God so that the community may pray with them.
- **R.C.I.A. n#153** The rite clearly indicates that the prayers of intercession during the scrutinies may include the particular needs and concerns of the community.
- Provide a period of reflection and integration after the celebration.
- The intercessions for the Scrutinies should be “custom-made” for the elect at this time.
- The images of the scrutinies-living waters that quench our basic thirst, light for our blindness and the gift of the fullness of life, suggest an intensification of prayer reflected in the intercessions.
Outline of the Rite of Scrutinies
Third, Fourth, Fifth Sunday of Lent

- Liturgy of the Word
  - Readings
  - Homily
  - Invitation to Silent Prayer
  - Intercessions for the Elect
  - Exorcism
  - Dismissal of the Elect
Exorcism

- Is the prayer of God’s presence: it is a pre-baptismal prayer.
- The exorcism is the acknowledgment of the breath of God being welcomed into those areas that lack life.
- Three movements to the exorcism prayer:
  - Presider invokes the power and presence of the Creator God to free and protect the elect from sin,
  - Presider calls upon the power and presence of the Spirit through the ancient symbol of the imposition of hands,
  - Prayer invoking the power and presence of Christ.
Catechesis following the Scrutinies

• First we reflect back on the experience of the scrutiny itself.
• Then, because the elect recognize their new freedom, they have the grace and courage to continue with the ongoing reflection on conversion that the scrutiny demands.
• The period of catechesis following the scrutinies is primarily a time of support and care for the elect, helping them see God’s love operative in the midst of the painful naming of sin.
• The focus is on God’s love, not on our sin.
  • It is the time to be preoccupied with the freedom of being a child of God, and anything that keeps us from living that vocation to its fullness.
Creed & Lord’s Prayer

• They are the “traditio symboli” – the handing on of the symbol tradition
• The presentations of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer can be considered transitional rites.
• They indicate a movement from one state to another.
• The **Creed** is a proclamation of belief: this is what we believe, what we settle our hearts on.
• The **Lord’s Prayer** is important in its pattern (praise, petition, forgiveness, thanksgiving).
Outline of the Presentation of the Creed
Third week of Lent

- Liturgy of the Word
  - Readings
  - Homily
- Presentation of the Creed
  - The elect face the assembled community because of the ritual action to follow.
  - The elect then receive a brief instruction as an introduction to the proclamation of the Creed.
  - The proclamation of the Creed by the entire assembly follow this.
- Prayer over the Elect.
- Dismissal of the Elect.
Outline of the Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer
Fifth week of Lent

- Liturgy of the Word
  - Readings
  - Gospel Reading
    - After the first and second reading, an assisting deacon or other minister says:
      - “Let those who are to receive the Lord’s Prayer now come forward.”
    - Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer
      - “Listen to the gospel reading in which our Lord teaches his followers how to pray”
- Homily
- Prayer over the Elect.
- Dismissal of the Elect.
Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

- On the night of the Easter Vigil – on the night we celebrate new life through death – we celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism (for the Cathechumens), Confirmation and Eucharist.
- In ceremonies that can be traced back to the year 200 A.D., the whole parish community renews its own baptismal commitment as it welcomes new members into its midst.
- It is the culmination to the journey of conversion, but certainly not the end of that journey.
Outline of Rite of Initiation

- Service of Light
- Liturgy of Word
- Celebration of Baptism
  - Presentation of the Candidates
  - Invitation to Prayer
  - Litany of Saints
  - Prayer over the Water
  - Profession of Faith
    - Renunciation of sin
    - Profession of Faith
  - Baptism
- Explanatory Rites
  - Anointing after Baptism
  - Clothing with a Baptismal Garment
  - Presentation of a lighted Candle
Outline of Rite of Initiation

• Celebration of Confirmation
  • Invitation
  • Laying on of Hands
  • Anointing with Chrism

• Renewal of Baptismal Promises (at the Easter Vigil)
  • Invitation
  • Renewal of Baptismal Promises
    • Renunciation of Sin
    • Profession of Faith
      • Sprinkling with Baptismal Water

• Liturgy of the Eucharist
The Fourth Phase: The Period of Mystagogia or Postbaptismal Catechesis

- The period of “mystagogia” is a time for:
  - Living a sacramental life
  - Living out the gospel way of life
  - Becoming more involved in the parish
- Topics often discussed at this stage are:
  - Evangelization
  - Stewardship
  - Lay Ministry
- The Sunday Gospel for the eight weeks of the Easter season, including Pentecost, are discussed and what they mean in the context of our lives.
What does the Rite say?

- **R.C.I.A. n#244** The task of both deepening our understanding and integrating more effectively in our lives the experience of initiation (immersion in the Paschal Mystery)
- **R.C.I.A. n#245** Mystagogia means to reflect on the mysteries, it is the experience of God that is both alluring yet causes us to stand back in awe.
- **R.C.I.A. n#246** This section highlights the close connection between the community of the faithful and the neophytes.
  - Clearly, the experience of sacrament focuses the neophytes to look outside themselves to community.
What does the Rite say?

- **R.C.I.A. n#247** The primary place of mystagogy is with the liturgical assembly at the Sunday eucharist.

- **R.C.I.A. n#249** To close the period of mystagogy some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday.

- **R.C.I.A. n#250** On the anniversary of their Baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, to renew their commitment.
First Movement of Mystagogical Catechesis

- **Initial Reflection**: Describing the Experience
  - What did you experience?
  - What did you see, hear, smell, taste, feel?
  - What touched you about the celebration?
  - In what ways were you engaged?
  - How would you described your feelings at any particular moment?
Second Movement of Mystagogical Catechesis

• **Secondary Reflection**: Quest for Deeper Meaning
  • In what particular way were you struck by God’s presence?
  • How would you convey the presence(s) of Christ?
  • What was your experience of the Church?
  • If we could place lips on the symbols, what would the symbols say?
  • What was written on your heart during this celebration?
Third Movement of Mystagogical Catechesis

• **Sharing the Christian Vision**
  
  • It interprets the rites in the light of the events of our salvation, in accordance with the Church’s living tradition.
    
    • How would you interpret any part of the celebration in the light of the events of our salvation?
  
  • A mystagogical catechesis must also be concerned with presenting the meaning of the signs contained in the rites.
    
    • This is at the heart of this catechetical method
Third Movement of Mystagogical Catechesis

- Finally, a mystagogical catechesis must be concerned with bringing out the significance of the rites for the Christian life in all its dimensions – work and responsibility, thoughts and emotions, activity and repose.
  - This is the ultimate quest of mystagogical catechesis
  - What difference does it all make?
  - How has the event shaped the lives and future actions of the participants? Where is God leading me? What is the cost?
Ongoing Conversion of Life

- R.C.I.A. is the beginning process of conversion.

- We need to continue our conversion of life through:
  - Sunday Eucharist
  - Scripture Reading
  - Daily Living which gives witness to our belief in the Paschal Mystery
Questions
makahiki kālele
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