

Rituals of the Period of the Catechumenate



*“Leave your country,
and come into the land I will show you.”
Genesis 12:1*

What is the Catechumenate Period about?



- RCIA §75: The Catechumenate is an ***extended period*** during which the candidates (*catechumens*) are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the ***Christian life***.¹...
 - ¹*Ad gentes* (“On the Mission Activity of the Church”), no. 14:

The catechumenate is **not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts**, but a **training period in the whole Christian life**, and an **apprenticeship** duty drawn out, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher. Therefore, catechumens should be properly instructed in the **mystery of salvation** and in the **practice of Gospel morality**, and by **sacred rites** which are to be held at **successive intervals**, they should **be introduced into the life of faith, of liturgy, and of love**, which is led by the People of God.

How do we achieve that goal?



- RCIA §75:...In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity. This is achieved in *four ways*.
 1. **A suitable catechesis**...accommodated to the **liturgical year**, and solidly supported by **celebrations of the word**.
 2. **Growth in prayer** by the encouragement, help, and example of sponsors, godparents, and the **entire Christian community**.
 3. Suitable **liturgical rites**, which **purify** the catechumens little by little and **strengthen** them with God's blessing.
 4. **Working actively** with others to **spread the Gospel** and **build up the Church** by the **witness of their lives** and by **professing their faith**.²

The life of faith starts now!



- *Ad gentes* (“On the Mission Activity of the Church”), no. 14:
And since the life of the Church is an apostolic one, the catechumens also should learn to cooperate wholeheartedly, by the witness of their lives and by the profession of their faith, in the spread of the Gospel and in the building up of the Church.

...For since they are joined to the Church, they are *already* of the household of Christ, and not seldom they are *already* leading a life of faith, hope, and charity.

How long, exactly?



- RCIA §76: The duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances... Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori.
- ...should be long enough—several years if necessary—for the conversion of faith of the catechumens to become strong.
- By means of sacred rites celebrated at successive times they are led into the life of faith, worship, and charity belonging to the People of God.

The Rites of the Catechumenate



- RCIA §79:
 - Celebrations of the Word of God are *foremost* (nos. 81-89)
 - Minor Exorcisms (nos. 90-94)
 - Blessings (nos. 95-97)
 - Anointings (nos. 98-101)

Minor exorcisms, blessings, and anointing usually takes place **within** the Celebration of the Word of God.

Other (normally during Period of Purification and Enlightenment):

- Presentations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer may be anticipated

Celebrations of the Word of God



- RCIA §81: Should be in accord with the **liturgical season** and contribute to the **instruction of the catechumens** and the **needs of the community**.
 - Can be a participation in the liturgy of the Word at **Sunday Mass**, but held **intentionally** for the catechumens, and in connection with **catechetical instruction** (after the **dismissal**, which takes place before the liturgy of the Eucharist).
 - **Main purposes:**
 - ✦ **Implant** into their hearts the teachings they are receiving
 - ✦ **Give instruction and experience** in different aspects/ways of prayer
 - ✦ **Explain** the signs, celebrations, and seasons of the liturgy
 - ✦ **Prepare** them to gradually enter the worship assembly of the entire community

Model for a Celebration of the Word of God



- **RCIA §86-89 (outside of Mass):**
 - **Song:** Choose an appropriate song that has a connection to the theme of the readings, and simple enough for all to join in.
 - **Readings and Responsorial Psalms:** One or more readings from Scripture, chosen for the relevance and formation of the catechumens, and proclaimed by a baptized member of the community. A sung (or recited) responsorial psalm should ordinarily follow each reading.
 - **Reflection:** Outside of the Mass, a baptized person may give a reflection. This should be brief, explaining the readings and applying them to life.
 - **Concluding Rites:** May conclude with a minor exorcism (priest or deacon only), blessing (priest or deacon only), or on occasion, the rite of anointing (priest or deacon only).

Questions?



Exorcisms... what?!



Minor

- **Purpose:** They draw the attention of the catechumens to the real nature of Christian life, the struggle between flesh and spirit, and the importance of self-denial for reaching the blessedness of God's kingdom, and the unending need for God's help (RCIA, 90).
- Petitions the Lord to free them from the effect of sin and from the influence of the devil, that they may be strengthened in their spiritual journey, and may open their hearts to receive the gifts of the Savior (*Exorcisms and Related Supplications*, 8).
 - Minor Exorcism in Baptism for infants
 - Part of preparation for Baptism who are at the age of discretion
- **Minister:** Any priest or deacon (or qualified catechist appointed by Bishop*) (RCIA, 91)
- **Form:** Simple
 - Takes place within a Celebration of the Word of God or the beginning or end of Catechesis
 - Prayer of petition
- **Frequency:** As often as is desired for the good of the catechumens (and based on the availability of the pastor or deacon)

Major

- **Purpose:** Directed at the expulsion of demons or to the liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church (CCC, 1673)
- **Minister:** Priest with *special* and *express* permission from the Bishop (*Exorcisms and Related Supplications*, 13)
- **Form:** Solemn
 - Introductory Rites
 - Litany of Supplication
 - Recitation of the Psalm
 - Reading of the Gospel
 - Laying on of Hands
 - Profession of Faith or Baptismal Promises
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - Sign of the Cross
 - Breathing Upon
 - Prayer of Exorcism
 - Thanksgiving
 - Concluding Rites
- **Frequency:** Only after much consultation and discernment with experts in spiritual matters and, if necessary, psychiatrists (*ERS*, 17)

Prayers of Minor Exorcism



- RCIA §94: *As the catechumens bow or kneel, the celebrant, with hands outstretched over them, says one of the following prayers (A-K).*

- A-

God of power,
who promised us the Holy Spirit through Jesus your Son,
we pray to you for these catechumens,
who present themselves before you.

Protect them from the **spirit of evil**
and **guard** them against **error and sin**,
so that they may become the temple of your Holy Spirit.

Confirm what we profess in faith,
so that our words may not be empty,
but full of the grace and power
by which **your Son has freed the world**.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Prayers of Minor Exorcism

Connection to Gospel Reading



- RCIA §94: *-June 7, 2021, Tenth Week in Ordinary Time, Sermon on the Mount*

○ D-

Lord Jesus Christ,
when you climbed the **mountain to preach**,
you turned your disciples from the paths of sin
and revealed to them the **beatitudes of your kingdom**.

Help these your servants, who hear the word of the Gospel,
and **protect** them from the **spirit of greed, of lust, and of pride**.

May they find the blessings of your **kingdom**
in **poverty** and in hunger,
in **mercy** and in **purity of heart**.

May they **work for peace** and **joyfully endure persecution**
and so come to share your **kingdom**
and experience the mercy you promised.

May they finally **see God** in the joy of heaven
where you live and reign for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Prayers of Minor Exorcism

Connection to Social Justice



- RCIA §94:
 - Nov. 22, 2020, Solemnity of CTK, Gospel reading (MT 25:31-46):
“...Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.”
 - January 22, Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn
- F-
 - Lord and God,
you know the secrets of our hearts
and reward us for the **good we do**.
 - Look kindly on the **efforts** and the progress of your **servants**.
Strengthen them on their way,
increase their faith,
and accept their repentance.
 - Open to them your goodness and **justice**
and lead them to share in your sacraments on earth,
until they finally enjoy your presence in heaven.
 - We ask this through Christ our Lord.
 - R.** Amen.

Questions?



Blessings



- RCIA §95: A sign of **God's love** and the **Church's tender care**. Bestowed on the catechumens so that, even though they do not as yet have the grace of the sacraments, they may still receive from the Church **courage, joy, and peace** as they proceed along the difficult journey they have begun.
- To bless is to acknowledge God's presence, ask his protection, and to open up one to God's love.
- Preparation for Baptism
 - **Minister:** Priest, deacon, or qualified catechist appointed by the Bishop* (RCIA, 96).
 - **Timing:** At the end of a Celebration of the Word or meeting for catechesis. Could also be given privately for individuals when there is a special need (RCIA, 96).

Example of Blessing



- RCIA §97: *The celebrant, with hands outstretched over the catechumens, says one of the following prayers (A-I). After the prayer of blessing, if this can be done conveniently, the catechumens come before the celebrant, who lays hands on them individually. Then the catechumens leave.*

○ A-

Let us pray.

Lord,
form these catechumens by the mysteries of the faith,
that they may be brought to **rebirth in baptism**
and be counted among the members of your Church.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Example of Blessing

Connection to Catechesis on the Four Marks of the Church



- RCIA §97:

- E-

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God,
you dwell on high yet look on the lowly;
to bring us your gift of salvation
you sent Jesus your Son,
our Lord and God.

Look kindly upon these catechumens,
who bow before you in worship;
prepare them for their rebirth in baptism,
and forgiveness of their sins,
and the garment of incorruptible life.

Enfold them in your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,
that they may join with us
in giving glory to your name.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Example of Blessing

Connection to Civil Holiday: Thanksgiving



- RCIA §97:

- F-

Let us pray.

Lord of all,
through your only begotten Son
you cast down Satan
and broke the chains that held us captive.

We thank you for these catechumens
whom you have called.

Strengthen them in faith,
that they may know you, the one true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Keep them clean of heart and make them grow in virtue,
that they may be worthy to receive baptism
and enter into the holy mysteries.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Example of Blessing Connection to Reading



- RCIA §97: *-September 13, 2021; Twenty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time; 1 Tm. 2:1-8*
“...who wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

○ G-

Let us pray.

Lord God,
you desire that all be saved
and come to the knowledge of truth.

Enliven with faith those who are preparing for baptism;
bring them into the fold of your Church,
there to receive the gift of eternal life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Questions?



Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens



- RCIA §99: Symbolizes their **need for God's help and strength** so that, undeterred by the bonds of the past and overcoming the **opposition of the devil**, they will forthrightly take the step of professing their faith and will hold fast to it unfalteringly **throughout their lives**.
 - **Minister:** Only a priest or deacon (RCIA, 98)
 - **Frequency:** However often this seems beneficial or desirable (RCIA, 98), even several times during the course of the catechumenate (RCIA, 100)
 - ✦ May be done privately for individuals if there is a particular need (RCIA, 100)
 - **Timing:** Ordinarily after the homily in a Celebration of the Word (RCIA, 100)
 - **Oil:** The Oil of Catechumens that was blessed by the Bishop at Chrism Mass is used. If necessary, a priest may bless oil for the rite immediately before the anointing (RCIA, 101).
- **Note:** The USCCB approved the omission of the anointing with the oil of catechumens both in the celebration of baptism and in the optional preparation rites for Holy Saturday. Thus, anointing with the oil of catechumens is **reserved for use in the period of the catechumenate** and in the period of purification and enlightenment and is **not to be included in the preparation rites on Holy Saturday or in the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil** or at another time (RCIA 33.7).

Order of Anointing



- RCIA §102-103:
 - **Prayer of Exorcism:** May use option “A” or other prayers of exorcism in no. 94
 - **Blessing of Oil:** Only if necessary; if not, skip this part.
 - **Anointing:**

Facing the catechumens, the celebrant says:

We anoint you with the oil of salvation
in the name of Christ our Savior.

May he **strengthen** you with his power,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Catechumens: Amen.

The celebrant anoints each catechumen with the oil of catechumens on the breast or on both hands or, if this seems desirable, even on other parts of the body.

[If there are a great many of catechumens, additional priests or deacons may assist in the anointing.]

The anointing may be followed by a blessing of the catechumens (no. 97).

Questions + Sharing + Resources



- General questions/comments?
- Which of these rituals have you already included in the RCIA?
- Which of these rituals (if any) are you most excited to begin incorporating?
- What resources would help you during the Period of the Catechumenate?
 - “RCIA Coordinator Resources” section of the Worship page includes:
 - ✦ Diocese of Owensboro RCIA Guidelines
 - ✦ RCIA scripts
 - ✦ Link to free downloadable resources
 - ✦ Recordings of past RCIA meetings and interviews
 - ✦ Link to “RCIA Coordinators Facebook Group”

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