

# *Journey in Faith*

## **Guidelines for RCIA**

**Diocese of Worcester**

NIHIL OBSTAT:  
F. Stephen Pedone  
Judicial Vicar

IMPRIMATUR:  
Timothy J. Harrington  
Bishop of Worcester  
November 28, 1993

Diocese of Worcester  
49 Elm Street  
Worcester, MA 01609

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# DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

49 ELM STREET  
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS, 01609



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In 1988, the rite of Christian initiation of adults became mandatory for all dioceses in the United States. To assist you in implementing this rite, I am pleased to promulgate these updated official diocesan guidelines on the rite of Christian initiation of adults, *Journey in Faith*.

The guidelines have a two-fold purpose. They provide vital pastoral, catechetical, canonical and liturgical information to assist parish personnel in establishing and maintaining a parish catechumenate. Also, the guidelines provide diocesan policy for those aspects of the rite which require it.

May God's Holy Spirit guide your efforts to develop the process of Christian initiation of adults in your parish.

Sincerely in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Timothy J. Harrington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

(Most Rev.) Timothy J. Harrington  
Bishop of Worcester

First Sunday of Advent  
November 28, 1993

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
OVERVIEW .....	2
IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS .....	3
TEAM FORMATION .....	5
THE ROLE OF SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS .....	6
STAGES AND RITES .....	7
PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE .....	7
Step One: RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS .....	7
PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE .....	8
Step Two: RITE OF ELECTION OR ENROLLMENT OF NAMES .....	9
PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT .....	9
Step Three: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION .....	10
PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY .....	10
ADAPTATIONS .....	11
CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE REACHED	
CATECHETICAL AGE .....	11
PREPARATION OF UNCATECHIZED ADULTS FOR	
CONFIRMATION AND EUCHARIST .....	12
RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO THE FULL COMMUNION	
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH .....	12
PREPARING LITURGY AND MUSIC FOR THE RITES .....	14
APPENDIX A The Initial Interview .....	15
APPENDIX B EASTERN CHURCHES .....	18
APPENDIX C THE INITIATION OF DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS .....	19
GLOSSARY .....	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	22
INDEX .....	25

## INTRODUCTION

Across the country and here in the Diocese of Worcester, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is being implemented in more and more parishes each year. Parishes that just a few years ago were taking the first small steps toward implementing this revised rite now have catechumenates and liturgies that foster and celebrate the faith of individuals and the parish community. Campus ministries and Newman centers of the colleges in the diocese have also made significant efforts to adapt the RCIA to their communities. These are truly signs of the Spirit's presence today in our local church.

In response to the provision in the RCIA for bishops "to lay down norms according to local needs" (34), the Diocesan RCIA Steering Committee prepared "Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Worcester." Bishop Harrington presented these guidelines to the diocese in September 1989. Since that time, individuals and teams from many parishes have taken part in the RCIA workshops co-sponsored by the Offices for Worship and Religious Education and in the RCIA track of the Educational Ministry Program. As a diocese, we have learned much from the experiences of parishes that have implemented the RCIA and from feedback about the 1989 guidelines. Our growing collective wisdom is brought together in this revised set of guidelines.

These Guidelines, containing commentary and recommendations, are to help in implementing and interpreting the restoration of the catechumenate in our time in the Diocese of Worcester. Their purpose is stated in the opening paragraph of the RCIA:

*The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully. (1)*

The Guidelines and Recommendations that follow are not intended to be a presentation or explanation of the RCIA. There can be no substitute for reading the official document and its prescriptions.

Note: All references are to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) unless otherwise noted. Numbers designated GI refer to the General Introduction. Numbers designated NS refer to the National Statutes.

## OVERVIEW

1. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is the church's rite for initiating adults into the mission of Jesus Christ through communion with the Roman Catholic church. It is celebrated in a series of periods (formation) and steps (liturgies) that unfold gradually over time. As a rite of the church, the RCIA is normative, and not an option.
2. The primary concern of the RCIA is the conversion of an individual to God. To embrace the Catholic faith is to convert one's life to the work of the church, particularly her mission to preach the Good News of the Lord Jesus and to build up the Kingdom. Such conversion is the work of God in which we, the church, participate.
3. Initiation is the responsibility of all the baptized (9). Individual Catholics, the local parish and the diocese share the responsibility of supporting and helping catechumens and candidates. The RCIA provides catechumens and candidates with an experience of both the local parish and the larger church into which they are initiated. For example, there are times to reflect on scripture with individuals, rites celebrated in the midst of the parish community, and rites celebrated with the bishop at the cathedral. Each of these elements is equally important to Christian initiation.
4. The RCIA is divided into four periods:
  - (1) evangelization and precatechumenate (or inquiry)
  - (2) catechumenate
  - (3) purification and enlightenment
  - (4) postbaptismal catechesis (or mystagogy)

Liturgical celebrations mark the catechumens' progress from one period to the next:

- (1) acceptance into the order of the catechumens
- (2) election or enrollment of names
- (3) celebration of the sacraments of initiation

## IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

5. Part I of the RCIA -- the Christian initiation of adults through the four periods and three steps -- is intended for an unbaptized person who seeks baptism. Yet, many of the people who seek to join the Roman Catholic church in our diocese have already been baptized in another Christian church or were baptized in the Roman Catholic church but were not catechized after baptism. An increasingly large number of unbaptized children of catechetical age are also being presented -- or are presenting themselves -- for baptism. The RCIA provides adaptations for these three groups of people in Part II of the rite. While individuals from the above groups may share some things in common with unbaptized adults, it is important to respect their unique backgrounds and differing needs.

- An **unbaptized person** with little or no religious background or understanding who seeks initiation in the Catholic church would progress through Part I of the RCIA (the christian initiation of an adult through the four periods and three steps).
- A **child of age seven or older** who seeks initiation in the Catholic church would progress through Part II, section 1 of the RCIA (the Christian initiation of children who have reached catechetical age). See Canon 97.2
- An **uncatechized adult Catholic** is defined as one who was baptized but not given any religious upbringing within the Catholic tradition. If such a person seeks confirmation and first eucharist, he or she would progress through Part II, section 4 of the RCIA (preparation of uncatechized adults for confirmation and eucharist).
- A **person baptized in another Christian church** who seeks reception in the Roman Catholic church would progress through Part II, section 5 of the RCIA (reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic church).
- An **alienated Catholic** who wishes to return to the church does not take part in the RCIA. A process of penance and reconciliation leading to sacramental reconciliation is the appropriate journey for such a person.

6. While individuals described above may have some similar needs and may be able to take part in some parts of the RCIA together, it is important to respect the differences between them. It is particularly important to acknowledge and respect the valid baptism of those seeking to join the Roman Catholic church from other Christian churches. Rites designed for the unbaptized catechumen cannot be celebrated with a baptized candidate without adaptation.

7. Even within an individual category, there may be distinct differences in the people's backgrounds which will determine which aspects of the RCIA are appropriate, how much time the person will spend in the RCIA, and when the person will be received into the church. The pastor or his delegate from the parish RCIA team needs to speak with each person seeking membership in the church to assess his or her religious background and understanding, familiarity with the Catholic tradition and family situation. With a spirit of welcome and hospitality, this initial assessment should be done before inviting the person to a session with other inquirers or candidates. A sample questionnaire is provided in Appendix A to guide this initial meeting.

8. Christian initiation impacts an entire family system. RCIA team members must be sensitive to family situations. If family members of candidates or catechumens are Catholic, they should be invited to participate and to be involved in the process of initiation. If family members of candidates or catechumens are not Catholic and are not supportive of the individual's decision to seek initiation into the Catholic faith, efforts should be made to allay their fears. Candidates and catechumens from such families need particular support and attention.

9. Unbaptized inquirers, catechumens and elect do not celebrate the sacrament of penance since their baptism remits all sin. All others are bound by the same laws governing penance for baptized

Catholics, that is, they are required to celebrate the sacrament of penance if they are conscious of serious sin.<sup>1</sup> (410; NS 27)

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<sup>1</sup>Canon 988.1 "A member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess in kind and in number all serious sins committed after baptism and not yet remitted through the keys of the Church nor acknowledged in individual confession, of which one is conscious after diligent examination of conscience."



## TEAM FORMATION

10. All of the baptized, by virtue of that baptism, share in the mission of the church. The task of the RCIA, that is the work of conversion, is the work of the whole parish and of the whole diocese. To the question "Who does the RCIA?", the only complete answer is "the whole church."

11. The pastor has the responsibility to implement and oversee the RCIA. To coordinate and provide collaborative leadership in the rite, parishes usually organize an RCIA team. Team members should be trained in their respective areas of involvement through study of the rite, reading commentaries on the RCIA, and participating in diocesan and regional workshops and institutes. Catechists are expected to participate in the diocesan certification programs. Shared prayer and scripture reflection are a necessary element in the formation of team members so that they can authentically model and invite catechumens and candidates into these activities.

12. The leadership and composition of the team will necessarily vary from parish to parish. Ideally, members of the team are comfortable with faith sharing, listening skills and group dynamics. With that in mind, the following roles can be identified as vital to the RCIA:

- the **pastor** or a parochial vicar who helps as spiritual guide and resource and presides over the major parish rites;
- a **director** who is actively involved in organizing the process and coordinating the work of the various team members;
- **catechists** who are formally trained in catechetics, especially adult learning models and the lectionary;
- a **liturgist** who prepares the various liturgies of the rite in conjunction with parish musicians;
- a **spiritual director** who acts as spiritual guide and resource to the catechumens and candidates as well as to the team;
- a **coordinator of sponsors** who acts as liaison between the team and the sponsors who accompany the catechumens and candidates on the journey of faith.

The ideal situation would have a different person for each of these roles. However, some roles may be combined and fulfilled by one person according to the parish's available talents.

13. Initially, as the team first organizes itself, it needs to set goals and establish communication with the parish staff and the parish council. It would also be wise to develop a calendar for at least a year in advance (i.e., dates of meetings, major rites, etc.) and to set objectives for the parish, the team and individual members. While it is often not possible to implement every element of the RCIA in the first year, the team should set goals for gradually implementing the fullness of the rite over a few years.

14. The ongoing tasks of a team include:

- establishing an atmosphere of hospitality and openness in the parish to provide a basis for evangelization;
- the continuing formation of the team members;
- serious evaluation of the team's planning and schedule; and
- discernment with and for those who approach the various steps within the rite.

Some of the constant components of an effective team include: prayer; the need to communicate among team members, with catechumens and candidates, with the parish staff, with the parish council, and with the religious education and worship committees; and, the ability to manage conflict and address certain procedures before conflict arises.

## THE ROLE OF SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS

15. The introduction to the rite makes a distinction between the sponsor and the godparent. The sponsor accompanies the inquirer through the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens and through the catechumenate period. The godparent accompanies the catechumen through the rite of election and through the period of purification and enlightenment (Lent) and the period of postbaptismal catechesis (mystagogy). One person may serve as sponsor and godparent for an individual catechumen, or one person may serve as sponsor while another one or two people serve as godparent(s).

16. The pastor or RCIA director needs to speak with the individual inquirer in order to determine an appropriate sponsor for that person. If a particular person was responsible for bringing the inquirer to seek initiation, then it would be appropriate to build on the existing relationship and, with the inquirer's consent, invite that person to serve as the sponsor. If the inquirer does not know a Catholic who is willing to serve as sponsor, then the pastor or director could seek to identify a sponsor from among the parishioners, preferably one with a similar background and situation in life. The requirements for sponsors are that they *"have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith and intention"*. (10)

17. A sponsor is named for each inquirer during the period of evangelization and precatechumenate. Each inquirer must have a sponsor prior to the acceptance into the order of catechumens.

18. The role of the sponsor includes serving as a guide to and an example of the Christian life, reflecting on conversion as an ongoing process, offering support in times of hesitation and doubt, and providing a link to the larger parish community.

19. The role of godparent is a canonical one and is subject to certain qualifications. There may be one godparent or two godparents (one male, one female). A godparent must be a fully initiated Catholic (baptism, confirmation, eucharist), at least sixteen years of age (GI 10.2), in good standing with the church, and not a parent of the catechumen. He or she must also have *"the capability and intention of carrying out the responsibility of a godparent"* (GI 10.2). The catechumen chooses his or her godparent(s) and this choice must be approved by the pastor. The godparent is not simply a passive witness to the sacrament. He or she accepts the responsibility *"to show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness, and to guide the candidates' progress in the baptismal life."* (11) They are also called to give testimony to the community about the candidate.

20. In keeping with ancient practice, it is recommended that rehearsals for the various liturgies of the RCIA be with the sponsor or godparent(s) and not with the catechumen or candidate. In this way, the catechumen or candidate depends upon the sponsor or godparent(s) who knows the rite and can lead the catechumen or candidate through the liturgy with regard to where to stand, what to do, etc. The catechumen or candidate does need preparation for the liturgies, but this need not entail a rehearsal.

## STAGES AND RITES

### PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

21. The initial work of the RCIA in this stage requires an atmosphere of hospitality and openness on the part of the parish. Evangelization is a parish's response to the mission of the church and constitutes an ongoing effort to invite others to join on the journey.

22. The goal of the precatechumenate stage is to help inquirers to realize an initial awareness of God's saving presence in their lives. The role of the church is one of prophetic witness, giving the inquirers a suitable explanation of the gospel so that they may cooperate with God's grace in their lives.

23. It is important to avoid an understanding that we (the church) are giving God to the inquirers. Rather, the kingdom resides within and the inquirers are searching because God within is calling. Our responsibility is to cultivate that search by sharing the presence of God in community and by helping the inquirers name their experience of God by using the stories of the sacred scriptures and our tradition as Roman Catholics.

24. In this stage, the catechist helps the inquirers make connections between their life stories and the sacred scriptures. Thus, the role of the catechist is to formulate questions and to develop a process that leads the inquirers to a deeper awareness of God in their lives.

25. Before the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate is celebrated, sufficient time should be set aside for the inquirers to enter into a process of discernment. As a result of this discernment with team and sponsors, the inquirers may choose to enter into the next stage, the catechumenate. This process of discernment involves five movements:

- deliberation;
- reflection;
- insight;
- decision and
- action.

The prerequisite for making this first step is evidence of a combination of:

- the beginnings of a spiritual life;
- the fundamentals of Christian teaching having taken root;
- initial conversion;
- the first stirring of repentance;
- a start to call upon God in prayer;
- a sense of church;
- some experience of the spirit of Christians.

Emphasis needs to be placed on beginnings, not completion.

### ***Step One: RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS***

26. This is the first of the rites celebrated publicly which takes place on some annual date or dates marking the completion of the precatechumenate stage. The RCIA specifies that this liturgy may be celebrated on two or even three fixed dates during the year. (18) During the rite, inquirers declare their

intention of continuing their journey toward full initiation in the Catholic church, and the community accepts their intentions and offers its witness and support for the journey.

27. Consideration should be given to adapting the liturgical texts where permitted. These adaptations include the General Intercessions and the presider's exhortations prefaced by the directive *in these or similar words*. When one adapts these texts, those provided in the ritual serve as models for the presider's construction. A major component of the liturgical celebration is the presentation of the sacred scriptures to the catechumens.

28. Once the Rite of Acceptance has been celebrated, the church embraces the catechumens as part of the household of Christ. When two catechumens marry or when a catechumen marries an unbaptized person, Chapter III of the *Rite of Marriage* is to be followed, but the nuptial blessing in Chapter I, no. 33, may be used, all references to eucharistic sharing being omitted. (NS 10) Because the catechumen is unbaptized, a dispensation from the impediment of Disparity of Cult must first be obtained. One who dies during the catechumenate receives a Christian burial. (47 and NS 9) After the celebration of the rite of acceptance, the names of the catechumens are to be duly inscribed in the register of catechumens, along with the names of the sponsors and the minister and the date and place of the celebration. (46)

**NOTE.** While the law does require the registration of catechumens, at the time of this writing, such registers have not yet been published. Until publication, catechumens are to be registered in the parish baptismal register by creating a separate section of this book, or in chronological order. Note that the individual record refers to acceptance into the catechumenate. Catechumens may need a record of their acceptance when moving to another parish. Such documents are provided by the pastor of the parish where they were accepted as catechumens.

### PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

29. This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong. This is achieved through:

- catechesis which is gradual, suitable and accommodated to the liturgical year;
- growth in a sense of Christian community through the support and witness of the entire community;
- celebration of suitable liturgical rites;
- growth in an understanding of the apostolic mission of the church.

30. Catechumens need to be introduced to the many and various components of the life of the parish through their sponsors. They are choosing life with the community, not simply with its RCIA team or catechetical instructors. This early introduction lays the groundwork for the choice of mission in mystagogy.

31. **The period of the catechumenate extends for at least one year of formation, instruction and probation.** (NS 6) A thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life, aided by approved catechetical texts, is to be provided during the period of the catechumenate. (NS 7) Parishes should consult with the Diocesan Office for Religious Education when selecting texts.

32. Catechesis during this period follows the order and structure of the liturgical year. (75.1) The lectionary is the primary resource. Other resources are used to expand on the issues which emerge from the scriptures.

33. The Rite of Dismissal at Sunday Mass is a powerful experience for the catechumens and the community. By their dismissal, the catechumens give witness to the community. It calls for those who remain to consider their own fidelity to the eucharist which they share and to the challenge to become active witnesses of this gift of faith.

34. Catechumens are strengthened through various exorcisms, anointings, and blessings. Because of the length of the catechumenate stage, it is suggested that the presentations (Creed and Lord's Prayer) take place during this stage. These special liturgies mark progress on the extended journey and serve to encourage the catechumens. (79; 104-105; 147-149)

35. The requirements to be considered for discernment before celebrating the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names are:

- conversion in mind and action;
- a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching;
- a spirit of faith and charity;
- a desire to celebrate the sacramental life of the church. (120)

### **Step Two: RITE OF ELECTION OR ENROLLMENT OF NAMES**

36. This is the liturgical rite by which the Church of Worcester formally ratifies the catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the rite through which the catechumens, now the elect, express their desire to receive the sacraments.

37. Since the spirit of the Rite of Election emphasizes membership in the larger church, the rite is celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent with the bishop presiding. **Only with serious exception and with the permission of the bishop is this rite to be celebrated without the bishop presiding.** (34.6)

38. At the parish level, a Rite of Sending may be celebrated prior to the Rite of Election to emphasize the ongoing support of the local community before going forth to the larger diocesan community.

39. In the Diocese of Worcester, the elect are invited to sign a prepared page which is sent out to each parish. This page is then brought to the Rite of Election rite and becomes part of the diocesan Book of Elect. This diocesan book is kept in the cathedral throughout the Lent/Easter season.

### **PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT**

40. This period usually corresponds to the Lenten season. It is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by the celebration of the scrutinies, presentations (Creed and Lord's Prayer), if these were not anticipated during the catechumenate, and preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

41. The elect are the primary symbol of the Lenten season. Their conversion is the historical basis for Lent. By virtue of our baptism, we are all numbered among the elect. As faithful journeying toward the paschal feast, we are renewed in the course of the church's ministry to the elect.

42. Since the elect are the primary symbol of the Lenten season, their role and presence throughout this season should be obvious. Some parishes reserve a special seating area for the elect during the Sunday eucharist. What is conversion for the elect is penitence for the faithful. The elect are invited and encouraged to participate in the Lenten devotions of the faithful, (e.g. ashes, stations, missions), and particularly the Triduum services.

43. An integral aspect of this stage is the celebration of the scrutinies. **It is required that all three be celebrated** because they develop a rhythm from personal to social to cosmic sin. When the scrutinies are celebrated, the readings of cycle A are used. These rites are exorcisms, prayers of

deliverance for those to be initiated. For serious pastoral reasons, one or two of the scrutinies may be dispensed. Permission requesting dispensation must be obtained from the bishop. (34.3)

### **Step Three: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**

44. This is the liturgical rite by which the elect complete their initiation through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist.

45. Initiation of the elect takes place during the parish celebration of the Easter Vigil. The priest who confers baptism upon an individual is authorized to confirm that individual in the absence of the bishop. (NS 14; Canon 885.2)

### **PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY**

46. This is the time following the celebration of initiation, usually the Easter season, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by their participation with all the faithful in the Sunday eucharist.

47. All neophytes and their godparents should make an effort to take part in the Masses for neophytes throughout the Easter season. Special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents. The homily and general intercessions take into account the presence and needs of the neophytes. (248)

48. The period of postbaptismal catechesis is of great significance for both the neophytes and the rest of the faithful. (246) This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity. (244)

49. "Doing works of charity" requires discernment on the part of the neophytes as well as the community. The community needs to discern its needs and a way of inviting the neophytes to share in the various areas of service. The neophytes need to discern their own particular gifts and how they will use these gifts to serve as disciples in the local community or in the larger community.

50. It is helpful to continue mystagogy beyond the Easter season, with perhaps monthly meetings, until the anniversary of the celebration of the sacraments. This extended time offers the neophytes an opportunity for a deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community.

51. To show his pastoral concern for the new members of the church, the bishop arranges, to meet the recently baptized at least once in the year and preside at a celebration of the eucharist with them. (251) In the Diocese of Worcester, this celebration usually takes place at the cathedral during the Easter season.

## **ADAPTATIONS**

52. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is normative for all who seek to be joined to the Church. However, particular circumstances warrant adaptations. (3)

### **CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE REACHED CATECHETICAL AGE**

53. Unbaptized children who have attained the use of reason are to be admitted to the catechumenate and, to the extent possible, be led through the several stages to sacramental initiation. (Canons 852.1 and 851) Children of catechetical age have a right to catechesis and the benefit of the various rites leading to the sacraments of initiation.

54. No child under 14 may be admitted to the catechumenate without parental consent. (Canon 111.2) Children between the ages of 14 and 18 must inform their parents before being admitted to the catechumenate. Normally parents present their own children for baptism. (260) However, if parents are unable to fulfill this role, children may be presented by other sponsors with the presumed permission of the parents.

55. Parents, godparents, sponsors, catechists and the parish community all support children in their catechumenal journey. Children also benefit from the support of peer companions -- baptized children of the same age who are preparing for confirmation and eucharist. (254)

56. The Christian initiation of children requires both personal conversion and the assistance of the education they need. (253) Both acceptance into the catechumenate and full initiation require discernment. Pastors will benefit from the advice of parents, sponsors, godparents, and catechists -- all of whom should be involved in such a process. According to their age, condition and development, children are to demonstrate a relationship with Jesus as the heart of Christian experience. According to their age, condition and development, children are also to demonstrate a personal prayer life, an acceptance of the Christian moral life and a relationship with the community.

57. The freedom of the individual child is to be respected at all times. As with adults (76), the length of the catechumenate will vary with individual children. Children may be catechumens for some years before being admitted to the Easter sacraments. While the catechumenate is never to be compressed, neither should it be unduly lengthened merely because one is dealing with children.

58. Children also benefit from the presentations of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Lenten scrutinies adapted to their age and condition. (291-294)

59. Children celebrate the diocesan rites (election and mystagogy) along with adults.

60. Unbaptized children of catechetical age are initiated at the Easter Vigil along with adults. (NS 18; 256, 319)

61. In this period of implementation, it must be recognized that these guidelines for the initiation of children presume both an active adult catechumenate and a number of children who might be grouped together. As we continue to adjust to the reality and challenge of the RCIA, with its impact on children's

issues, further guidelines and recommendations will be issued by the Steering Committee and/or the Office of Religious Education.

### **PREPARATION OF UNCATECHIZED ADULTS FOR CONFIRMATION AND EUCHARIST**

62. The status of baptized but uncatechized Catholic adults differs from that of catechumens since by baptism they are already members of the church. (400) These candidates should never be confused with catechumens. Their special status should always be recognized especially in the celebration of the liturgical rites. See Part II, Section 4, "Optional Rites for Baptized but Uncatechized Adults" (411-472), and also Appendix I, "Additional Combined Rites" (505-561).

63. Nonetheless, the preparation of these candidates requires considerable time. A process of catechesis, participation in liturgical rites and contact with the community of the faithful is needed in order to strengthen them in the Christian life. (401)

64. Pastors benefit from the advice of sponsors and catechists in discerning with the candidate the appropriate time for the rite of welcoming.

65. Particularly where numbers are small, it may be helpful to group these candidates with catechumens for the purposes of catechesis. Consultation with the candidate and pastoral judgment determine whether or not individual candidates participate in the dismissal catechesis of the catechumens.

66. Presentations of a Bible (or Gospel book), the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are helpful to these candidates. (407)

67. The final phase of preparation should coincide with the Lenten season. Candidates are invited to participate in the diocesan rite of recognition which is celebrated at the same time as the Rite of Election of Catechumens. A Penitential Rite on the Second Sunday of Lent replaces the scrutinies which are directed to the unbaptized. (462) During Lent, the candidates are catechized on the sacrament of penance and are invited to approach this sacrament before the completion of their initiation. (408, NS 27. But, see also canons 960 and 988)

68. Ordinarily, priests do not confer the sacrament of confirmation upon an already baptized Catholic. (However, see exception NS 28) Should circumstances suggest that a priest do so, (e.g. the candidate having participated in catechesis and rites with catechumens and/or others being received into full communion), he must first obtain permission from the diocesan bishop. (409; NS 28-29)

69. Once they have completed their initiation, they take their place with the neophytes for the period of mystagogy.

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

70. The Rite of Reception into Full Communion is not limited to the Easter Vigil. The rite is so arranged that no greater burden than necessary is required for the establishment of communion and unity. (473) Priests confer the sacrament of confirmation when receiving a baptized non-Catholic into full communion with the Catholic church. The baptized Christian is to receive both doctrinal and spiritual



preparation adapted to individual pastoral requirements. (477) Prior to their reception, the candidates are to be catechized on the sacrament of penance and invited to approach this sacrament before the completion of their initiation. (NS 36. But, see also canons 960 and 988)

71. Questions concerning the validity of a previous baptism are to be referred to the Diocesan Vicar for Canonical Affairs. **Cases involving Eastern rites, orthodox and uniate, are not covered by the RCIA.** For more information, see Appendix B.

72. In working with candidates for Full Communion, one must make distinctions. Some candidates are indeed validly baptized but may never have been catechized. Others may have been active members of another ecclesial communion. Still others, while baptized in another Christian communion, may have been attending Roman Catholic liturgy for a long time.

73. The duration and content of the preparation will depend on the candidate's previous experience as will his/her participation in dismissal catechesis and the various optional liturgical rites and presentations. Previously baptized but uncatechized Christians will benefit from catechesis and liturgical rites along with catechumens. However, these candidates are never to be confused with catechumens. Their special status is always recognized especially in the celebration of the liturgical rites. See Appendix I (505-565 "Additional Combined Rites".)

74. Other baptized Christians to be received should be consulted about the form of their reception and the extent to which they would like to participate along with other candidates and catechumens in dismissal catechesis and preparatory liturgical rites.

75. All candidates are welcome to participate in the diocesan rites.

## PREPARING LITURGY AND MUSIC FOR THE RITES

76. The various liturgies of the RCIA can be profound faith celebrations for the catechumens and candidates as well as the entire assembly. Experience indicates that new inquirers and candidates often come forward after having witnessed and participated in one of the rites. The careful preparation of these liturgies is a significant concern of parishes and RCIA teams.

77. Priests who preside at RCIA liturgies and others in positions of liturgical and musical leadership should become familiar with the structure, prayer texts and symbols of the rites. The prayer texts and symbolic gestures speak powerfully of the conversion journey through which the catechumens and candidates are moving and of the community's role as model, support and witness. It is far more effective to celebrate the rites in their full symbolic richness than to offer commentary on their intended meaning throughout the celebration.

78. Music is integral to the RCIA. Several parts of the rite are designed to be sung. The primary consideration in choosing repertoire is the active participation of the entire assembly. The norms of *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today* provide guidance in this regard. Music of various styles is preferable, reflecting as it does the universal character of the church into which the catechumens and candidates are being received. Silence also has its place in various parts of the rite.

79. The designation of a cantor to lead the assembly in its particular sung acclamations is encouraged. As at Sunday eucharist, the proper place for the cantor or leader of song is facing the assembly.

80. The RCIA makes some demands of our spaces for worship and for catechetical sessions, that is, the environment. The space for catechetical sessions should reflect warmth and hospitality, comfortably inviting the participants to shared reflection and prayer. The space should avoid any semblance of a classroom or a student-teacher orientation.

81. In the actual celebration of baptism, there is a clear preference in the rite for immersion *which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ*. (GI 22) While this ancient practice may seem foreign to Catholics in our area, it is reclaiming its place in Catholic churches in other parts of our country. In building or renovating our church buildings, the norm governing baptismal fonts is that they *allow for the immersion of infants, at least, and . . . allow for the pouring of water over the entire body of a child or adult*. (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, 76) In churches where the fonts are too small for immersion, a temporary, portable font may be prepared for the Easter Vigil.

82. The clothing of the newly baptized with a baptismal garment at the Easter Vigil, although optional, is a strong symbol of the new life which the newly baptized have taken on. The garment, similar in design to an alb, may be white "or of a color that conforms to local custom." (229) Baptized candidates for reception and uncatechized adult Catholics who will celebrate confirmation and eucharist at the Easter Vigil may wear a baptismal garment throughout the liturgy, signifying their baptism.

83. In the presentation of a lighted candle to the newly baptized at the Easter Vigil (230), the emphasis is on the symbolism of light. Large plain white candles (e.g., 12" high x 1" wide), available from candle distributors, serve this purpose well. Baptized candidates for reception and uncatechized adult Catholics who will celebrate confirmation and eucharist at the Easter Vigil may carry similar candles throughout the liturgy, signifying their baptism.

## APPENDIX A

### The Initial Interview

The initial contact with an inquirer demands both openness and pastoral sensitivity. An inquirer has the right to know what will be required. In order to determine this, the interviewer will require information regarding prior church affiliation, the reasons for interest in the Catholic church, and current marital status as well as any previous marital experience.

The following questionnaire is designed to be completed by the pastor or catechumenate director. It is designed to be used by the pastoral minister in an interview format. Pastoral considerations will determine its use. However, all of the information should be gathered within the first weeks of the initial contact.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a lengthy process designed to foster conversion to Christ and the Christian lifestyle. *Initiation or Reception into Full Communion* requires the leaving behind of all that would constitute an impediment to communion in the Roman Catholic Church. Certain information must be obtained in order to determine what process is appropriate (e.g. unbaptized, baptized non-Catholic, baptized but uncatechized Catholic) and what further pastoral or canonical steps might be required.

Questions concerning the validity of a previous baptism or marriage are to be referred to the Diocesan Vicar for Canonical Affairs or the Tribunal as soon as they arise. Church law presumes all marriages are valid, even those among non-Catholics before a Justice of the Peace. Do not assume that because a marriage did not take place in a Catholic Church it is invalid and therefore not recognized by the Church. Should it be necessary to initiate the annulment process, this process takes between one year to a year and a half to complete. The granting of an annulment is never assured. Please check with the Diocesan Tribunal before you proceed whenever there is a question in this regard. **Marriages must be validated before celebrating the Rite of Election** since this rite assumes that the candidates will be celebrating the sacraments of initiation (or confirmation and eucharist) without further delay. For this reason, it is recommended that the Rite of Acceptance (or Welcome) be delayed for those who are involved in any validation process.

While many prospective catechumens seek initiation into the Roman Catholic Church prior to their marriage to a Roman Catholic, a planned marriage cannot foreshorten the length of preparation for Baptism or control the timing of initiation. (34.2; 34.3; 331; NS 20-21) In such cases, it is recommended that the preparation for and celebration of marriage take place prior to and apart from Christian initiation. **A priest must apply to the bishop for permission to use the abbreviated form of the RCIA in individual cases.**

---

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

HOME TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

WORK TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT \_\_\_\_\_

**RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION:**

Were you ever baptized?                      YES                      NO

If yes, what denomination? \_\_\_\_\_

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, describe your participation in this denomination.

Did you ever leave this denomination and join another?      YES      NO

If yes, explain.

If Catholic, were you confirmed?                      YES                      NO

If Catholic, did you receive eucharist?                      YES                      NO

**BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE REQUIRED**

**MARITAL STATUS:**

Are you presently married?                      YES                      NO

If yes,

To whom? \_\_\_\_\_

What is his/her present religion? \_\_\_\_\_

Is he/she baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he/she practice his/her religion faithfully? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this marriage witnessed by a priest, minister, justice of the peace, other?

Please give particulars: \_\_\_\_\_

Were you ever in prior marriage(s)?                      YES                      NO

Was your spouse ever in a previous marriage?      YES      NO

If yes,

Did the marriage(s) end in      DEATH      DIVORCE?

If divorce,

From whom: \_\_\_\_\_

What is his/her religion? \_\_\_\_\_

Was he/she ever baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

Did he/she practice his/her religion faithfully? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this marriage witnessed by a priest, minister, justice of the peace, other?

Please give particulars: \_\_\_\_\_

Was this marriage ever formally annulled by the Roman Catholic church?    YES    NO

**CHILDREN:**

NAME:	AGE:	BAPTIZED?
_____	_____	Yes    No
_____	_____	Yes    No
_____	_____	Yes    No

**OTHER INFORMATION:**

When did you first become interested in the Catholic church?

Do you have any relatives/friends in this parish?

Have you participated in any other church? How often?

Are you willing to invest time in learning more about our faith?

## APPENDIX B

### EASTERN CHURCHES

Orthodox and Uniates must undergo a process in order to transfer to the Latin (Roman) rite. This process is intended to protect the integrity of and show respect for the Uniate/Eastern Catholic Churches.

Consequently, the Vicar for Canonical Affairs must be consulted each time a Uniate or Orthodox seeks transfer to the Latin rite via the RCIA process.

#### 1. Uniates

Uniates (e.g., Melkite Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, Maronite Catholic, etc.) are required to obtain the permission of their own eparch/bishop before they can enter the RCIA. The actual change in membership is effected, not by a profession of faith, but by communication between the Uniate eparch/bishop and Latin rite bishop.

#### 2. Orthodox

The Orthodox (e.g., Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Albanian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, etc.) *normally* should seek membership in the corresponding Uniate rite. If they desire membership in the Latin rite, the eparch/bishop of the corresponding Uniate church and the Latin rite bishop must each approve.

3. The Code of Canon Law also makes further provisions for the spouses and children of Orthodox/Uniates.

**N.B.** In all cases involving Orthodox/Uniate, their spouses or children, please consult the Diocesan Vicar for Canonical Affairs (Tribunal) before proceeding with the RCIA process.

## APPENDIX C

### THE INITIATION OF DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS<sup>2</sup>

Developmentally disabled persons are invited to share in the full sacramental life of the community. Their knowledge and consent must be judged according to their condition and capacity. The parish's liturgical life provides the primary catechesis and continuing support for these catechumens/candidates. They should be incorporated into as much of the process as would benefit them. Such catechumens/candidates celebrate all of the liturgical rites along with the rest of the catechumens/candidates.

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<sup>2</sup>See especially *Access to the Sacraments of Initiation and Reconciliation for Developmentally Disabled Persons*. Archdiocese of Chicago, 1985. Available through Liturgical Training Publications, Chicago, IL

## GLOSSARY

<b>Candidate</b>	One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who is now preparing to be received into full communion in the Catholic Church. At the time of reception, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed and receive the eucharist. Also, a baptized but previously uncatechized Catholic who is preparing to complete his or her initiation. In the <i>Rite</i> , also used for those participating in the precatechumenate (baptized and unbaptized) as well as in reference to a catechumen.
<b>Catechumen</b>	One who is not baptized and is preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through baptism, confirmation and eucharist.
<b>Catechumenate</b>	Second period of the RCIA (see below) which involves intense preparation in word, worship, community life and apostolic works.
<b>Cathedral</b>	The principal church of the diocese containing the bishop's <i>cathedra</i> or throne. The church of the chief pastor of the diocese.
<b>Children</b>	The catechumenate with children has as its foundation the adult rite. Special rites have been developed for use with children of catechetical age which usually means seven years and older.
<b>Christmas Cycle</b>	Cycle within the liturgical year (see below) that begins with the first Sunday of Advent and ends with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord in January.
<b>Cycle A, B, C</b>	The three year cycle of liturgical readings: Cycle A, Matthew; Cycle B, Mark and some of John; Cycle C, Luke. All three cycles incorporate John.
<b>Easter Cycle</b>	Cycle within the liturgical year (see below) that begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with Pentecost. Includes Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension Thursday and the weeks in between.
<b>Easter Season</b>	Part of the Easter Cycle which includes seven weeks after Easter to Pentecost.
<b>Elect</b>	The name given to catechumens on the first Sunday of Lent signifying being chosen by God.
<b>Exorcism</b>	A prayer of purification.
<b>Evangelization</b>	The task of the Church during the precatechumenate which involves the inviting, the welcoming, the witness, the sharing of faith and the proclamation of the gospel to inquirers/candidates.
<b>Inquirers</b>	Those who participate in the precatechumenate of a parish. They are inquiring into Catholicism.
<b>Lectionary</b>	The book used in liturgical celebrations that contains all the readings of the liturgical year (see below).
<b>Liturgical Year</b>	The seasons and cycles of the Christian year. It is the instrument and means for leading God's people along the way of the Lord. The readings introduce us and invite us into the paschal mystery. It includes: Christmas Cycle, Easter Cycle, and Ordinary Time.
<b>Minor Rites</b>	Rites during the catechumenate which include Rite of Exorcism, Rite of Blessing, Rite of Anointing.



<b>Mystagogy</b>	Final period of the RCIA from Easter to Pentecost.
<b>National Statutes</b>	Particular law for the implementation of the RCIA in the United States presented by the Conference of Catholic Bishops.
<b>Neophyte</b>	One who is initiated at the Easter Vigil. From the word meaning twig as in a new sprout on a limb/branch. At Pentecost the new Catholic is no longer called neophyte.
<b>Ninety Days</b>	Occasionally used to mean the combination of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment (see below) and the Period of Mystagogy (see below) which corresponds with Lent (40 days) and the Easter Season (50 days).
<b>Ordinary Time</b>	Cycle within the liturgical year that is outside the seasons of Christmas and Easter. This time provides an opportunity for reflection on the meaning of God's gift to us in Christ, our attitudes, our prayer life, and service to others.
<b>Precatechumenate</b>	The first period of the RCIA which is the initial introduction of an inquirer into the Catholic way of life. It is also a period of evangelization on the part of the Church.
<b>Presentations</b>	During the period of purification and enlightenment, a catechumen is presented with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer through special rites. Both prayers could be presented during the catechumenate when it is more convenient.
<b>Purification and Enlightenment</b>	The third period of the RCIA which usually coincides with the Lenten season. It is the final period of preparation for initiation at the Easter Vigil.
<b>RCIA</b>	<i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.</i> This is the official rite of the Roman Catholic Church for initiation of children and adults and the reception of baptized candidates. Full initiation through baptism, confirmation and eucharist is the norm presented in the <i>Rite</i> . Reception is through profession of faith, confirmation and eucharist.
<b>Rite of . . .</b>	<p><i>Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens:</i> the bridge between the precatechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.</p> <p><i>Welcome:</i> the bridge between the inquiry period and the period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate. It is for those already baptized.</p> <p><i>Election:</i> Presided over by the bishop, the rite inaugurates the final period of preparation before initiation. It is a bridge between the catechumenate and the period of purification and enlightenment.</p> <p><i>Call to Continuing Conversion:</i> Coincides with Election but is the rite for candidates, the already baptized.</p> <p><i>Initiation:</i> Customarily at the Easter Vigil, it includes baptism, confirmation and the eucharist.</p> <p><i>Scrutiny:</i> Three rites of exorcism for catechumens during Lent.</p> <p><i>Penitential Rite:</i> Similar to the rite of scrutiny for candidates.</p>
<b>Sunday</b>	The first day in the Christian liturgical year, the original feast day, the heart of the calendar, the basis and nucleus of the liturgical year.
<b>Triduum</b>	The <i>three days</i> of the celebration of Easter which begins with Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. Includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday.

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# INDEX

- ANOINTINGS . . . . . 8
- BAPTISMAL GARMENT . . . . . 14
- BISHOP . . . . . 1, 2, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 21
- BLESSINGS . . . . . 8
- BOOK OF ELECT . . . . . 9
- CALENDAR . . . . . 5, 21
- CANDIDATE . . . . . 3, 6, 12, 13, 20
- CANDIDATES . . . . . 2, 3, 5, 6, 12-15, 19-21
- CANDLES . . . . . 14
- CATECHESIS . . . . . 2, 6, 8, 10-13, 19, 23
- CATECHETICAL AGE . . . . . 3, 11, 20
- CATECHISTS . . . . . 5, 11, 12, 23
- CATECHUMEN . . . . . 3, 6, 8, 20-22
- CATECHUMENS . . . . . 2, 3, 5-9, 11-15, 19-21
- CATHEDRAL . . . . . 2, 9, 10
- CONFIRMATION . . . . . 3, 6, 10-12, 14, 15, 20, 21
- CONVERSION . . . . . 1, 2, 5-9, 11, 14, 15, 21-23
- CREED . . . . . 8, 9, 11, 12, 21
- DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED . . . . . 19, 22
- DIRECTOR . . . . . 5, 6, 15
- DISCERNMENT . . . . . 5, 7, 9-11
- DISMISSAL . . . . . 8, 12, 13
- DISPENSATION . . . . . 9
- EASTER VIGIL . . . . . 10-12, 14, 20, 21
- EASTERN CHURCHES . . . . . 18
- EASTERN RITES . . . . . 13
- ELECT . . . . . 3, 9, 10, 20
- ELECTION . . . . . 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 15, 21
- ENVIRONMENT . . . . . 14
- EUCCHARIST . . . . . 3, 6, 8-12, 14-16, 20, 21
- EVANGELIZATION . . . . . 2, 5-7, 20, 21
- EXORCISMS . . . . . 8, 9
- FAMILY . . . . . 3
- FONT . . . . . 14
- FREEDOM . . . . . 11
- FULL COMMUNION . . . . . 3, 12, 13, 15, 20
- GODPARENT . . . . . 6
- GODPARENTS . . . . . 6, 10, 11, 24
- IMMERSION . . . . . 14
- INITIATION . . . . . 1-3, 6, 7, 9-12, 15, 19-24
- INQUIRER . . . . . 6, 15, 21
- INQUIRERS . . . . . 3, 7, 14, 20
- LECTIONARY . . . . . 5, 8, 20, 22, 23
- LENTEN SEASON . . . . . 9, 12, 21
- LITURGICAL YEAR . . . . . 8, 20, 21
- LITURGIES . . . . . 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 14, 21
- LITURGY . . . . . 6, 7, 13, 14, 22-24
- LORD'S PRAYER . . . . . 8, 9, 11, 12, 21
- MARRIAGE . . . . . 8, 15-17
- MISSION . . . . . 2, 5, 7, 8
- MUSIC . . . . . 14
- MYSTAGOGY . . . . . 2, 6, 8, 10-12, 20, 21
- NEOPHYTES . . . . . 10, 12
- ORTHODOX . . . . . 13, 18
- PARENTAL CONSENT . . . . . 11
- PARISH . . . . . 1-3, 5-11, 17, 19, 20, 22-24
- PASCHAL MYSTERY . . . . . 10, 20
- PASTOR . . . . . 3, 5, 6, 8, 15
- PEER COMPANIONS . . . . . 11
- PENANCE . . . . . 3, 4, 12
- PENITENTIAL RITE . . . . . 12, 21
- PERMISSION . . . . . 9, 12, 15, 18
- PRECATECHUMENATE . . . . . 2, 6, 7, 20, 21
- PRESENTATIONS . . . . . 8, 9, 11-13, 21, 22
- PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT . . . . . 2, 6, 9, 21
- REGISTER OF CATECHUMENS . . . . . 8
- RITE . . . . . 1-3, 5-12, 14, 15, 18, 20-23
- RITE OF SENDING . . . . . 9
- SCRIPTURE . . . . . 2, 5
- SCRUTINIES . . . . . 9, 11, 12
- SPONSORS . . . . . 5-8, 11, 12, 23, 24
- STEERING COMMITTEE . . . . . 1, 11
- TEAM . . . . . 3, 5, 7, 8, 22
- TESTIMONY . . . . . 6
- TIME . . . . . 1-3, 7-10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21
- TRIBUNAL . . . . . 15, 18
- UNBAPTIZED . . . . . 3, 8, 11, 12, 15, 20, 21
- UNCATECHIZED . . . . . 3, 12-15, 20
- USE OF REASON . . . . . 11
- WITNESS . . . . . 6-8, 14, 20