

The Period of the Catechumenate



DISCUSSION GUIDE

part 3 of 7



The Period of the Catechumenate

Having put their faith in Christ and undergone initial conversion, catechumens in the Period of the Catechumenate are provided an apprenticeship in the Christian life, aimed at helping their faith and conversion to mature and become strong. During this lengthy time of formation, catechumens learn not only what we believe, but how we live and share our faith. Through catechesis adapted to the liturgical year, celebrations of the word of God, the example and support of sponsors and godparents, participation in apostolic works, and the minor rites belonging to this period, catechumens are strengthened in faith. By these means they deepen their knowledge of the mystery of salvation that they choose to participate in and make their own (see RCIA/OCIA, 75.1) through their eventual sharing in the sacraments of initiation.



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FOR YOUR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

GRACED TIME FOR FAITH TO GROW

There is nothing more exciting than seeing those “light bulb” moments in the lives of catechumens—when their faith moves from head to heart. This movement depends not on brilliant lesson plans, but on grace, circumstances, and on each catechumen’s openness to Christ. Another key factor is time: by giving catechumens a supportive environment and ample time to understand and embrace the Christian way of life, we foster conditions where conversion can take place. The fruits of a sustained, unhurried catechumenate bless both the catechumen and the entire Christian community for years to come.

- In what ways does the timeline of catechumenal formation in your parish honor the unique journey of each catechumen?
- How might a sufficiently prolonged apprenticeship (See RCIA/OCIA, 76) give adequate time for the faith life of a catechumen to develop to a place of maturity?

GODPARENTS AREN'T JUST FOR INFANTS

Even adults, especially the newly baptized, need spiritual companions. While the sponsor is usually provided by the parish to guide individuals through the catechumenate, the godparent is selected at the end of this period to testify about the individual’s readiness on the day of their election and at the celebration of their initiation. Then the real work begins as the godparent shows them how to put the Gospel into practice and stay true to their baptismal promises, in good times and bad, for a lifetime!

- Discuss the difference between a sponsor and a godparent.
- Discuss the characteristics of an ideal godparent.
- How can a godparent discern whether someone is ready to be chosen for initiation?

THE MINOR RITES ARE A MAJOR DEAL

The catechumens have been invited to model their lives on the teachings of the Gospel. Throughout their formation, they will be sustained by the liturgical rites that will shape their lives according to the teachings of Christ and the Church. Specially prepared Celebrations of the Word serve as foundation for blessings, anointings, and minor exorcisms designed to strengthen the catechumens on their journey. Additionally, they provide a scriptural basis for catechetical sessions and parish gatherings. (See RCIA/OCIA, 52c, 75.3, 79)

- In which ways can a special Celebration of the Word explain the signs, actions, and seasons of the liturgy to the catechumens? When and how might these occur in our community? (RCIA/OCIA, 82c)
- During their years of formation, why is it important for catechumens and the community to come together to celebrate and break open the Word? How do these help prepare a catechumen for their future participation in the Eucharist?