

ONGOING TEAM FORMATION

Maintaining the Integrity of the Process

Part 1

*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, December 3,
1963 (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*

64. The catechumenate for adults, comprising **several distinct steps**, is to be restored and to be taken into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this, means the time of the catechumenate, which is **intended as a period of suitable instruction**, may be **sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.**

66. Both the rites for the baptism of adults are to be revised: not only the simpler rite, but also the more solemn one, which must take into account the restored catechumenate. A special Mass "for the conferring of baptism" is to be inserted into the Roman Missal.

Introductory Comments: If you want to maintain the integrity of the process, do you know what the process is? In its entirety? Can you, in your own words, describe the entire process?

Who is on your RCIA Parish Team, and how or why did they get on the team?

Do you, as director, have a team, and if so, do you know how each person was invited onto the RCIA team?

Is it necessary to engage in ongoing team formation at my parish?

Why? Or Why Not?

What's involved in ongoing team formation?

Who is on your team? (These are all possible “persons” to have, but realistically speaking, one person may serve more than one role, maybe two or three, or a role may become a collective responsibility) (These would be their “specialties”)
What kind of Spirituality do they have? What is their “mentality” about people seeking to join the Church? Very important questions to discuss. Our mentality colors our whole view of things and determines which way we have the courage to lean.

Evangelization Minister – Evangelium –knows
the Gospel well (all four evangelists)

has a masterful grasp of Sacred Scripture and
provides ways of doing Evangelization – the
First announcement of the Good News

Hospitality Minister – prepares the space for the Catechetical sessions

Helps with details such as name tags, coffee, snacks, welcome at the door, the A/C, the lights, etc. Certainly a spirit and attitude of Hospitality belong to each and every one of us, even within the Liturgy, but when it comes down to tasks of hospitality, who's in charge, and how does it get done?

Sunday Assembly – This is the first locus for Catechesis and Evangelization.

CSL 48, that we not be at the liturgy as silent spectators

This person begins to find ways to form the assembly so that they take their rightful role in the whole Catechumenal process

Prayer Minister – There are many different ways to pray: The Mass, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Centering Prayer, the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, Novenas, Sung prayer, Meditation, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, personal dialogue with God. This person is responsible for a BALANCE in ways of praying. Also, this person brings the best experience of these various forms of prayer into the process.

Discernment Minister – What does it mean to discern and to scrutinize? This person is a wisdom person, a person who knows how to objectively distinguish one reality from another, and has a personal “bedside manner” that helps the Catechumen/Candidate, and their sponsors to discern their spiritual progress

Peace and Justice Minister – this person helps the team and the Catechumens and Candidates and their sponsors to find and engage in the Gospel lived out –

“taking it to the streets”

Catechetical Minister – This person is a wonderful teacher – helps make the connections between Scripture, Liturgy, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and Catholic Tradition. They know well the methods of adult learning models, as well as those of youth, and children.

Sponsor Coordinator – This person keeps their eyes open as far as Catholics in the pews goes. This person is not afraid to approach families or individuals about sharing their own faith journeys so that they may “ACCOMPANY” another person to an intimate relationship with God and God’s Church.

Sponsor – the person who has said “Yes, I am willing to walk this journey with someone seeking God.”

Catechumenate Director – The person who is willing to bring together all the gifts of all the other persons on this list. This person is gifted with flexibility, and creativity. This person holds the VISION of the RCIA for all other team members and is not afraid to call them to account. Also, relationship with Pastor.

Ordained Presider – The pastor, the priest. He holds the VISION of the RCIA alongside the Director of the Catechumenate. He knows the Rites well, and has studied them, and is willing to work with the team, with the liturgist (if there is one), with the musician, in order to make this a profound experience for the Catechumens/Candidates. He knows the importance of preparing and excellent homily ESPECIALLY for the celebration of the Rites.

Lay Presider – This person is responsible for leading times of prayer such as Morning Prayer/ Evening Prayer and presides with style and grace required of such a prayer time. Leads other types of prayer as well or appoints an appropriate person to do so.

Deacon – this person knows all the times when there is an option for someone other than a priest to preside at various rites, and knows the Rite well in order to preside with style (dignity) and grace – in other words, not just something thrown together at the last minute

Bishop – Perhaps not a week in/week out member of the team, but he is the one who sets the norms for the process in his Diocese. His presence is noticed primarily at the Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion.

Spiritual Director – this person knows how to help people examine their lives in light of Sacred Scripture and to help them seek direction for their lives through same.

Homilist – This person, priest, deacon, bishop, takes seriously the task of integrating Sacred Scripture, the arts (poetry, drama, music), current events, and aids the journey of catechumens and candidates as they seek the living God (which in turn also helps those already full members of Church)

Liturgist – This person knows the Rites of the RCIA backwards and forwards. This person has a sense of when it is best to celebrate the various Rites, HOW to celebrate the Rites in terms of the worship space, the Community, and empowers the liturgical ministers

Music Minister – This person not only knows music (theory), but also knows the RCIA backwards and forwards. This person reads the rubrics of the rite to understand what kind of music is called for in the Rite, whether it is a hymn, a psalm, an acclamation, a litanic response, and knows the nature of each Rite and the Scriptures associated with it in order to choose music that supports the Rite not only through proper texts, but also through the quality of the music itself.

In addition to this, this person involves other music ministers in the understanding of the Rites so that they are not there merely providing a musical background to spoken words. This person knows how to teach the assembly what THEIR own musical response to the Rites is, by planning out a teaching schedule (5 minutes before Mass), as well as providing worship aids that help people to understand, to participate, and above all to pray.

Mystagogue – After Initiation, this person is able to help the Neophytes to “Savor” the Mysteries celebrated, particularly the Eucharist, and having partaken of the Eucharist, helps to become a Eucharistic people, now living out their baptismal call in Mission in the World and in the Church.

Psychologist or Family Counsellor – This person is there to assist those who need it, those who have issues that go beyond spiritual realities.

Some areas of discussion among team members:

The VISION of the Catechumenate in/for the Universal Church

The VISION of the Catechumenate in/for the Parish

The Gifts each person brings – What/where are the strengths and the best use of those gifts

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A Plan for Ongoing Formation – can be based around some of the very activities that the Catechumens themselves engage in:

Breaking Open the Word with and among yourselves – includes time of Lectio Divina

Your participation in Liturgy, and mystagogy about the Liturgy with and among yourselves

Apostolic Works within and outside the parish, especially outside the parish that give witness to a lived faith. What does each member do individually, and what do you do collectively? Why or why not?

Studying the Rite Book IN DETAIL, and asking critical questions about the manner of celebration, and the options given.

Theological Updating (for us locally, through Oblate offerings, RCIA Institute in Chicago, etc., Southwest Liturgical Conference study Week each January in varying locations of the Southwest)

Reading a book in common on the team

A suggested yearly plan

Yearly – An Annual Retreat Day filled with Scripture, Reflection time, a lot of liturgical singing, and rituals that draw on the primary rituals of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Quarterly – A Pot-luck supper – purely social – how well do the team members mesh? How do team members relate to each other?

Monthly – A way to “Check in” on the progress of our catechumens/candidates that we care for collectively, and a way to check with their sponsors as well (help with questions of faith)

Weekly – Reporting on the day-to-day progress of our catechumens/candidates

For further discussion: What is our understanding of faith?

What is our understanding of the three sacraments of initiation as they relate to each other?

What is the Mission of Jesus Christ? (Isaiah)

What is the place of the Catholic Church in relation to that Mission?

How do you understand the role of the parish and of the team in the making of Christians?

What is it that we need to “let go of” (individually/collectively) in order to work with this process?

What IS the conversion process?

What is the GOAL of the Conversion process?

Where on the scale do your team members lie? 1 (membership/information) to 10 (discipleship/transformation)

One good resource: RCIA Spirituality! Formation for the Catechumenate Team, by Barbara Hixon, with reflection questions by Gael Gensler, published by Resource Publications, Inc. Revised edition 1997