

1. Introduction to RCIA and the Church as a Place of Worship.

The ancient practice adopted by the Church as she accompanies, instructs, nurtures and supports those who wish to become immersed in the God has given us hope by making it possible to participate in his work and in his life in the liturgy.

Key terms:

RCIA Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – process of conversion whereby participants embrace the Catholic way of life through the Sacraments of Initiation.

Liturgy 1) The public participation of the members of the Church in the work of God, most specifically in the Paschal mystery of Christ;
2) Christ's continuation of his redemptive work through his Church and the sacraments.

Church A place of worship
Greek – ekklesia – “a gathering assembly” “Congregation”

Catholic Comes from two Greek words “kata” meaning “concerning,” and “holos” meaning “the whole, that together mean “throughout the whole” as in the universal church.

Catechumenate The period of time spent in formation.

Catechumen Someone who is undertaking the RCIA process and simply means ‘one who is learning’.

Mystery 1) A truth of faith that we could not know unless God revealed it; once it is known, it is understandable and reasonable, but is never fully comprehensible.
2) Truths that surpass reason's powers and can only be shown to be non-contradictory.

Rite A specific liturgical tradition by which the faith is expressed and celebrated, consisting of specific prayers, rituals, hymns, gestures, vestments.

STAGES OF THE RCIA

Inquiry or Pre-Catechumenate

Prior to beginning the RCIA process, an individual comes to some knowledge of Jesus Christ, considers their relationship with Jesus Christ, and is interested in exploring the basic tenets of the Catholic faith in light of their own life experiences.

Catechumenate

The period of the catechumenate is a period of prayer, study, service, worship, discussion and faith-sharing where candidates grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and understand what membership in the Catholic Church involves.

Purification & Enlightenment

When a catechumen and the parish catechetical team believes the person is ready to make a faith commitment to Jesus in the Catholic Church, the next step is the request for baptism and the celebration of the Rite of Election.

Sacraments of Initiation

The third step is the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, which takes place during the Easter Vigil Liturgy on Holy Saturday when the catechumen receives the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

Mystagogy

After the person is initiated, formation and education continue in the period of the postbaptismal catechesis, which is called “mystagogy.” This period continues at least until Pentecost. During this period they continue to learn more about the scriptures, the sacraments, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In addition, they reflect on how they will serve Christ and help in the church’s mission and outreach activities.

RCIA in Scripture

Acts 8:26-40 – Philip baptises a Eunuch

Evangelisation	8:27-28
Study of God’s Word	8:29-30
Inquiry	8:30
Catechesis	8:31-35
Enlightenment Conversion	8:36
Initiation	8:38
Testimony (Living Witness)	8:39

Example of Conversion in Scripture

John 4:1-26 – The Woman at the Well

Intent – Jesus travels to Samaria with intent. He engages with intent – He stops deliberately at the well near the plot of ground Jacob gave to Joseph. Jesus calls the candidate to this moment in their lives with intent, a moment of conversion. **4:3-4, 7**

Initiative - Jesus asks the woman for help – will you give me a drink? Candidates take the initiative and ask for assistance in understanding the tenets of the Catholic faith and preparing for initiation. **4:7**

Interaction – Faith is something alive and active. Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman. Personal growth comes through dialogue. The candidates engage with the catechist, fellow catechumens, the faith community at worship. **4:7ff**

Invitation – Jesus invites the woman to drink from the spring of water welling up to eternal life. Candidates come to embrace the Catholic faith because of their thirst for Jesus who quenches their thirst. **4:14**

Evangelisation – the woman desires the message of eternal life Jesus brings and accepts it is Jesus who grants it. Jesus calls candidates to receive the message of redemption won for them in Jesus and asks for initiation. **4:15**

Catechesis – Jesus sits with the woman and through conversation/dialogue opens her mind and heart to the message of eternal life. Catechumens are called to conversion through the message of eternal life. **4:13-14**

Impact – The woman went back to the town and shared her encounter with the Messiah – she proclaimed Christ, Jesus. She gave a living testimony of the impact of her encounter with the living Christ. **4:28-30**

EXPLORE! Assist the candidate in articulating their own journey in faith.

How has God called them to faith?

Were there people of faith who influenced their decision?

Can they identify key moments that confirmed their relationship with Jesus?

Why have they chosen to follow Christ in the Catholic church?

The Church as a place of Worship

Entrance

Holy water font – Reminder of Baptism and entrance into the life of grace.

Sign of the Cross

Altar & Sanctuary

Eucharistic sacrifice where the simple offerings of bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ through the act of transubstantiation. The Eucharist is the “source and summit of Christian life”.

During each celebration of Eucharist, the bread and wine are TAKEN, BLESSED, BROKEN, and GIVEN.

Scripture passages referencing the above Eucharistic formula:

Five loaves and two fish – Feeding of Five Thousand

Mt. 14:13-21

Last Supper Mt. 26:17-30
Road to Emmaus Lk. 24:13-35
Jesus appears after the Resurrection Jn. 21:1-13

Tabernacle/Sanctuary Lamp

“I will be with you always” (Mt. 28:20)

Baptism Font

First Sacrament of initiation. The gateway to the sacraments.

Ambo/Lectern

Lectio – sacred texts of the Word of God – alive and active.

Ambry

Oil of Catechumens (Baptism)

Oil of Chrism (Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, Consecration of Church)

Oil of the Sick

Confessional

(Sacrament of Confession/Reconciliation/Penance)

Statues

Votive candles – an act of prayer

Stations of the Cross

Gestures/Postures during Worship & Prayer

Genuflection

Stand, Kneel, Sit, Bow

Church as a Place of Worship — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is the liturgy more than merely a “gathering of people”? Why are we not free to change the liturgy at will?
2. Why is posture an important aspect of the way we worship?
3. Why would you say that liturgical prayer is at the heart of Catholic life?
4. How does your journey to faith connect with the conversion stories of the scriptures?

5. Why do you think public prayer is so important?

PRAYER

Pray together Psalm **99** or Psalm **150** or Psalm **122**

or

Gospel Reflection: Twenty Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A Mt. 22:1-14

Year B Mk. 10:17-30

Year C Lk. 17:11-19

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

Scripture

- Ex. 25:1-28,42 God prescribes ways he wants the Ark of the Covenant, sacred vessels, the tabernacle and its tent and veils, the altar, and priestly vestments to be made.
- Lv. 2:1-16, 6:14-18 God makes prescription for making a cereal offering of unleavened bread and for its consumption by the Aaronic priests.
- Lv. 23:1-44 God prescribes liturgical feasts for the Israelites
- Mt. 18:20 Jesus in the midst of the praying assembly.
- Lk. 2:41-52 The Holy Family goes as was its yearly custom to Jerusalem for Passover, Jesus remains behind unknown to his parents to be in his Father's house, the Temple.
- Jn. 2:13-17 Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, and cleanses the Temple of merchants who are desecrating its holiness.
- Jn. 7:2-39 Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles (Booths) and promises living water.
- Jn. 10:22-38 Jesus is in Jerusalem for the feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) and tells the Pharisees that he is doing the words of his Father.
- Acts 3:1 Peter and John prayed at the Temple during prescribed hours of prayer.
- Acts 10:30 Cornelius kept regular hours of prayer.
- Acts 20:7 Pauls and his companions celebrate the Eucharist on the first day of the week.
- 1Cor 11:17-22 Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their profane assemblies in place of worship.
- Jas 2:1-7 We are to show honour to the poor and not partiality to the rich in the assembly.
- Rev. 4:2-11, 7:9-12 John witnesses Heavenly worship.
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Catechism

- 1066-1206 Liturgy: why it is necessary, its various aspects, as a work of the Blessed Trinity, how the church's liturgical life is centred on the Mass and the sacraments, who are the celebrants, how the liturgy is celebrated, when it is celebrated (days of the week, seasons of the year, liturgical year), where it is celebrated, liturgical traditions and diversity.
- 1247 The Baptism of adults.
- 1248-1249 The catechumenate as a period of preparation.

(Source: RCIA Catechist's Manual, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Maryland, 2007)