

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
The RCIA Process

--by Vickie Shepherd

RCIA: GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS
The RCIA Process

- **BOOK OF THE ELECT:** The book the Catechumens for election are to sign at the Rite of Sending in their parish, this book is presented to the bishop at the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent, from there they are sent to the Easter sacraments.
- **CANDIDATE:** Generally anyone preparing to become a Catholic, but the term is often used more specifically for a person who is baptized in another Christian tradition, who is preparing for reception into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church.
- **CANON LAW:** The body of law that governs church practice and protects the rights and privileges of individuals and community.
- **CATECHESIS:** The instruction and spiritual formation of the catechumens, neophytes and candidates.
- **CATECHUMEN:** An unbaptized person who is seeking initiation into the church and who has been accepted into the order of catechumens.
- **CATECHUMENATE:** The process by which the Catholic church brings unbaptized children and adults to Christian initiation. Also, the period of time during which an unbaptized person prepares for Christian initiation.
- **CHRISM:** A combination of oil and sweet balsam or perfume that is mixed and consecrated by the bishop and used to anoint newly baptized people and newly ordained priests and bishops. Chrism is also used in the consecration of churches and altars.
- **DOCTRINE:** The formal teachings of the church.

- **ELECT:** Catechumens who have been found ready by the community of faith to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation.
- **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 particular 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. (may also be called illumination and purification).
- **ENROLLMENT:** The rite of inscribing into the Book of the Elect the names of those catechumens to be elected to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation.(usually done at the Rite of Sending in the parish, or can be done at the Rite of Election in some diocese, ours has the Rite of Sending).
- **EPHPHETHA:** The rite in which the presider touches the ears and the mouth of the elect and prays that they be open to hear and proclaim the word of God in faith. (it may be celebrated as part of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.)
- **EXORCISMS:** Prayers for the deliverance from the powers of evil and falsehood and for the reception of the gifts of the Lord, especially the Holy Spirit. Exorcisms are part of the rites of scrutiny.
- **EVANGELIZATION:** The activity by which the church proclaims the gospel in word and in deed. (Also the period in which the Inquirers are prepared for the catechumenate).
- **FASTING:** A form of sacrifice by which faithful Christians join themselves with the suffering and death of Jesus by foregoing food for a specific period of time. On Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday , Catholics are obliged to fast in a modified way. Many Christians fast from Holy Thursday evening to after the Easter Vigil in anticipation of the Lord's resurrection.
- **GODPARENT(S) :** This is the person who will accompany the catechumen on his/her journey through the rites and periods of the catechumenate through the time of mystagogy (the time after Easter) .This person is selected by the catechumen with the approval of the parish priest.
- **ILLUMINATION:** see enlightenment
- **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 process by which a person enters the faith life of the church. The process extends from the person's first inquiry through the completion of mystagogy.
- **INQUIRERS:** Persons who sincerely seek to learn about the faith of the church.
- **LECTIONARY:** A book containing the assigned scripture readings for the celebration of the eucharist and the other sacraments.
- **MYSTAGOGY (MYSTAGOGIA) :** The period of time following initiation, usually the Easter season, which centers on catechesis in the meaning and experience of the mysteries of baptismal faith.
- **NEOPHYTE:** A newly baptized person who is in the final period of Christian initiation, mystagogy.
- **OIL OF CATECHUMENS:** The blessed oil used in anointing catechumens as a sign of their need for and God's offer of strength in overcoming all opposition to the faith they will profess throughout their lives.
- **PASCHAL TRIDUUM:** The three days from Holy Thursday evening through Easter Sunday during which Christians celebrate the passover of Israel from slavery to freedom, the passover of Jesus Christ from death to life, our own passover from sin to grace and the world's passover from darkness to light.
- **PERIODS:** Times of growth in the initiation process: (1) Inquiry or pre-catechumenate : (2) catechumenate : (3) purification and enlightenment : (4) mystagogy
- **PRECATECHUMENATE (PRE-CAT) :** The period of inquiry prior to acceptance into the order of catechumens; the time of initial evangelization.
- **PRESENTATIONS :** The rites during the period of purification and enlightenment through which the church passes on to the elect the Creed and the Lord's prayer, the cherished documents of the church, and the traditions they represent: the way Christians believe and the way Christians pray.
- **PURIFICATION :** see enlightenment
- **SCRUTINIES :** Rites celebrated with the elect, usually at the Sunday liturgy 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 :** Also called Parish companions, persons (from this parish) who accompany the inquirers when they seek acceptance into the order of catechumens and who remain with them as companions during the catechumenate until the rite of

election. (the candidate may choose to have this person as their sponsor at the Easter services also).

- **STAGES** : see periods

©Copyright 2000 Vickie Shepherd all rights reserved.
No portion of this article or web page may
be used without written permission from the author.

+RCIA Links+

- [The Process of Becoming A Roman Catholic](#)
 - [Diocese of Buffalo](#)
 - [RCIA Information](#)
 - [North American Forum for the Catechumenate](#)
 - [Description of RCIA by Scharback](#)
 - [RCIA Q&A](#)
 - [How To Become A Catholic by James Akin](#)
 - [What is RCIA?](#)
-