

RCIA Booklet
for the
Diocese of Paterson, NJ



Diocesan RCIA Office

2016

Authors of this handbook presuppose previous knowledge regarding the overall structure of RCIA, which can be found in Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), 1988 edition, and in pertinent sections of the U.S. National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), 2005 edition.

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I. INITIAL INTERVIEW

1. Can I conduct one initial interview for multiple people, such as in the case of a family?

Yes. However, proper form should be filled for each individual.

2. Can I delegate someone to conduct the initial interview for me?

Unless there is a significant obstacle, such as unexpected sickness or travel, the initial interview should not be delegated. It is preferable that the RCIA coordinator or a pastor conduct the initial interview; he/she possesses knowledge about the parish RCIA process, and should know each of the inquirers individually.

3. Do I need to follow a diocesan Initial Interview Form?

Yes. However, other forms developed by parishes are acceptable as long as the essential information about the inquirer is acquired.

4. Where can I find a Diocesan Initial Interview Form?

The form is posted on the diocesan RCIA website, www.insidethewalls.org/RCIA, under the tab "forms".

5. Do I need to know Canon Law in order to be an RCIA coordinator?

Yes and no. It is always useful to have some knowledge of Canon Law while interviewing an inquirer. This would help you to make a good judgment about the person's canonical status. However, you do not need to be a Canon Law expert. Simply remember that in case of doubt, it is better to consult the pastor or the diocesan RCIA office rather than to make an uncertain decision on your own.

II. BASIC INFORMATION REGARDING THE STATUS OF AN INQUIRER

1. For whom is the RCIA intended?

The rite is intended for unbaptized adults and unbaptized children over the age of reason (usually after 7 years old).

2. What do I do with baptized, but uncatechized adults?

Those who are baptized, regardless of their level of religious education, are to be distinguished from those who have never received baptism. For this reason, liturgical rites for baptized candidates will differ significantly from the unbaptized catechumens. However, it is permitted for both groups to receive catechetical instructions together.

3. What do I do with baptized adults who never received first Communion and/or Confirmation?

These adults seek the full communion with the Church; therefore their journey is towards reconciliation, not baptism. Accordingly, they can join the RCIA group in order to receive catechetical instructions, but they receive different rites.

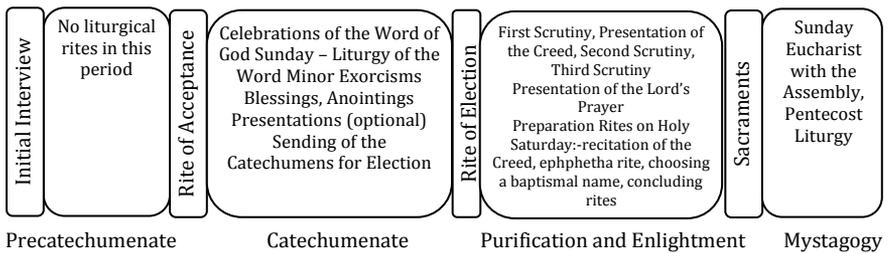
4. What do I do with unbaptized but catechized adults?

Every unbaptized person over the age of reason needs to go through the entire RCIA process, including catechetical instructions and proper liturgical celebrations. If possible, an effort should be made to meet the unbaptized at his/her level of religious education.

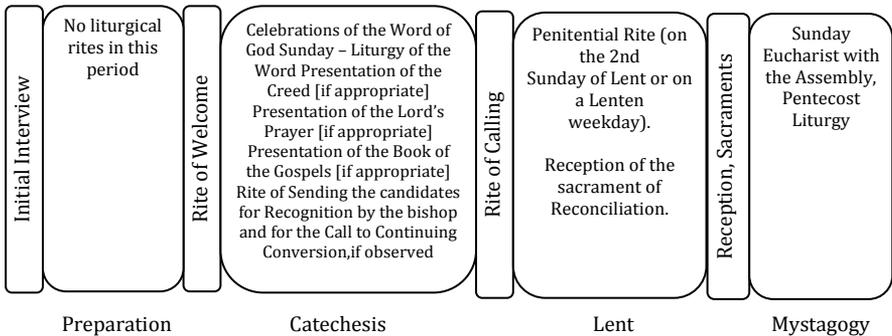
5. What are the differences in regards to those seeking baptism and those who were already baptized and seek full communion with the Church?

Although many parishes combine catechetical sessions for unbaptized and baptized, the following differences in rite should be noted:

RCIA for the Unbaptized Adults



RCIA for the Baptized Adults



6. Can the celebration of the rites proper to catechumens and candidates be done in conjunction?

Yes, given that the differences in rites are carefully observed. For instance, it is common to celebrate the rite of acceptance into catechumenate along with the rite of welcome of the candidates. It is a mistake, however, to celebrate one rite for both groups (e.g., rite of acceptance for both the unbaptized and baptized).

7. What is a diocesan policy regarding RCIA for children?

According to Canon Law children who have reached the age of reason (usually 7 years old and older) are considered, for the purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults and take part in a process of sacramental initiation similar, inasmuch as possible, to that of adults. (CC, 852.1). Consequently, catechumenal process for children should include all four periods of the RCIA journey, if this is appropriate pastorally.

At the same time, it is essential that the catechetical instruction for children continues beyond the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation and remains at the appropriate level. Thus, many parishes, in addition to the adult RCIA classes, offer separate RCIA sessions for children, which is encouraged. Bishop Serratelli wishes the celebration of Confirmation to be deferred for children who participate in the RCIA journey so that their catechetical formation continues, and they have the opportunity to integrate the fullness of Catholic doctrine into their formation. Thus, in keeping with canon 866, Bishop Serratelli has determined that there is a grave detriment to the faith formation of children when the Sacrament of Confirmation is administered apart from the ongoing parish Confirmation formation process.

Children below the age of reason should not go through the RCIA process. The celebration of baptism follows the form included in The Rite of Infant Baptism.

8. What do I do with an inquirer who was married and divorced?

As Catholics, we believe that the sacramental bond of marriage is unbreakable and no civil divorce can change it. If an inquirer entered valid, sacramental marriage, divorced, but did not re-marry, and lives as a single person, he or she is free to seek full communion with the Church. In case of doubt, make sure you contact your pastor or diocesan RCIA office.

9. What do I do with an inquirer who was previously married, divorced, and re-married?

Those who entered sacramental marriage in the past, divorced, and later re-married civilly, cannot be received into the full communion with the Church without the annulment. In this situation, before proceeding with an inquirer, contact your pastor or diocesan RCIA office.

10. What should I do with an inquirer/candidate whose marriage is not considered valid in the eyes of the Church?

The marriage should be investigated and convalidated, if possible, before moving onward. The Church does not recognize a civil wedding ceremony as valid when one or both people are Catholic, unless proper dispensation has been obtained from the Bishop. In case of doubt, always seek the advice of the pastor or contact the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal.

11. What about other unusual situations concerning canonical irregularities, such as uncertain baptism, doubtful marriage, or sacraments received in a different tradition?

Reiterating that the RCIA coordinator does not need to be an expert in Canon Law, every time there is a doubt or hesitation regarding canonical status of an inquirer, the case should be presented to the pastor or forwarded to the Diocesan Office for RCIA.

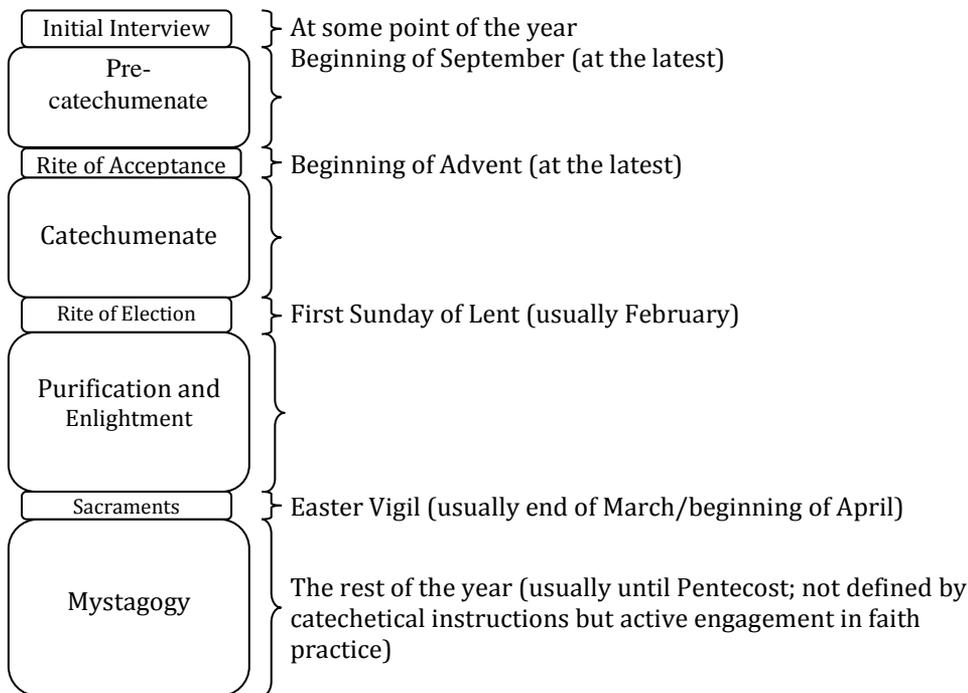
III. TIMING MODELS FOR RCIA PROGRAM

1. How long should the RCIA process last?

The desirable length of RCIA process is one year (including mystagogy). Every catechumen preparing to receive the sacraments should acquire a sense of liturgical time. For this reason, catechetical instruction and particular rites reflect the liturgical season of the year.

If the pastor finds it necessary, the process can be extended to another year. Anything less than six months is strongly discouraged. As far as candidates are concerned, the preparation time may vary; depending on their readiness, candidates can receive sacraments earlier or later than the catechumens. See question five of this section for more details.

2. What is the suggested time model for the RCIA process in the diocese?



3. What if the time model presented in this guide does not reflect the model followed at my parish?

As the Diocesan Office for RCIA we are very much aware of local particularities of every parish. Inevitably, adjustments must be made based off parish calendar, space availability, people's schedules, etc. These adjustments should be made in consultation with the pastor, who is ultimately responsible for the effective functioning of RCIA at the parish.

However, the diocese has to make sure that the pastoral adjustments do not go beyond reasonable bounds. Consequently, the minimum time for RCIA process cannot be shorter than six months, and none of the four periods, along with their proper rites, should be ever omitted.

4. What should I do when an inquirer comes in late?

Those who express their interest in receiving the sacraments through RCIA should be welcomed, but a prudential judgment on the part of RCIA coordinator and pastor should be made as to whether they should join immediately or wait until next year. If the catechetical sessions advanced too far, an inquirer, for his good and the good of those already in the program, should abstain from formally entering the RCIA program. Meanwhile, it is strongly encouraged that the RCIA coordinator or other RCIA team member meets with an inquirer from time to time in order to make him/her feel welcomed and deepen his/her desire to go through the process.

5. Does everyone need to receive their sacraments during Easter Vigil?

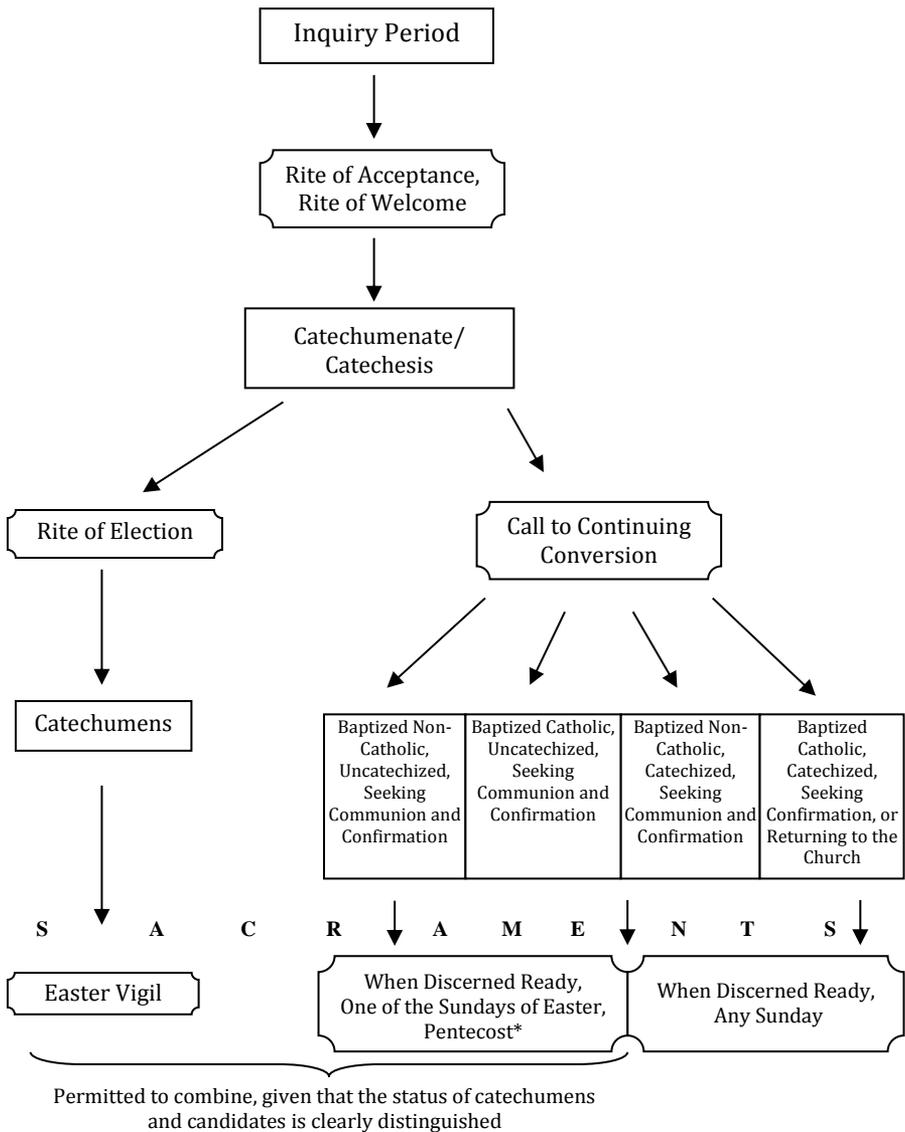
No. Formally, only catechumens should receive their sacraments at the Easter Vigil. The Rite of Christian Initiation is clear that depending on the level of their formation, those seeking full communion with the Church (candidates) can receive sacraments (with delegation for confirmation from the Bishop) at other appropriate times. See the diagram on next page for further reference.

6. What are some of the diocesan RCIA events I need to know about, as the RCIA coordinator?

The best way to make sure you and your group do not miss on any diocesan RCIA events/rites is to consult our diocesan RCIA website, www.insidethewalls.org/RCIA.

There are two events per year that are pre-fixed and you should have it on your calendar as recurring events:

- * Diocesan RCIA Retreat Day for Catechumens, Candidates and Coordinators -
First Saturday after Ash Wednesday (optional)
- * Rite of Election and Enrollment of Names (event with the Bishop) -
First Sunday of Lent (required)



*it is preferable that reception into full communion not take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism (RCIA U.S. Statute 33)

IV. KEEPING OF THE RECORDS

1. Should the names of catechumens be registered?

Yes. Before baptism, the names of the catechumens should be registered in the Parish Register of Catechumens. The information, besides the first and last name of the catechumen, should include the date, place of celebration, names of sponsor and minister. If such register does not exist, it is advisable for the RCIA coordinator to create one.

2. Should the names of the elect be registered too?

Yes. The names of the elect should be recorded in the Parish Book of the Elect, and then presented to the Bishop at the Rite of Election. If such book does not exist, it is advisable for the RCIA coordinator to create one.

3. Where do I register the reception of proper sacraments?

Every parish should have a separate registry for baptisms, confirmations, first communion, and marriages. Depending on the received sacrament, the elect's name should be properly recorded in a proper sacramental registry. In case of catechumens, baptismal entry in the baptismal registry should indicate participation in the RCIA program.

4. Does the diocese keep the records of catechumens, elect, and those who received the sacraments?

It is parish responsibility to keep all the records in the parish sacramental registry.

V. OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What constitutes a valid baptism?

The following conditions must be met for the validity of the baptism:

- Real water must be used and administered by pouring, immersion, or sprinkling of water
- The Trinitarian formula naming Father, Son, Holy Spirit (Ghost) must be used.
- The minister of baptism must have explicit intention to perform the baptism.
- In the baptism of adults, the person must desire baptism.

To determine the validity of a prior baptism, please consult the Diocesan Sacramental Validity guide at www.insidethewalls.org/RCIA, under the tab "RCIA Documents"

2. Who can be a godparent?

To become a godparent, Canon Law (c. 872-874) lists the following requirements:

- a person must be a Catholic who is not a parent of the one to be baptized or confirmed
- must have received all the sacraments of initiation
- must live a life of faith that befits the role to be undertaken
- cannot labor under a canonical penalty like excommunication
- cannot be under the age of sixteen

- must be nominated by at least one of the parents in the case of infant baptism, by the one to be baptized in the case of an adult baptism, or by the pastor or the one administering the baptism in cases where necessity requires it
- sponsors may be chosen by the confirmation candidate, preference should be given to the godparent
- a baptized non-Catholic may be a witness to the baptism, but not a godparent

3. Can the neophytes serve as godparents?

No. Neophytes, although having received the Sacraments of Initiation, have not formally ended the RCIA process which extends over the period of mystagogy. Only after the mystagogy is passed (usually with the celebration of Pentecost), those who received the Sacraments of Initiation are no longer called "neophytes," and are free to serve in the capacity of a godparent.

4. What are some of the recommended sources for RCIA?

The list of recommended sources for RCIA in our diocese is posted on the website: www.insidethewalls.org/RCIA, under the tab "Resources"

5. What topics must be covered during the RCIA?

The essential topics which must be covered in the course of every RCIA program within the Diocese of Paterson can found on the diocesan RCIA website: www.insidethewalls.org/RCIA, under the tab "RCIA Documents"

VI. GLOSSARY

Candidate - One already baptized in another ecclesial community who is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of full reception, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed, and receive the Eucharist.

Catechumen - An unbaptized person who is preparing for full Christian initiation through the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Elect - The name given to catechumens who, at the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent, have been "chosen by God" for the sacraments of initiation

Inquirer - One "inquiring" about the Christian faith at the precatechumenate level.

Neophyte - One who has been fully initiated into the Christian faith at the Easter Vigil by the reception of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Rite of Acceptance - The rite by which unbaptized inquirers declare their desire to be catechumens, and the church accepts their declaration.

Rite of Welcome - The rite by which inquirers who are already baptized become candidates for the completion of Christian initiation in the Catholic Church.

Rite of Election - Presided over by the Bishop, the rite by which catechumens enter the period of purification and enlightenment.

Call to Continuing Conversion - Often celebrated in tandem with Election, the rite by which candidates enter their final preparation for the completion of Christian initiation.

Scrutiny - Three rites of exorcism for the elect during Lent.

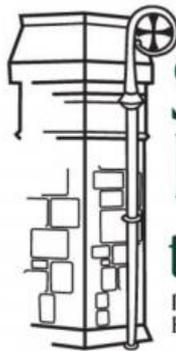
Sacraments of Initiation - The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Baptized but uncatechized Catholic - One who was baptized in Catholic faith, but was not brought up in faith and never received First Communion and/or Confirmation

Baptized but uncatechized Non-Catholic- One who was baptized in other ecclesial tradition, but was not brought up in faith and never received First Communion and/or Confirmation



DIOCESE OF PATERSON



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