

RCIA GLOSSARY FOR COMMON TERMS

BAPTISM: The first of the seven sacraments, and the “door” which gives access to the other sacraments. Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist constitute the “sacraments of initiation” by which a believer receives the remission of original and personal sin, begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the body of Christ. The rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on the head while pronouncing the invocation of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

BOOK OF THE ELECT: The book the catechumens for election are to sign for the Enrollment of Names in the Rite of Election. In the Diocese of Richmond, this is done at the parish Rite of Sending just prior to the Rite of Election. Godparents may sign the book, and the name of the bishop is inscribed as well. Candidates do NOT sign the Book of the Elect.

CANDIDATE: One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who is now 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 Eucharist. In the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, “candidate” is also used for those participating in the pre-catechumenate (baptized and unbaptized). It is also used for an uncatechized Catholic who has received neither Confirmation nor Eucharist.

CATECHESIS: Catechesis is the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways. Catechesis (Greek “to echo the teaching”) is an interactive process in which the Word of God re-sounds between and among the proclaimer, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit! It is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Through word, worship, service and community, it seeks to lead all God's people to an ever deepening relationship with God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

CATECHUMEN: An unbaptized person who has entered the order of catechumens in the Church through celebration of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. Catechumens are preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

CATECHUMENATE: Second period of Christian initiation of adults and children, which involves intense preparation in word, worship, community life, and apostolic works. This should last at least one year, so as to experience a full liturgical year.

CHRISM: Oil mixed with balsam and consecrated by the bishop, used to anoint newly baptized persons, confirmands, and newly ordained priests and bishops. Sacred Chrism is also used in the consecration of churches and altars.

CONFIRMATION: One of the ensemble of the Sacraments of Initiation into the Church, together with Baptism and Eucharist. Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism by a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which seal or “confirm” the baptized in union with Christ and equip them for active participation in the worship and apostolic life of the Church.

DOCTRINE: The formal teachings of the Church.

EASTER SEASON: A period of seven weeks beginning with Easter Sunday and ending with the feast of Pentecost.

ELECT: The name given to catechumens who celebrate the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent, signifying their being chosen by God for the initiation sacraments to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

ELECTION: The process of selecting those catechumens who are considered ready to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation. The celebration of the Rite of Election takes place the first Sunday of Lent. The bishop declares in the name of the Church that these catechumens are ready and chosen for the sacraments at Easter. The Book of the Elect is presented to the bishop at this celebration.

ENLIGHTENMENT: The period of Lent during which the elect are involved in the final stage of preparation for celebrating the rites of initiation. (also called illumination and purification)

ENROLLMENT: The rite of enrolling into the Book of the Elect the names of those catechumens to be elected to celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the next Easter Vigil. While an essential part of the Rite of Election, the actual inscription may take place at the parish Rite of Sending.

EUCCHARIST: The ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ. The liturgical action called the Eucharist is also traditionally known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is one of the seven sacraments of the Church; the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*)

EVANGELIZATION: The proclamation of Christ and his gospel (Greek: *evangelion*) by word and the testimony of life, in fulfillment of Christ’s command. In the context of the initiation of adults, evangelization is the task of the church during the pre-catechumenate. It involves the inviting, welcoming, witness, and sharing of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel to inquirers/candidates.

EXORCISMS: Prayers for the deliverance from the powers of evil and falsehood, and for the reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are part of the Rites of Scrutiny.

FASTING: This is a form of sacrifice by which faithful Christians join themselves to the suffering and death of Jesus by foregoing food for a specific period of time. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics are obliged to fast in a modified way.

GODPARENT: The sponsor of one who is to be baptized, who assumes a responsibility to assist the newly-baptized –child or adult – on the road to the Christian life. During the RCIA process the role is assumed at the Rite of Election. The requirement is that one must be fully initiated, over 16 years of age, and not a parent.

IMMERSION: Baptism in which the person is partially or entirely submerged in the baptismal waters.

INFUSION: Baptism by pouring water over the head of the person.

INITIATION: The extended process by which a person enters the faith life of the Church and celebrates the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

INQUIRERS: Those who participate in the pre-catechumenate of a parish. They are “inquiring” into Christianity in the Catholic Tradition.

LECTIONARY: The book containing the assigned Scripture readings of the liturgical calendar for the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

LENT: A six-week period extending from Ash Wednesday to sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a retreat time for the Church in preparation for the Easter Triduum.

MINOR RITES: Rites during the period of the catechumenate which includes exorcisms, blessings, and anointings.

MYSTAGOGY: The fourth and final period of Christian initiation of adults, which is from Easter to Pentecost. The U.S. National Statutes envision an extended mystagogy for one year. This centers on catechesis and the meaning and experience of the mysteries of baptismal faith.

NATIONAL STATUTES OF THE UNITED STATES: Particular law for the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the United States approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Located in the back of the book of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

NEOPHYTE: One who has been initiated at the Easter Vigil. The term comes from the Greek word meaning new plant, as in a new sprout on a limb/branch. The newly baptized person in the final period of Christian initiation: mystagogy.

NINETY DAYS: A term used to mean the combination of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and the Period of Mystagogy which corresponds with Lent (40 days) and the Easter Season (50 days).

OIL OF CATECHUMENS (OC): Oil blessed by the bishop at the Chrism mass; may be used often in anointing catechumens as a sign of their need for and God's offer of strength in overcoming difficulties in the faith.

PENITENTIAL RITE: Celebration for candidates, similar to Rite of Scrutiny, usually celebrated on the 2nd Sunday of Lent, or 4 weeks prior to the Rite of Reception.

PERIODS (stages): Times of growth in the initiation process: (1) Inquiry or pre-catechumenate; (2) Catechumenate; (3) Purification and enlightenment; (4) Mystagogy

PRE-CATECHUMENATE: First period of the Christian initiation of adults, which is the initial introduction of an inquirer into the Christian way of life in the Catholic Tradition. It is also the period of evangelization on the part of the Church.

PRESENTATIONS: During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the elect are presented with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer through special rites. For pastoral reasons, both presentations can be anticipated during this Period of the Catechumenate.

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT: Third Period of the Christian initiation of adults, which usually coincides with the Season of Lent. It is the final period of preparation for initiation at the Easter Vigil.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA): English title of *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*. This is the official collection of rites of the Roman Catholic Church for the process by which adults (including children of catechetical age) enter the faith life of the Church, culminating with the celebration of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This also includes the rites for the reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS: The liturgical rite that is the bridge between the pre-catechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.

RITE OF WELCOMING THE CANDIDATES: The liturgical rite that is the bridge between the inquiry period and the period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate. It is for those already baptized.

RITE OF ELECTION: Presided over by the bishop, this rite inaugurates the final period of preparation for the catechumens (unbaptized) before initiation. It is the bridge between the catechumenate and purification and enlightenment. It is about discernment, God's choosing, the Church's choosing, the testimony of godparents, the assent of the elect, and the enrollment of names. (See **Election** above)

RITE OF CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION: Usually coincides with election, and is the rite for the already baptized (candidates).

RITE OF SCRUTINY: Three rites of exorcism for elect (unbaptized) during Lent. (See **Scrutinies** below)

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION: Usually celebrated at the Easter Vigil; includes baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

SCRUTINIES: Rites celebrated with the elect, on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent, petitioning for the spirit of repentance, an understanding of sin, and the experience of the true freedom of the children of God.

SPONSORS: Persons who accompany the inquirers and remain with them as companions through the catechumenate until the Rite of Election. They may also be chosen as godparents for the Initiation sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

TRIDUUM: The “three days” of the celebration of Easter, which begins with sundown on Holy Thursday evening and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. This includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.

YEAR-ROUND INQUIRY & CATECHUMENATE: The on-going process of a parish’s welcoming inquirers as the Holy Spirit brings them, freed from the limitations of an academic year model. This entails celebrating the various rites (Acceptance, Welcoming, Reception, etc.) several times a year as needed.

