

Terms for Christian Initiation

GLOSSARY

Candidate: One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who now is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of 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.)

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 the RCIA*, which involves intense preparation in Word, worship, community life, and apostolic works.

Children: The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* includes the initiation process adapted for children of catechetical age (defined in the canons [art.97] as a person who has completed their seventh year). A person is considered to be an infant, according to canon law until they have completed their seventh year.

Cycles A, B, C: The 3-yr cycle of liturgical readings: Cycle A: Matthew; Cycle B: Mark; Cycle C: Luke. All three cycles incorporate John.

Easter Season: The 50 days from Easter Sunday through the feast of Pentecost.

Elect: The name given to Catechumens who celebrate the *Rite of Election* signifying their being chosen by God for the initiation sacraments.

Evangelization: In the context of the initiation of adults, evangelization is the task of the Church during the Pre-catechumenate. It involves the inviting, welcoming, witnessing, and sharing of faith, and the proclamation of the Gospel to inquirers/candidates.

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

Lectionary: The book used in liturgical celebrations that contains the scripture readings of the liturgical year.

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.

Liturgical Year: The seasons and cycles of the Christian year. It is the instrument and means for leading God's people along the way to the Lord. The prayers and readings introduce and invite us into the Paschal Mystery. The liturgical year includes: Christmas Cycle (First Sunday of Advent through the Baptism of the Lord), Easter Cycle (Ash Wednesday through Pentecost), and Ordinary Time.

Minor Rites: Rites during the *Period of the Catechumenate* which include exorcisms, blessings, and anointing.

Mystagogy: The fourth and final period of the Christian initiation of adults, which is from Easter to Pentecost. The U.S. National Statutes envision an extended mystagogy for one year.

National Statutes: Particular law (for the Dioceses of the United States of America) for the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the United States approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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.

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).

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 the *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.

RCIA: Acronym for *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for use in scholarly references to identify the text paragraph. The term RCIA is discouraged for popular usage.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) English title of *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulorum*. This is the official collection of rites of the Roman Catholic Church for initiation of adults (including children of catechetical age) and the reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Rites of . . .

Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens: The bridge between the Pre-catechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.

Welcome: The bridge between the inquiry period and the period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate. It is for those already baptized.

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.

Call to Continuing Conversion: Coincides with election, but is the rite for the already baptized (candidates).

Scrutinies: Three rites of exorcism for the Elect (unbaptized) during Lent.

Penitential Rite: Celebration for candidates, similar to rite of scrutiny.

Sacraments of Initiation: Includes *Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist*.

Sunday: The first day in the Christian liturgical week, the original feast day, the heart of the calendar, the basis and nucleus of the liturgical year.

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. Includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.