
OCIA: PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

Workshop Series, Part 2

Thursday, 16 OCT 2025

Questions? Contact us!

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THE SERVANT SONG

Will you let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant, too.

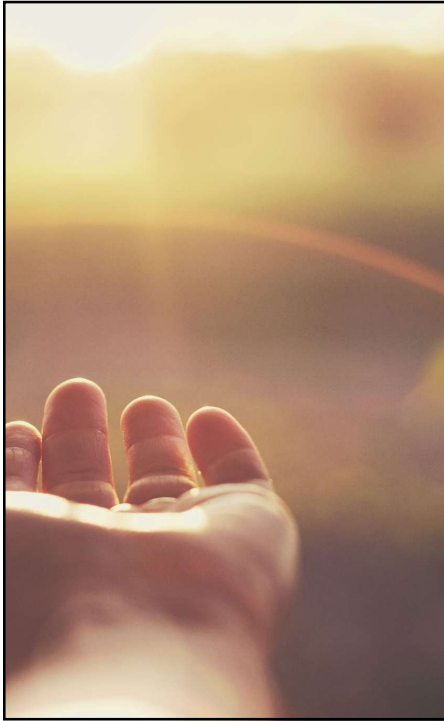
We are pilgrims on a journey,
we are trav'lers on the road;
We are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

Richard Gillard



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2



OPENING PRAYER

Look, Lord, on we your servants
Who hold fast to your holy name
And bow our heads before you:
Assist us in every good work;
Rouse our hearts,
So that, mindful of your works and commandments,
We may hasten eagerly toward all that is yours,
And share our joy with all we meet.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen!

(Adapted from OCIA Prayer of Blessing, #97-1)

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SOME REMINDERS



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ACCOMPLISHING THE INTENT OF THE CATECHUMENATE

• **Appropriate catechesis** – divided into steps and fully presented, suited to the liturgical year and supported by Celebrations of the Word

• **Becoming familiar with the practice of Christian life** – helped by the example and support of the faith community

• **Suitable liturgical rites** – that cleanse and sustain with divine blessing

• **Cooperating actively in the evangelization and the building up of the Church** – by the testimony of their life and their profession of faith

Follow Christ

Catechumenate

"Catechumen"

+ basic catechesis

+ foundational Scripture

+ prayer

+ church teaching

+ parish life

RITE of ELECTION

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A colorful illustration of a group of diverse children and youth. The characters have various skin tones, hair colors, and styles, and are all smiling. The style is simple and cartoonish, with thick black outlines and flat colors.

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INTENT OF THE CATECHUMENATE

For Children and Youth:

- The same 4 ways, but appropriate for children/teens
- Help them connect the practices of Christian life to the practices of their own families
- Adapt to the children's needs, level of understanding, and relationship with Jesus.
- Examples are very important with children and youth
- Explore how children and teens can build up the Church, be disciples
- Explain the why
- Discussion, reflection, and variety are important

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Follow Christ

Catechumenate

"Catechumen"

- + basic catechesis
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RITE of ELECTION

BUILD THE TEAM

Varied skills are needed!

Team members assume various responsibilities:

- Hospitality
- Interviews
- Communication (bridge between those in the OCIA process, the pastorals staff, and the larger faith community)
- Liturgical Preparation
- Retreat leaders and Prayer Partners
- Sponsor assistance
- Catechesis
- Youth specialists

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BUILD THE TEAM

For Children and Youth:

- Many of the same qualities as for adults...
- Definitely members who are comfortable with children and have some understanding of development (parent, teacher, catechist, etc.)
- Important to have someone who has enough background in theology to be able to explain in children/teen language
- Creative, utilize a variety of approaches
- Able to think on the fly/respond well
- Gentle and patient
- Sense of humor
- Sense of RITUAL – beyond just the rites


ONE POSSIBLE OCIA TEAM MODEL

Core team:

- OCIA Director/Coordinator
- A member of the pastoral staff (if the OCIA Director is not a staff member)
- Liturgy Coordinator – liaison with the parish Liturgy/Music Directory
- Hospitality Coordinator
- Catechist Coordinator
- Sponsor and Godparent Coordinator
- Youth/teens Coordinator(s)


Team members:

- Accompanyers
- Catechists
- Ritual leaders
- Those who Break Open the Word
- “Service Specialists” – who connect & accompany catechumens in service opportunities




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LOOK FOR PARISHIONERS WHO ARE:



- Regular participants in Sunday Eucharist “average” Catholics
- Persons of faith and prayer who have the potential for sharing their own journeys with others
- Community builders who recognize the value of developing relationships
- Hospitable, friendly, personable, able to make others feel at ease
- Able to speak in front of a group as potential catechists, prayer leaders, facilitators of faith sharing, etc.
- Have natural charisms for working with youth/young people
- Willing to use their gifts and talents to serve the unique needs of the parish OCIA formation community



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CHARISMS TO CONSIDER – THINK “SPECIALISTS”:



Accompaniers



Pray well & comfortably



Can handle questions



Organizationally skilled



Creative

Dream BIGGER!

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EXTEND A PERSONAL INVITATION

“I thought of you because you have this wonderful way of...”



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DEVELOPING A YEAR-ROUND PROCESS

It all begins with MINDSET

Remember the big picture:

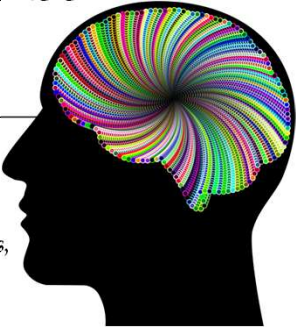
- This is not an academic pursuit; we are talking about transforming lives!
- So much more than LESSONS – IT’S ABOUT RELATIONSHIP
- Time together includes Formation sessions, Breaking open the Word, Minor rites, Prayer/Worship, Service opportunities – this is all meaningful! (See Norm 6.)

Be open to inquirers year-round

- Find a way to journey with them
- Inquirers (and catechumens) need time to process

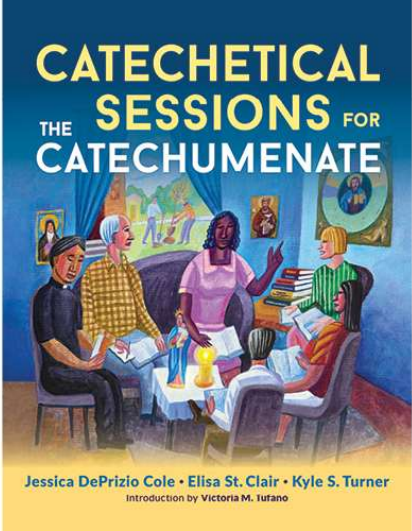
Consider having Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate 2 or 3 times per year as needed

- There may be catechumens at the Vigil who are not initiated at the Vigil



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CATECHETICAL SESSIONS FOR THE CATECHUMENATE



Jessica DePrizio Cole • Elisa St. Clair • Kyle S. Turner
Introduction by Victoria M. Iufano

EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES

- LTP Book: Catechetical Sessions for the Catechumenate
- Resources (with dynamic links) will be emailed at the end of this workshop series
- Pflaum Gospel weeklies
- Team Initiation

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WHAT DO FORMATION SESSIONS LOOK LIKE?

Example:

Cycle C, 28 OT (weekend before this workshop): The Life of Jesus; Salvation and Redemption; Catholics and Scripture; Discipleship and Mission

Cycle C, 29 OT (weekend after this workshop): The Life of Jesus; Salvation and Redemption; Catholics and Scripture; The Creed; Discipleship and Mission

• Use a variety of approaches – multi-media

• ALWAYS start and end with PRAYER

• Leave plenty of room for LISTENING

• Be okay with SILENCE – teach by letting it be part of what we do! (Silence facilitates listening to God)

• Use VALID RESOURCES – not everything on the Internet is appropriate

• Use CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE

• Enlist the help of catechists with formation whenever possible

• FORM YOUR CATECHISTS – Digital Academy, Seminary, Catechetical Offerings

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FORMATION SESSIONS WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

• All of what was said on the last slide regarding adults also applies to children.

• NOT a classroom

• NOT all lecture

• Plenty of room for discussion and sharing

• Remember children learn and express themselves in different ways

• Age-appropriate activities and prayers with variety

• Plenty of room for discussion, sharing, questions, in large and small groups


• Allow for reflecting

• Connect teachings to life

• Break up the time with different activities

• Teach the why

• Focus on the Kerygma and the Creed



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10:00

LET’S TAKE A BREAK!

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WHAT DOES BREAKING OPEN THE WORD LOOK LIKE?

Basic Format:

- Dismissal from Mass
- Prayer to refocus
- Second proclamation – some or all of the readings are proclaimed again
- Reflection and discussion – What did you hear? How can you respond in your personal life?
- Shared faith experience – how the readings speak to the catechumens’ lives
- Concluding prayer

- Only dismiss the CATECHUMENS – the candidates have a right and obligation to remain at Mass and join in the prayers
- Ask open-ended questions. You’ve already heard the homily... what does this mean to me? (Internalizing) – this is about spiritual growth, not specifically teaching
- Consider tapping into your Lectors

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BREAKING OPEN THE WORD WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Children are still dismissed
- Model after Children's Liturgy of the Word (but it is separate)
- Utilize children's Lectionary
- Tap into creativity



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WHAT DO MINOR RITES LOOK LIKE? (MINOR EXORCISMS, BLESSINGS, ANOINTINGS)

- Notice **WHO** can do them – see yellow handout
- Consider **WHERE** to do them – in session room, chapel, church
- Make it **PUBLIC** – invite family and the community (remember they are slowly entering into community – teach by example)
- Remember that appropriate **TOUCH** is important
- **Follow the OCIA book!**
- Look for **other prayer opportunities**: Blessing of the Animals, Stations of the Cross, Rosary, May Crowning, Liturgy of the Hours – these are powerful and tell our story as Catholic Christians – “*Sanctify the day to sanctify the people*”
- Recognize **we have rich tradition** – not everybody all the time, but the catechumens should SEE the Church's rituals

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MINOR RITES WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

• It is important to have adults involved who can help make it go smoothly – this matters


• Include helpful explanations **before and after** – mystagogy with the rites helps to give meaning

• Connect youth to the “why” of what we celebrate

• Choose options that suit the audience

• Minor rites likely celebrated separate from the adults – easier to adjust (remember that adults have STUFF that may not be appropriate to youth)

• Use physical signs and movement when possible – appropriate touch (**Jesus touched people**)



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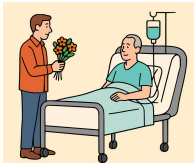
WHAT DO SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES LOOK LIKE?

• Service can happen at home, with family / friends / neighbors, in a comfortable setting, or challenging our comfort zone

• Invite the catechumens along with other ministers – ex. Diocesan week of service or EMHC bringing Communion to the Sick offers witness of faith and connections with the community

• Consider where in your daily life service happens

• Arrange moments of contact with folks on the margins – homebound, special needs, SVdP Clients, homeless/shelters – even once has great value





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SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Adults involved or family experiences
- Hands on when possible
- Keep it simple
- Reflection both before and after
- Connection to the faith, the why
- Consider service that happens in daily life
- Age appropriate, but don't be afraid to explore



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ASSESSING GROWTH AND NEEDS



- Observe using more God language
- They recognize where life isn't aligned (ex. Living together outside matrimony)
- Reactions/responses, especially when reflecting – indicates connections
- They pray more
- They show up early/on time for the sessions, participate more, express a sense of transformation

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ASSESSING GROWTH IN YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE (AND THEIR PARENTS)

- Same signs, in an age-appropriate way
- Observe excitement/interest
- Intellectual and emotional/experiential responses to formation
- Interest in learning more
- Consider the various ways a child can express themself
- Check in with parents and family
- Starting to **KNOW GOD** vs. **know ABOUT God**



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DISCERNING READINESS TO MOVE ON

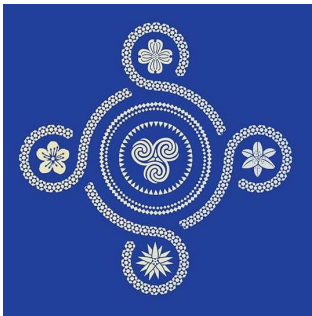
What does the transitional ritual ask?



- Are these catechumens worthy of admission to the Sacraments of Christian Initiation?
- Godparents – have they faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church?
- Godparents – Have they begun to walk in God's presence, treasuring the word they have received?
- Godparents – Have they persevered in fraternal communion and in the prayers?
- Community – Are you willing to affirm the testimony expressed about these catechumens and include them in your prayer and affection as we move toward Easter?
- Catechumens – is it your will to be initiated into Christ's Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist?

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EVIDENCE THE INQUIRER IS READY
TO MOVE ON: OCIA #120



“Before ‘Election’ is celebrated, the catechumens are questioned regarding their conversion of mind and morals, a sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine, and their sense of faith and charity; deliberation is especially required regarding their suitability. Then, during the actual celebration of the rite, the manifestation of their will and the judgment of the Bishop or his delegate are made in the presence of the community. Therefore it is clear that the Election, which is endowed with such solemnity, is as it were the hinge of the whole catechumenate.”

Remember that centuries of experience formed this ritual – the Church knows what she is doing!

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DISCERNING READINESS TO MOVE ON

It’s about depth of relationship as much as depth of understanding book knowledge – not just memorizing facts

- Conversion of mind and morals
- Sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine
- Sense of faith and charity



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DISCERNING READINESS TO MOVE ON



- Remember this isn't PSR! – set the bar to the right height (not too high, not too low)
- “Sufficient knowledge” has to be at their level – some level of knowing God, able to converse, knowing what God wants from us and brings to us
 - Kids – Kerygma + a little (know that there are rules but don't have the commandments memorized)
 - Teens – more depth
 - Adults – even more depth
- You can see faith in young people and talk faith with young people

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Follow Christ

Catechumenate

“Catechumen”

- + basic catechesis
- + foundational Scripture
- + prayer
- + church teaching
- + parish life

RITE of ELECTION

TRANSITIONAL RITUAL

Rite of Election

- What does this Rite look like? – see handout
- When & Where is it celebrated? – First Sunday of Lent

February 22, 2026 @ Public Auditorium

- **Not optional** for Adult Catechumens anticipating the Sacraments at the Easter Vigil
- Celebrate Rite of Sending and have the catechumens **sign the Book of the Elect** that morning at the parish Mass

Note that we will celebrate the Combined Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

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RITE OF ELECTION

For Children and Youth:

- Participation at Public Auditorium optional
 - Consider developmental needs and level of comfort
 - LOTS of people; long ritual – could be daunting
 - Preparation and guided reflection before and after
 - For teens, good to participate if possible
 - Make it a point to recognize their growth/progress even if they don't go to Public Auditorium
-


REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE IN THE PARISH!







Photos

Bulletins & Newsletters


Social Media





Recognize growth!

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QUESTIONS?

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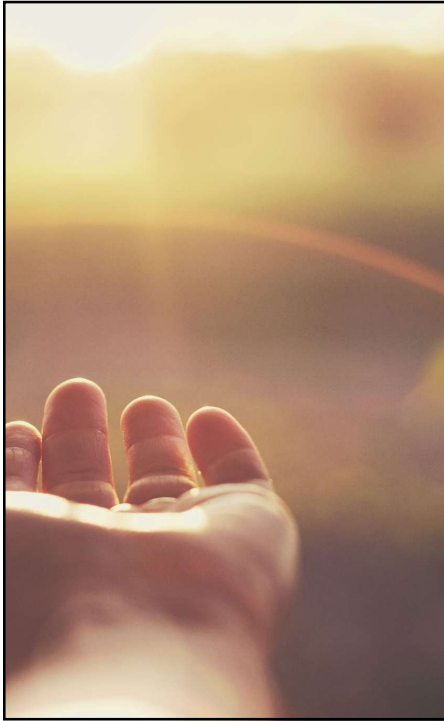
+ parish life

RITE of ELECTION

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CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty, most beloved Father,
Whose will it is to renew all things in Christ
And draw all people to him,
Graciously guide all catechumens of the Church
And those who journey with them.
Grant that, faithful to the calling they have received,
They may be built up into the kingdom of your Son,
Infused with the Holy Spirit.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen!

(Prayer over the Catechumens from the Rite of Sending, adapted)

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THE SUMMONS

John L. Bell

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known?
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?



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