

# Best Practices for Turning Seekers into Disciples

Six principles from the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults



## 1 Make sure seekers experience a step-by-step, gradual process

*“The Initiation of catechumens takes place step by step....” (OCIA 4)*

Nothing can be settled a priori; the catechumenate should be long enough that the catechumens experience true and lasting conversion—several years if necessary (see OCIA 76). [See this article](#).

- **Simple next step:** Choose one Sunday a month to move off of your syllabus. Instead, break open what Jesus is teaching the seekers in that Sunday’s gospel or in an experience of Christ they had in the parish or in their family life. [See this article](#) and these [Sunday reflection questions](#).
- **Long-term goal:** Develop an individual faith formation plan for each seeker that is guided by the movement of the Holy Spirit and not by a school calendar. [Learn more in this course](#).

## 2 Rely on the parish community

*“The Initiation of catechumens takes place...in the midst of the community of the faithful.” (OCIA 4)*

The faith community is the Body of Christ. Immerse your seekers into the life of the parish so they can have deeper encounters with Christ and strengthen their conversion. [See this article](#). The Sunday liturgy is the premier experience of the presence of Christ. Be diligent about accompanying your seekers to Mass every Sunday. [See this article](#).

- **Simple next step:** Choose one week a month to take the catechumens and sponsors to a parish event or meeting. They don’t all have to go to the same meeting. Spread them around the parish. [See this article](#).
- **Long-term goal:** Gradually move toward involving the seekers in the life of the parish as their primary formation. Meet only occasionally as a separate catechumenate group to break open what they have been experiencing in the faith life of your parish. [Learn more in this course](#).

## 3 Constantly reflect on the value of the Paschal Mystery

*“...the community of the faithful, who together with the catechumens reflecting upon the value of the Paschal Mystery....” (OCIA 4)*

Living a paschal life is not always easy, but it is always joyful. Living in Christ instead of merely with Christ will fulfil what Pope Francis calls “the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart” (*Joy of the Gospel*, 165). [See this article](#).

- **Simple next step:** Practice sharing your own paschal mystery story with family members or members of your catechumenate team. When did you experience miraculous healing? How did Jesus save you? [See these reflection questions](#).
- **Long-term goal:** Transform your inquiry process into a discovery of the wounds of each seeker. Instead of teaching classes, offer ways in which your parish community can be an agent of miraculous healing.

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### 4 Renew your own conversion

*“...the community of the faithful...renewing their own conversion....” (OCIA 4)*

To lead the seekers to deeper conversion, we have to first of all renew our own conversion. We have to make conversion (our own and the seekers’) our first priority. [See this article.](#)

- **Simple next step:** Create an inventory of all the activities of your parish. Identify those that are most effective at helping your parishioners renew their own conversion. [See this article.](#)
- **Long-term goal:** Significantly increase the amount of time your catechumenate team spends enhancing those parish activities that are most effective at renewing the conversion of parishioners. Plan for the bulk of your seekers’ formation time to be spent engaging in those activities alongside the parishioners.

### 5 Make adult initiation the norm

*“The Order of Initiation is suited to the spiritual journey of adults....” (OCIA 5)*

When the Second Vatican Council called for the restoration of the catechumenate (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 64), the church recovered the original norm of adult initiation. Adult initiation has to become the normative template for formation in every parish. [See this article.](#)

- **Simple next step:** Begin to incorporate adult learning principles into your formation process. [See this article.](#)
- **Long-term goal:** Completely transform the way seekers are formed in your initiation process. Move away from information delivery to accompaniment learning.

### 6 Shape the spiritual journey to the unique needs of each seeker

*“...the spiritual journey...varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place....” (OCIA 5)*

If we take seriously the variables of each person’s unique encounter with the Risen Christ, we can clearly see that it is impossible to provide a standard, one-size-fits-all program that will be an authentic spiritual journey of conversion. [See this article.](#)

- **Simple next step:** Start a daily prayer discipline asking the Holy Spirit to make you more open to accommodating your catechumenate process to the unique needs of each person. You don’t have to actually change anything right away. Just start praying for the courage and insight to make future changes. [See this article.](#)
- **Long-term goal:** If you are currently offering a series of classes for the precatechumenate period, plan to discontinue them in the future. In their place, begin a listening process to discover in each seeker how the Holy Spirit is guiding them. Use the signs of conversion listed in the rite at paragraph 42 as a starting point for your new process. [Learn more in this course.](#)