

RCIA: The Language

For parishioners and new comers who are little baffled by the multitude of titles (often derived from ancient Greek) relating to people and terms in the RCIA, here is a simple glossary of common terms:

RCIA

Stand for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (also referred to as The Catechumenate, after its formal period of catechetical formation). This is the Church's teaching on its way of initiating new adult members into the Church.

Initiation

This is the process that is different to 'learning about' the Church or being 'apprenticed' to the tasks of the Church (although it contains elements of both). Rather it is primarily a process of growing into and becoming part of the Church in its relationships and mission.

The Period of Evangelisation and Precatechumenate

Evangelisation in its simplest form is to proclaim the Good News of God's love so that a person may hear that proclamation (or Word) as a personal call to them. While this is often referred to as a 'first call' it can be heard as a new call in every experience in our lives. This period then is the cornerstone of the RCIA and as such is of no fixed duration or structure. It is for proclamation of Gospel values and inquiry: an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

Enquirers

Enquirer: A person who approaches the Catholic Church with an initial expression of interest.

Sponsors

A Catholic from the local community who acts as a companion to a catechumen or candidate on his/her journey to becoming a Catholic and helps them to live as part of the Catholic community.

The Catechumenate

This is the period, after the enquirer has made an initial commitment to becoming part of the Church, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual for the nurturing and growth of the catechumen's faith and conversion to God and her/his growing relationship with the Church. Celebrations of the Word, and prayers of exorcism and blessings are provided to assist the process.

Catechumens

(Greek: one who 'echoes the gospel.') An unbaptized person who has made an initial commitment and is undertaking preparations for baptism in the Catholic Church.

Candidates

A baptised -

- (a) an adult Catholic who has not received all three sacraments of initial.
- (b) an adult in another Christian denomination who seeks full communion with the Catholic Church.

Catechist

A parishioner with a role of teaching and facilitation in the catechumenate process.

Catechumenate team

The core group who oversees the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in a parish. Since

RCIA: The Language

the initiation of adults into the Church is regarded as the responsibility of the whole parish, the actual involvement of people in the process is far wider than the team.

Exorcisms

Far from being what is seen in horror movies. Exorcisms are petitions directly addressed to God. They draw the attention of the catechumens to the real nature of Christian life: the things that draw us close to God, the things that pull us away in other directions.

Dismissal Rite

After taking part in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, the catechumens and candidates go out with their sponsors and catechists, to continue to explore ways of faith.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This is the time immediately after preceding the elect's initiation usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil. It is a time for reflection, intensely centred on conversion, marked by celebration of the Scrutinies, the Presentations and of the Preparation Rites of Holy Saturday. (Rite p14)

Godparents

May be the same people as sponsors; but who specifically, lead the catechumen/candidates through the rites, e.g. a significant person like a life friend, fiance or spouse.

Rite of Election

This is the liturgy rite, usually celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally recognises and affirms the catechumen's readiness for the sacraments of initiation. The catechumen now known as the elect, expresses the desire to come to the Easter sacraments.

The Elect

Catechumens who are recognised by the Church as elected by God to be initiated into the Church at the coming Easter.

Scrutinies

Rites for self-searching and reflection for a spiritual purpose. They are held on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent.

Presentations

Rites which celebrate that the Church has been sharing its faith (Presentation of the Creed) and its prayer (Presentation of the Lord's Prayer) with the elect and Candidates.

Mystagogy

This is the period, usually the Easter Season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Catholic community, particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, reflections on their experience of initiation. Making their first steps into their own personal mission as part of the Church Initiation is ultimately a way of being the Church.

Neophyte

(Greek: 'new nature') A recently baptized Catholic.