

GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Preface

This document is written to assist all who journey with catechumens: pastors, directors of Christian Initiation, team members, deacons, lay ecclesial ministers and music ministers.

Since the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults also provides rituals for completing the Initiation of adults baptized in other Christian communities, and baptized but uncatechized Catholics, this document will highlight also our Diocesan Guidelines for these situations.

Since children of catechetical age (seven years) are initiated into the Christian community through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, this document supports the unified celebration of Initiation Sacraments and will be helpful for the parish process. It also provides information for principals and teachers to appreciate the child's Initiation experience, particularly when the child's peers are being prepared for Confirmation and first Eucharist.

Teachers encountering children who have been fully initiated in the Catholic Eastern Churches will also find this document informative.

Introduction

In 1991 the Diocesan R.C.I.A. Committee published an eight page pamphlet *Guidelines for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. This served the Diocese well for the past two decades, but it is time to offer a renewed text that expresses the wisdom and practical insight gleaned from many years of walking with catechumens and candidates as they are drawn into life in the Eucharistic Community.

We are grateful to the many other dioceses in North America whose published guidelines gave us a focus and direction.

(We are also grateful to the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and the Council of Priests who reviewed and advised Bishop Fabbro upon a first reading of these new guidelines.)

The Guidelines set out for us the vision expressed in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The Diocesan RCIA committee is aware that some of the details in this document are not commonly established in our diocese. Many of these changes will occur with support of and discussion by the parishes that have been able to implement the Initiatory process fully. We also commit our committee to provide ongoing education and formation in order to achieve this vision.

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Aspects of the vision to be strengthened in the Diocese of London:

- The catechumenal process is the normative way for bringing unbaptized adults into the Church.
- The RCIA process consists of four stages and three major Rites that are celebrated publically.
- Rites that are presided over by the pastor are celebrated in the home parish.
- The Inquiry stage is best processed in small groups.
- The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is celebrated at any point throughout the year in Ordinary Time, as required.
- The Lenten period is a time of intense final preparation for the Elect. Catechesis should be complete prior to the celebration of the Rite of Election.
- Reflection on the Sunday readings is an essential part of formation and catechesis.
- Breaking open the Word becomes a regular practice for those seeking initiation.
- Children of catechetical age are invited into a catechumenal journey as outlined in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, which expects the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the time of Initiation..
- Baptized persons from other Christian denominations are invited into a process that suits their specific formational needs, and are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church as soon as deemed ready.
- Baptized Catholics requiring catechesis may benefit from the conversion process of the unbaptized. Due attention is given to awakening them to their baptismal dignity.
- Catholic adults who seek Confirmation are not included in this process.
- Candidates seeking reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church are received at a liturgy other than the Easter Vigil.
- We continue to strive to involve the whole parish in the catechumenal process.

The rite presumes that a parish develops a team to implement the process, and provides appropriate training for the team members. In our present circumstances the team may be serving clustered parishes or even a zone where the numbers are small. It is desired that even when catechesis and formation activities are held in a shared setting, the rites be celebrated in the parish community that will be the home base for the one seeking to become Catholic.

It is also expected that the Diocese will continue to offer formative activities for team members to ensure well trained persons journey with those seeking to know Christ and to become his disciples as members of the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL CONCEPTS

Initiation – Dying and Rising with Christ

Initiation into the Roman Catholic Church is completed with the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist through which men, women and children are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Through the power of the Spirit they become adopted sons and daughters of God and members of the people of God, who are then able to fully join in the celebration of the Lord's death and resurrection.¹

The Rite celebrates the connection between the Sacraments of Initiation and the Easter Vigil, a theological connection realized by the early Church. At that time persecution of Christians was rampant. Those who sought to become Christian underwent a complete change in their lives to be ready to take on the full responsibilities of following Christ. This process often took up to three years. The conversion process was truly a dying to self, and carried with it the possibility of martyrdom. Dying and rising in Christ in Baptism carried the weight of being joined to Christ's self-offering.

The Normative Sacramental Journey

Following the decree of the Second Vatican Council, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was restored as the normative way by which adults are initiated into the Catholic Church. The renewed rite [in English] has been in use in Canada since 1974 and many have expressed gratitude for this process which invites the whole community of faith to conversion of heart and to ministry while assisting the catechumens on their journey toward baptism in Christ.²

In this third millennium the Church realizes that conversion takes time and is best facilitated through a process in which an individual grows in relationship with Jesus, accepts the Gospel message and values, comes to know what the Church believes and teaches, and is drawn into the life and mission of the Eucharistic Community. Such conversion is a free gift from God. It requires the work of the Holy Spirit and the nurture and support of the community. A relationship with Jesus is established through reflecting on scripture, sharing faith and participating in communal and private prayer. "Breaking open the Word" on Sundays provides an effective opportunity to reflect on the scripture of the day and to share faith. Since conversion involves the whole person, attention is given also to intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of self in the commitment of faith.

The Rite provides opportunity for doctrinal content, the tradition of the Catholic faith, liturgical experiences of the community at prayer, and active involvement with the parish in its outreach mission activities. During the journey, prayer and ritual mark an individual's readiness to take another significant step of incorporation into the Body of Christ. These are celebrated within the heart of parish Sunday worship. Other rites of strengthening are provided through the Catechumenate and Lenten period.

¹ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, "Christian Initiation, General Introduction" 1.

² Foreword, page v, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1987.

The participation of the Parish and the Diocese

Persons seeking to join the Roman Catholic Church become members not only of the universal Church but also of a specific parish faith community, and the diocesan family. It is essential that during the journey they come to know the local community – to understand its vision, goals, outreach activities, and social action. The entire parish community becomes bears witness to the gospel in action, worship and everyday life.

By its presence and participation at the celebration of the rites, the parish supports the faith of the catechumens. The parish members are also strengthened by the celebration of these rites. In watching the catechumens ritualize their faith journey; parishioners are challenged to reflect on how faithful they have been to the teachings of Christ. Such reflection may be a source of conversion and deeper faith commitment for all parishioners.

The catechumens are strengthened in their bond with the Body of Christ by meeting individual members of the parish and by being introduced to various aspects of the diocesan family. Team members, sponsors and the parish members at large pray with and for the catechumens, helping them to experience the joy and challenges of being Catholic in contemporary society. The work of diocesan committees shows the universal Church's efforts to promote social justice and a preferential option for the poor. Weaving together the good work of the local and diocesan Church will help to engage the catechumen in the vision of the universal Church.

Who is served by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a process for adults who, “after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the new way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts.”³ Since it is through this process, and all its accompanying rites that they are prepared to receive the Sacraments of Initiation, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is primarily for unbaptized adults.

The Rite does provide an adapted process for:

- a) children of catechetical age (RCIA p. 149)
- b) adults baptized in other Christian Traditions (RCIA p.225)
- c) baptized, but uncatechized adult Catholics (RCIA p. 223)

These will be considered in the following chapters of this guide.

Catholic adults who require only Confirmation are not included in this process. They are prepared by the pastoral staff and then confirmed by the Bishop at some other appropriate time.

The journey with persons baptized in other Christian communities is modified to their spiritual and formational needs. No one process will meet the particular needs of every candidate. Although the rite indicates that they may be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, many parishes and dioceses have chosen to celebrate Confirmation at Pentecost or another Sunday in the Easter Season. This has helped to strengthen the connection between Baptism and the Easter Vigil.

³ RCIA, 1

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When the Easter Vigil is reserved for initiating the unbaptized, the ritual expresses fully and dramatically the unity with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. As the elect are drawn through the baptismal waters they are joined to Christ's paschal mystery. Passing from their former way of living into life in Christ, freed from sin, they are clothed in the glory of the risen Lord, anointed to prophetic witness, and called into life in the eucharistic community.

Children of catechetical age complete their initiation by receiving all three initiatory sacraments at one liturgical celebration.⁴ Their process of formation and catechesis may extend over a period of years. Their initiation is celebrated at the Easter Vigil, on Easter Sunday, or on any Sunday, since Sunday always celebrates Christ's resurrection.⁵

The Eucharistic Community's responsibility

The vision of RCIA is that the entire parish community is responsible for sharing in the Church's mission to evangelize and catechize. This attitude is basic to our understanding of Christian mission. Parishioners do this in conscious and unconscious ways.

The way we pray together, greet one another, show kindness and concern; the way we reach out to those in need, make a commitment to serve in both internal committees and parish outreach – these all model in an unconscious way and silently shape the impression of who we are as Christ's disciples.

Parishioners participate consciously in evangelizing and catechizing by participation on the Initiation team, by meeting catechumens and having ordinary conversations about faith and life, by inviting catechumens to parish social and outreach functions. The more parishioners extend hospitality toward catechumens, the deeper their awareness of their own participation in this process.

The Initiation Team

The members of this team assist the catechumens primarily by their witness to their own faith. Some members will take on specific roles. In some parishes some roles may be shared.

a) The Coordinator/Director oversees the Initiation process by gathering a team, coordinating people, schedules, meetings, rites, and ideas. The coordinator should have clarity about the vision of initiation; skills to inform and involve the parish, parish team, and parish groups; knowledge of recruiting and forming a team; advanced understanding of Catholic faith and practice; a hospitable, conversant approach to those interested in becoming Catholic.

b) The Catechist's role is to answer the questions posed by the catechumens and to instruct them on the teachings of Christ and the Church. The catechist exhibits a good grasp of scripture, Catholic doctrine, and is comfortable with process facilitation. This skill helps the catechist to lead reflection on scripture and faith practice.

⁴ RCIA, 281

⁵ RCIA, 280

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c) **The Sponsor** guides the person through the Initiation process providing support and encouragement. As an example to the catechumen of what it means to live as a committed follower of Christ, the sponsor develops the closest relationship with the catechumen. The sponsor is a connector with the parish, witnessing to the community about the readiness and willingness of the catechumen as he or she progresses through the process.

To ensure the sponsor is an effective mentor, often the parish will name a sponsor for the catechumen. It is possible that a catechumen may wish to request a specific person who has been instrumental in awakening the desire to become Catholic. Through consultation with the coordinator or pastor such a sponsor may be welcomed into the parish process.

d) **The Ministry of Hospitality** is central to the Initiation process. Persons in this role welcome the catechumens to the gatherings, and prepare the environment and refreshments for the sessions. They also assist the director/coordinator in other activities as required.

e) **The Pastoral Staff** are key persons in establishing a relationship between the catechumen and the parish community. The presence of the pastor, pastoral ministers (youth, music ministers) periodically at sessions and celebrations strengthens the connection with the faith community at large. Such meetings also give the pastoral staff a more intimate connection with the catechumens.

CHAPTER 2: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERIODS AND STEPS IN THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

The journey of faith is continuous throughout life. God calls each of us at different times to deepen our relationship, turning our minds and hearts and lives more toward God; becoming more compassionate to our neighbour and the world community. For those entering into the process of Christian Initiation, there are four major periods with special rites (steps) that mark passage from one stage to the next. These periods and steps are intended for persons who are not baptized.

The First Period - Evangelization and Precatechumenate

There is no fixed duration or structure for this period. It is a time of evangelization in which initial faith is awakened and the fundamentals of Christian teaching are explored.

The First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

This liturgical rite marks the beginning of the catechumenate. The catechumen publicly expresses and the Church accepts their intention to respond to follow God's call and follow Christ. The catechumens are now part of the household of Christ, joined to the church.⁶ This rite is celebrated whenever required in Ordinary Time.

The Second Period - Catechumenate

During this time attention is given to nurturing the catechumen's faith and conversion to God. This includes formal catechesis and rites associated with "hearing God's Word." Celebrations of the Word and prayers of exorcism are interspersed throughout the period. Particular attention is given to "Breaking Open the Word" on Sundays. The length of this period depends on the progress of the individual. One year allows an experience of the liturgical year with its reflection on the life and mission of Jesus. A three year period allows for a deeper relationship with Christ as the catechumen experiences the full course of lectionary readings.

The Second Step: Election (Enrollment of Names)

This rite usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent is presided over by the Bishop. Within it the Church formally ratifies the catechumens' readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation. The catechumens become the "elect" and publicly express their willingness to be initiated into the Eucharistic community.

The Third Period - Purification and Enlightenment

The Lenten period is a time for reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the Scrutinies, presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and the preparation rites of Holy Saturday.

The Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

At the heart of the Easter Vigil the elect are washed in the waters of Baptism, anointed with the gift of the Spirit, feast at the Eucharistic banquet and are initiated into the Eucharistic community.

⁶ RCIA #47

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The Fourth Period - Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogia

This is a time for the community and the neophytes to deepen their grasp of the paschal mystery, making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and in doing works of charity.⁷ The neophytes enjoy a distinctive spirit and spirituality derived from their personal experience of the sacraments and of the community. This is a time of celebration, of awakening awareness of the mysteries celebrated, of drawing closer to the parish community, life in the Trinity, and a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.

⁷ RCIA #234

CHAPTER 3: THE SPECIFIC PERIODS AND RITES

The First Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

Purpose

The whole period of the precatechumenate is set aside for evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek baptism may mature.⁸ This period allows the inquirer to strengthen his/her relationship with the Lord, become acquainted with a community of faith, and build relationships with individual members of the Christian community.⁹

Catechetical Method

- Let the inquirer raise his/her own questions.
- Present basic beliefs of the Catholic Faith.
- Reflect on Scripture, help them to know the Triune God and how scripture gives us a focus for our daily life.

Meetings

These sessions can be organized as small conversation groups. Inquirers may show a readiness for the catechumenate on an individual basis. For this reason entrance into the catechumenate is celebrated several times during the year. It requires that the parish form a number of team members to work with the inquirers at whatever time or season they approach the parish.

Initial Interview

It is essential that, when an inquirer comes to the parish, care be taken with establishing their marital status. A Diocesan Information Form is provided as a resource.¹⁰ A person who has been divorced and re-married should be directed to discuss the situation with the pastor or another person who knows the Church's laws on marriage, so that a canonical procedure may be initiated. In the Diocese of London persons requiring a Tribunal process may only proceed into the Order of Catechumens when the process is completed.

It is also essential to establish if the inquirer has been baptized and in which denomination. A list is provided of churches whose celebration of Baptism is deemed valid by the Catholic Church.¹¹

Discernment of Readiness for the Next Stage

The Rite expects that the inquirer must show evidence of:

- initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ
- the first stirrings of repentance
- a start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer
- a sense of the Church
- some experience of the company and spirit of Christians¹²

⁸ RCIA, 37

⁹ Diocese of Beaumont, p.9

¹⁰ See Appendix A

¹¹ See Appendix B

¹² RCIA, 42

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Matthew 22:37-39

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

With this Scripture passage as an anchor these questions may be helpful in the discernment process:

Why do you wish to continue this process into the next stage?

Since beginning this process, what change have you seen in

- Your relationship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- Your relationship with self?
- Your relationship with others?¹³

Rites

There are no specific rites associated with the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate.

The First Step – the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

The rituals of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults begin with the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. Here the inquirer publicly declares that they want to continue the journey toward full initiation into the Catholic Church. The sponsor presents the inquirer to the community and accepts the responsibility of walking with him/her on the journey of conversion. This rite is celebrated whenever required, in Ordinary Time.

The sponsor is invited by the initiation director/ coordinator to journey with the inquirer, or an inquirer may ask for a specific person to be named sponsor. When the inquirer requests a specific sponsor the director/coordinator discerns if the suggested sponsor is a faith filled, practicing Catholic. The sponsor attends all the sessions with the catechumen.

The Second Period - the Catechumenate

Purpose

During this extended period of time the catechumens receive formation in the faith and life of the Church. There is no fixed amount of time for this period because the conversion process varies for each individual. The process should be long enough for the catechumen's faith to become strong. Criterion for discernment of readiness is found on page 12 of this guide.

The length of the catechumenate depends on the grace of God and cannot be determined in advance. The rite states that it "should be long enough – several years if necessary" for conversion to take place.¹⁴

Catechetical method

These four elements strive to bring about maturity in commitment to the way of life:

¹³ Diocese of Beaumont, p. 10

¹⁴ RCIA, 7.2, 18

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- A) Catechesis
- B) Familiarity with the Christian way of life
- C) Liturgical rites
- D) Apostolic works

Catechesis

Catechesis is to be “gradual and complete, accommodated to the liturgical year, and supported by celebrations of the word.”¹⁵

Many of our parishes schedule a 5-6 month period of faith topics in a systematic order to ensure the basic elements of the Creed and sacramental theology are covered within that short period of time.

The preferred pattern of catechesis develops according to the liturgical year and the Sunday readings. This method expects that the catechumenal process last as long as required for conversion to be strong and committed. Since it is not tied to a period of time, it enables a harmonious blending of the Sunday readings with the catechetical process and conversion to living the challenge of the gospel.

With this method the doctrine taught during the catechetical session is determined by the Sunday readings. Thus the doctrine and precepts are connected to the mystery of salvation which comes from Jesus and is proclaimed in the Gospels. It also brings harmony with the entire Church as it prays, reflects upon and tries to live the weekly message of Christ.

Some of our parishes are finding it best to schedule the catechetical session on Sunday afternoon. The catechumens gather for the Sunday liturgy, and after hearing the Word of God move into their reflection on the Word “Breaking Open the Word”. Following a refreshment break they gather with the team for the catechetical session.

It is important that the main elements of the Christian faith be covered: the Mystery of the One God, Creation, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Sacraments, the Life of Grace, the Moral Life, Mary and the Saints, Death, Judgement and Eternity.

The four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are the basis for catechesis: our Christian Faith as found in the Creed, the Christian mystery as celebrated in the Sacraments, the Christian Life as lived in the Commandments and Beatitudes, Christian Prayer, the Lord’s Prayer.

Since not all these topics will arise from the lectionary, additional sessions are held to cover all the teachings.

Appendix C provides a guide for addressing catechetical topics with the lectionary sequence of readings.

Catechesis also reveals the importance of the four elements of Christian Life: catechesis, community, prayer, and service

¹⁵ RCIA, 75.1

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Community - The Christian Way of Life

Catechumens will learn the way of life, by the example and support of other Christians. By welcoming the catechumens to the parish cycle of prayer, community activity and outreach, many parishioners are able to participate in the initiation process.

Prayer - Liturgical Rites

During the catechumenate rites are celebrated to purify and strengthen the catechumens. The first is the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of the Catechumenate. The second are the weekly Dismissal Rites. This dismissal after the proclamation of the word is an act of hospitality to continue to be fed by the word of God. The period of reflection is integral to conversion, since only by coming to know Jesus through the scriptures can a person turn one's heart, mind and soul to the Lord.

The catechumens may be sent forth with these words:

*"My dear friends, this community now send you forth to reflect more deeply on the word of God which you have shared with us today. Be assured of our loving prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully at the Lord's Table."*¹⁶

Other examples of dismissal texts are found in *We Send You Forth*, by Jerry Galipeau.

Other rites celebrated during the catechumenate are:

- Minor exorcisms which draw the catechumen to the real nature of Christian life, the importance of self-denial and the need for God's help.¹⁷
- Blessings of the catechumens which are a sign of God's love and the Church's tender care.¹⁸

Service - Apostolic works

Sponsors and other parishioners invite the catechumens to participate in the parish organizations that reach out to the needy, visit the sick, and are actively engaged in works of social justice. By reflecting on this experience catechumens learn how the word of God is manifest in action.

Discernment of Readiness for the Next Stage

The benchmark for readiness is that the catechumen has "undergone a conversion in mind and action and (has) developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity".¹⁹ This requires that the catechumen reflect on their journey and discern with persons responsible about their readiness for the next step.

Reflection questions:

Why do you wish to continue this process into the next stage?

Since beginning this process, what change have you seen in:

Your relationship with God – Father, Son, Spirit?

¹⁶ RCIA, United States Ritual, 67

¹⁷ RCIA, 90

¹⁸ RCIA, 95

¹⁹ RCIA, 106

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Your relationship with self?
Your relationship with others?
How are you listening and responding to the word of God?
How are you joining with the community in prayer?
How are you sharing in the mission of the Christian community?
What further clarity do you need about the celebration of the Sacraments or about our Christian faith? ²⁰

The Second Step – The Rite of Election

This rite is celebrated at the Cathedral with the bishop. Prior to its celebration the catechumen will chose a godparent who will present them to the Church on the day of Election and be present with them for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. Whereas the sponsor's role is to better acquaint the catechumen with the community and faith practice, while offering initial support and care, the godparent's role is to help the catechumen integrate into the community by offering on-going support, care and by sharing faith.²¹

The godparent is one who knows the catechumen well and can witness before God and the Church as to the person's readiness to complete Initiation and for election.

The *Code of Canon Law* #874 requires that the godparent must:

1. Be appointed by the candidates for baptism;
2. Be at least sixteen years of age, unless there is a just reason or permission has been granted for a different age;
3. Be a fully initiated Catholic who lives a life of faith befitting the role to be undertaken;
4. Be free from canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;
5. Not be the father or mother of the person to be baptized.

Catechumens may ask their sponsor to serve as godparent.

The Rite of Election celebrates the transition in the life of the catechumen from one who is seeking to one who is ready to stand firm in a commitment, and marks the entrance into the final period of their preparation for the Easter Sacraments. This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election of God, in whose name the Church acts. The step is also called the enrollment of names because as a pledge of fidelity the candidates have inscribed their names in the book that lists those who have been chosen for initiation.²² The bishop presides at this rite which takes place at the Cathedral on the First Sunday in Lent.

The Third Period - Purification and Enlightenment

Purpose

²⁰ Diocese of Beaumont, Guidelines p. 14

²¹ RCIA, 11

²² RCIA, 119

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Originally the Lenten season developed as a time of retreat for those entering the Church at Easter. In the initiation process the focus of this period is one of intense spiritual reflection rather than catechetical instruction. It is a time of focusing on God's presence and how that presence uncovers and reveals attitudes and lifestyles that are contrary to being in relationship with God, as well as raising up attitudes that deepen one's relationship with God. Retreat time makes one aware of all that strains one's relationship with God –that is sin; and how God calls us to deeper union. This Lenten period is intended "to purify the hearts and minds of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance . . . and to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour."²³

Catechetical method

The Sunday readings continue to determine the content of catechesis. For the first few weeks of this period the catechesis will be on the experience of election and should be reflective in nature.

When there are elect in the parish, Cycle A readings are used on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays. The Scrutinies along with Cycle A readings focus on the meaning of Baptism – the sacrament through which Jesus overcomes sin and give us living water, light and freedom from death.

The sessions following the celebration of the Scrutinies are primarily a time of support and care for the elect, helping them to see God's love in the midst of the painful naming of sin.

Along with the Scrutinies, the presentation of the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer lead to catechesis on our Catholic belief and the need for a life of prayer.

Liturgical Rites

The Scrutinies are three rites for the elect that focus on self-searching and repentance. They help the elect to uncover and heal all that is weak and sinful in their hearts. The Scrutinies help also to bring out and strengthen all that is upright, strong and good. The Scrutinies are meant to complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.

If the Scrutinies cannot be celebrated on Sunday they are celebrated within community during the week.

It is also possible that this period of six weeks may be marked outside Lent with the rites being celebrated on Sundays or weekdays, using the Cycle A Readings. However, these should not be celebrated on solemnities of the liturgical year.

The presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer usually occur during the third and fifth week of Lent, although they may be anticipated during the period of the Catechumenate.

The elect do not celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the Easter Vigil because they will be receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

²³ RCIA, 126

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The Third Step - Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

The Easter Vigil is the usual time for the celebrating of the Sacraments of initiation. The elect enter the Paschal mystery through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, thus beginning their relationship with the triune God as members of the Catholic Church.

The Fourth Period - Mystagogy

Purpose

This is a time of postbaptismal catechesis meant to help the neophytes reflect upon the sacraments they received and also for the Christian community to reflect upon the paschal mystery celebrated at the Easter Vigil. This period lasts until Pentecost Sunday. However this period is really a beginning for the neophytes the beginning of life in the Eucharistic community, rather than the end of the Initiation process.

Catechetical method

The method is one of processing and reflecting on the experience of:

- the Easter Vigil with its symbols of darkness and light, water, oil, bread and wine;
- the celebration of the Easter Sacraments;
- the conversion that has gradually taken place during the initiation process.

The reflective process should provide words to describe not just the emotion and feeling, but more importantly what conversion has meant in their lives in terms of prayer, action and relationship with God.

The Sunday readings and the homily are the basis for this ongoing catechesis. Even though the neophytes will participate fully in the eucharist, they should at other times reflect upon the homily and readings, in order to receive further catechesis on the sacraments. Having celebrated the Easter Sacraments, the neophytes “develop new ways of viewing life. The experience of the mystery of God changes how they view faith, church, the world. They do not see new things; rather, they see things in new ways.”²⁴

The focus of the catechesis now is preparedness for mission.

Liturgical Rites – Weekly Sunday Eucharist

The neophytes attend Sunday liturgy in a group, with godparents and sponsors whenever possible. Here they discover anew their baptismal identity, when they are gathered in common worship with the community. While part of the assembly, they sit in their reserved places and are recognized and prayed for by the community during the General intercessions. One of the greatest gifts the neophytes give to the community is the witness by their presence.

Special Concerns

The catechumenate should be presented as leading to life in the Eucharistic Community – participating in the Sunday Eucharist, rather than celebrating Baptism. Such a focus will foster a continued involvement in the life of the community. The success of the period of mystagogy is marked by how well ordinary women and men are living the gospel way of life and giving

²⁴ RCIA, United States Rite, 75.1, 245.

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witness to their relationship with God. Ideally the neophytes should gather once a month after Pentecost, for a full year. If this is not possible they are welcomed into other programs of adult formation.

THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE

Introduction

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for children of catechetical age is the normative way for a child to be initiated into the Catholic Church. Children seven years of age and older who have not celebrated the Initiation Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist belong in the catechumenate for children. All three sacraments are celebrated at the one initiation liturgy. Confirmation should not be celebrated separately.²⁵

This process is dependent on a thorough understanding of the rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

The consent of both parents, or the guardian is necessary for the children to enroll in this initiation process. If the parents are separated, permission is required from the parent who holds custody of the child.

Age and child development must be taken into consideration. An interview with the child and parents or guardian will determine how best to minister to the child's particular needs and to find out the learning ability of the child.

The child's initiation may extend over several years, if needed.²⁶

This process is dependent on a thorough understanding of the adult rite for Initiation.

STAGES

Period of Pre-catechumenate for Children

This period may last as long as required. The child's progress depends on the help and example of the companions and the influence of their parents.²⁷ The parents need to be engaged in the child's spiritual development.

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumen will be celebrated when the child shows:

- Evidence of first faith
- Signs of being in relationship with God, with Jesus by entering into prayer
- Recognition of actions that separate one from God
- Recognition of a community (the Church) belonging to God

Interview questions:

- Who is God or Jesus to you?

²⁵ RCIA, 281

²⁶ RCIA, 243

²⁷ RCIA, 244

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- How do you talk to God? When do you talk to God?
- Are you able to sit quietly knowing that God loves you?
- What do you notice about the way we pray at church? What do you like about that?

Period of the Catechumenate

This is a period of time to talk about Scripture and to share it with the children. It is the time to pass on the tradition and beliefs of the Catholic faith. It is a time for catechesis and for Sunday dismissal.

Catechesis best unfolds in the environment of the family. During these catechetical sessions, it is helpful to have other children of the same age participate and talk of their experiences of living as a Catholic Christian.

As for adult initiation a sponsor will journey with the child.

Catechesis

A lectionary based catechesis is preferred since it is biblically based and accommodated to the liturgical year. The fundamentals of Catholic faith can be found to flow from the scripture readings and the liturgical rites.

Rite of Election

In the Diocese of London the children join the adults for this rite at the cathedral on the First Sunday of Lent with the Bishop presiding.

Period of Enlightenment and Purification

The Penitential Rite, scrutinies and anointings; the presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer all take place during this period. The scrutinies in particular are adapted to the needs of the children.

Celebration of Initiation

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist take place at the Easter Vigil, or some other appropriate time.²⁸

²⁸ RCIA, 202, 282

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Mystagogia – Fifty Days from Easter to Pentecost

This period may consist of gatherings in which the children are invited to talk about the experience of the Easter Sacraments. They may speak about what they heard, saw, tasted, smelled and how these experiences give them words to talk about their experience of God and the Church.

RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Persons baptized and catechized in an ecclesial community separated from the Catholic Church, who seek admission into the full communion of the Catholic Church, journey through a process that requires no greater burden than is necessary.²⁹

Baptized Christians receive doctrinal and spiritual preparation according to their individual need. They are received into full communion as soon as they are ready. If their final preparation takes place during Lent their reception into full communion will take place during the Easter Season.³⁰ However their reception may be celebrated at any time of the year.

In the Diocese of London we strive to celebrate the distinct grace of Baptism that has brought the candidates to this point in their faith journey, ensuring that their formation and time of sacramental celebration differ from that of the catechumen.

It is advantageous to help the candidates recognize the meaning of their baptism, and to cherish the Christian life and service they have lived to date. Helping them articulating what draws them to the full communion of the Catholic Church may shed light on the specific areas of catechesis to be pursued. Depending on the lived faith and experience of the candidate for full communion he or she does may not require the same catechetical sessions offered in the catechumenal process.

Prior to be received into the Catholic Church the candidate according to his or her own conscience, should make a confession of sin.

Admission into full communion may occur at anytime. The candidate will be accompanied by a sponsor³¹

EASTERN CHRISTIANS

In the case of Eastern Christians (that is, members of the Orthodox Faith) all that is required is a profession of Catholic faith.³²

²⁹ RCIA, 387

³⁰ RCIA, 458

³¹ RCIA, 396

³² RCIA, 388

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PREPARATION OF BAPTIZED BUT UNCATECHIZED ADULTS

These persons require a similar journey into deepening faith and catechesis as the catechumens. However, they are first led to appreciate the significance of their baptism in Christ. Through conversation, prayer and reflection they will be drawn to see the graced living that has been operative in their life.³³

Their preparation requires considerable time to allow their faith to take root, for catechesis and for contact with the community.³⁴

The gift of Baptism should always be a hallmark in their journey.³⁵

The following rites are celebrated at times apart from the rites of the catechumenal process:

- Rite of Welcoming Candidates for Confirmation and Eucharist RCIA page 269
- Celebrations of God's Word (RIA page 279)
- Prayers for Strength and Blessings (RCIA p[age 280 , 282
- Rite of Calling candidates to Lenten Renewal (RCIA page 283)
- Presentation of the Creed (RCIA page 293)
- Presentation of the Lord's Prayer (RCIA page 299)
- Sacrament of Penance
- Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (Confirmation, Eucharist)

³³ RCIA, 376

³⁴ RCIA 377

³⁵ RCIA, 378

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Themes for Year A

- 2 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Confessing belief in Jesus, Who is Jesus?
- 3 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Vocation, The Call
- 4 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Christian Morality, Mortal and Venial Sin
- 5 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Social Teaching of the Church
- 6 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Human Freedom and Christ's Law of Love, Free Will
- 7 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Call to Holiness, Mystery of the Trinity
- 8 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Divine Providence, God's Creation
- 9 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Justification (part two of last week), Faith and Works
- 10 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Grace
- 11 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Mystery of the Church
- 12 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Persecution and Suffering, Witness to the Faith
- 13 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacrament of Baptism, Mystical body of Christ
- 14 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Chastity, Sexuality, Dignity of the Human Person
- 15 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacred Scripture
- 16 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Problem of Moral Evil, Free Will
- 17 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Kingdom of God, Church and Relationship to Kingdom
- 18 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Eucharist as Meal
- 19 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Revelation
- 20 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacrament of Anointing of Sick, Redemptive Suffering
- 21 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Petrine Ministry in the Church, Apostolic Faith and Witness
- 22 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Cross in the Life of the Disciples
- 23 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Conversion
- 24 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Forgiveness, Lord's Prayer
- 25 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacrament of Reconciliation
- 26 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Moral Decision Making, Good and Evil
- 27 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Divine Justice and Judgment, Heaven, Hell and Purgatory
- 28 Sunday in Ordinary Time: 3rd Commandment: Keep Holy the Lord's Day, Eucharist
- 29 Sunday in Ordinary Time: 1st Commandment: I am the Lord, There is no other
- 30 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The 2 Great Commandments
- 31 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Role of the Magisterium
- 32 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Perseverance in Prayer, Surrender to God
- 33 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Stewardship of Creation
- 34 Sunday in Ordinary Time: To Judge the Living and the Dead, Final Judgment

- 1 Sunday of Advent: The Second Coming, Prepared to meet the Lord, Always be Ready
- 2 Sunday of Advent: Justice and Peace as a Sign of the Messianic Era
- 3 Sunday of Advent: The Charism of Prophecy, John the Baptist
- 4 Sunday of Advent: Virgin Birth, Who is Mary Christmas: Incarnation
- Epiphany: Christ is the Light of all Nations, All Meant to be Saved
- Baptism of the Lord: Baptism and Mission

- 1 Sunday of Lent: Divine Election
 - 2 Sunday of Lent: Christ, our Hope of Glory
 - 3 Sunday of Lent: Faith as a Gift (1 Scrutiny)
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4 Sunday of Lent: Original Sin and Social Sin (2 Scrutiny)
5 Sunday of Lent: The Paschal Mystery in the Sacraments (3 Scrutiny)
Passion Sunday: Christ's Obedience as Model for Believers
Easter Sunday: Resurrection
2 Sunday of Easter: Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen, But Have Believed
3 Sunday of Easter: The Celebration of the Eucharist
4 Sunday of Easter: Jesus, the Good Shepherd
5 Sunday of Easter: Sacrament of Holy Orders, Priesthood of all Believers
6 Sunday of Easter: The Sacrament of Confirmation, Gifts of the Holy Spirit
7 Sunday of Easter: Christian Unity, Nicene Creed and Four Marks of Church
Ascension: He Ascended into Heaven and Is Seated at the Right Hand of the Father
Pentecost: The Holy Spirit, Confirmation, Spirit given in Different Ways
Immaculate Conception: The Immaculate Conception
Mary, Mother of God: He was born of the Virgin Mary and Became Man
The Presentation of the Lord: The Two Natures
Trinity Sunday: The Holy Trinity
The Body and Blood of Christ: The Real Presence, Eucharist
Birth of John the Baptist: Human Cooperation with Divine Grace
Peter & Paul: Collegiality
The Transfiguration of the Lord: Visions and Private Revelation
Assumption: Mary's Assumption
The Triumph of the Cross: Redemption
All Saints: The Communion of Saints
All Souls: Purgatory
The Dedication of St. John the Lateran: The Four Marks of the Church

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Themes for Year B

- 2 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Vocations, The Call, Chastity
 - 3 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sin & Repentance, Calling, Our Dependence on God
 - 4 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Jesus as Prophet, Teacher, Lord, Marriage and Celibacy
 - 5 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Problem of Evil, Ministry of Healing, Sacrament of the Sick
 - 6 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacrament of the Sick, Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - 7 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacrament of Reconciliation, Forgiveness of Sin
 - 8 Sunday in Ordinary Time: God's love for Us, All is New
 - 9 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Keep Holy the Lord's Day, Sabbath made for Man
 - 10 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Creation and the Fall, A Family of Faith
 - 11 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Church the Kingdom of God, Difficult Growth in Faith Today
 - 12 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Power of God, Fear; Power of Christ to Calm our Fears
 - 13 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sanctity of Human Life, Learning to Share, Almsgiving
 - 14 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Prophecy, Hope, Lack of Hope, Facing up to Reality
 - 15 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Election and Mission, Missionary task of the Church
 - 16 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Pastoral Ministry in the Church, Unity of Church
 - 17 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Unity of Church and Ecumenism, Unity of Family Life
 - 18 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Eucharistic Celebration, Which makes us One
 - 19 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament, Living it out in our Lives
 - 20 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Continuing Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist
 - 21 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Faith, Marriage
 - 22 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Principles of Morality, Scripture in the Life of the Christian
 - 23 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Healing, Catholic Social Teaching
 - 24 Sunday in Ordinary Time: What is a Profession of Faith?, Creed, Who is Jesus?
 - 25 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Call to Service
 - 26 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Catholic Social Teaching
 - 27 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Marriage, Divorce, Annulment
 - 28 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Word of God, Revelation, Heaven
 - 29 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Redemption of Christ's Suffering
 - 30 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Holy Orders, The Priesthood of the Baptized, Calling
 - 31 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Command to Love God and Neighbor
 - 32 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Stewardship, Time, Talent and Treasure
 - 33 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Final Judgment, End Times
 - 34 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Christ the King, Who is Jesus?
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- 1 Sunday of Advent: The Second Coming, Prepared to meet the Lord, Always be Ready
 - 2 Sunday of Advent: Confession of Sins, Conversion, Who is John the Baptist, Baptism
 - 3 Sunday of Advent: Discernment, Christian Joy, Who is John the Baptist, Baptism
 - 4 Sunday of Advent: Incarnation, Obedience in Faith, Who is Mary

Christmas: Prayerfully Considering the Meaning of
Christmas, The Nativity

Epiphany: Universal offer of Salvation, Manifestation of Christ in the Sacraments, What Gifts
Baptism of the Lord: The Holy Spirit, Baptism

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1 Sunday of Lent:	Baptismal Covenant, Love for the Individual
2 Sunday of Lent:	Sacrifice, Transfiguration, Transformation, Meaning of Lent
3 Sunday of Lent:	10 Commandments, Presence of God in our Lives, Various Modes
(1 Scrutiny):	Go to Year A 3 Sunday of Lent
4 Sunday of Lent:	Grace
(2 Scrutiny):	Go to Year A 4 Sunday of Lent
5 Sunday of Lent:	Christian Prayer, Resurrection and Life.
(3 Scrutiny):	Go to Year A 5 Sunday of Lent
Passion Sunday:	The Gift of Perseverance, Suffering and the Meaning Jesus Gives to it
Easter Sunday:	Resurrection
2 Sunday of Easter:	The Challenge of Peace, Christian Life, Mercy, Peace Making
3 Sunday of Easter:	Evangelization (bearing witness), Easter Life
4 Sunday of Easter:	Trinity, Reconciliation, Good Shepherd
5 Sunday of Easter:	The Church as the Body of Christ, Christian Community
6 Sunday of Easter:	Love, The Soul of an Apostolate, God's Love for Me
7 Sunday of Easter:	Hierarchical Nature of the Church, Prayer Why & How
Ascension:	'I am with you always' Assurance to the Church, One of the Glorious Mysteries
Pentecost:	The Holy Spirit, Confirmation, Spirit given in Different Ways, Glorious Mystery
The Presentation of the Lord:	The Two Natures, One of the Joyful Mysteries
Trinity Sunday:	The Holy Trinity
The Body and Blood of Christ:	The Real Presence, Eucharist
Peter & Paul:	Collegiality
The Transfiguration of the Lord:	Visions and Private Revelation
Assumption:	Mary, One of the Glorious Mysteries
The Triumph of the Cross:	Redemption
All Saints:	The Communion of Saints
All Souls:	Purgatory
The Dedication of St. John the Lateran:	The Four Marks of the Church

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Themes for Year C

- 2 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Sacrament of Marriage
 - 3 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sacred Scripture
 - 4 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Christian call to Prophecy
 - 5 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Tradition
 - 6 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Our Vocation to Beatitude
 - 7 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Love of Enemies
 - 8 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Conscience
 - 9 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
 - 10 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Resurrection of the Body
 - 11 Sunday in Ordinary Time: God's Merciful Forgiveness, Reconciliation
 - 12 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Bearing our Cross
 - 13 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Christian Freedom
 - 14 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Church Exists in Order to Evangelize
 - 15 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Love of Neighbor
 - 16 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Hearers of the Word
 - 17 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Lord's Prayer: summary of the Gospel
 - 18 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Tenth Commandment and the Seven Deadly Sins
 - 19 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Christian Hope
 - 20 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Conflict between Good and Evil – The two ways
 - 21 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Final Judgment
 - 22 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Preferential Option for the Poor
 - 23 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Self-Renunciation
 - 24 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Church's Ministry of Reconciliation
 - 25 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Social Justice
 - 26 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Social Justice
 - 27 Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Sacrament of Holy Orders
 - 28 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Giving Thanks
 - 29 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Petition and Intercession
 - 30 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Humility before God in Prayer
 - 31 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Justification
 - 32 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Heaven and Hell
 - 33 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Justice
 - 34 Sunday in Ordinary Time: Christ the King, Who is Jesus?
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- 1 Sunday of Advent: The Second Coming, Prepared to meet the Lord, Always be Ready
 - 2 Sunday of Advent: Hope for Salvation
 - 3 Sunday of Advent: Moral Conversion
 - 4 Sunday of Advent: The Word made Flesh
- Christmas: Prayerfully Considering the Meaning of Christmas, The Nativity
Feast of the Holy Family: The Family is the domestic Church
Epiphany: Christ is the Light of all Nations
Baptism of the Lord: The Meaning of Baptism
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- 1 Sunday of Lent: We are God's chosen People.
 - 2 Sunday of Lent: Contemplative Prayer.
 - 3 Sunday of Lent: God is kind and Merciful.
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(1 Scrutiny): Go to Year A 3 Sunday of Lent
4 Sunday of Lent: Conversion
(2 Scrutiny): Go to Year A 4 Sunday of Lent
5 Sunday of Lent: Reconciliation.
(3 Scrutiny): Go to Year A 5 Sunday of Lent
Passion Sunday: The meaning of Suffering.
Easter Sunday: Resurrection
2 Sunday of Easter: Faith.
3 Sunday of Easter: Eucharist calls us to Mission.
4 Sunday of Easter: The divinity of Christ.
5 Sunday of Easter: The Law of Love.
6 Sunday of Easter: Peace.
7 Sunday of Easter: Christian Unity.

Ascension: Christ has Died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.
Pentecost: The Gifts of the Spirit and the Sacrament of Confirmation.
The Presentation of the Lord: The Two Natures, One of the Joyful Mysteries
Trinity Sunday: The Holy Trinity
The Body and Blood of Christ: The Real Presence, Eucharist
Peter & Paul: The Ministry of the Papacy and College of Bishops unfold from the faith.
The Transfiguration of the Lord: Visions and Private Revelation
Assumption: Mary, Sign of hope for the Church
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All Saints: The Communion of Saints
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