



CATECHUMENEON

Summer 2018

Quarterly

Welcome to Catechumeneon!

What's a *catechumeneon*? It's the place where catechumens, catechists, sponsors, and other members of the community meet for prayer and formation. In the catechumeneon, stories are shared, Scripture is proclaimed, songs are sung, relationships are nurtured. We all have one: the multipurpose room at your parish, the meeting room in the basement of the rectory, a parishioner's living room. In some ancient churches, the catechumeneon was a room off the nave of the church, more like a chapel than a meeting room, dedicated for the use of the catechumeneon. Whatever our catechumeneon looks like, it is a sacred space because there Jesus' newest followers are being trained and mentored by a community of disciples.

Every so often, we baptized disciples need to return to the catechumeneon—whatever and wherever that might be for us—to renew our own spirits, reflect on the Gospel, and learn new ways of doing things. In 1975, Pope Paul VI wisely observed that the Church “has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 15). A *constant need*, he says. And how are we evangelized ourselves? We are receptive to how the truths of our faith echo in us through the liturgical seasons and the seasons of our lives. We strive to respond to life with love, hope, sacrifice, and prayer, both personal and communal. We exercise our apostolic ministry by the witness of our lives. We are continually being converted by the formative power of the baptismal catechumeneon.

Welcome to *Catechumeneon*, Liturgy Training Publications' new initiative to promote the catechumenal ministry of the Church by supporting those who serve in this ministry. We invite you to be a part of this initiative, which we hope will grow into a school of prayer and a community of disciples. We offer formation, training, and, in the days to come, a way for catechumenal ministers to share their stories and best practices with each other. We hope to help fulfill Pope Francis' vision that “in all its activities, the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 28) by keeping the vision of Christian initiation as our inspiration.

Michael Ruzicki
Training and Events Manager
Liturgy Training Publications

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What is Catechumeneon?

Liturgy Training Publications continues its commitment to training parish leaders and catechumenal ministers with its new initiative, *Catechumeneon*. The naming of this initiative is inspired by an ancient Greek word used to describe the meeting place for catechumens; it is a place for prayer, study, and formation. LTP's *Catechumeneon* imprint is a collection of training and print resources focused on Christian initiation and designed to assist parishes with understanding and implementing the vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Rooted in the vision of the rite, *Catechumeneon* resources and training opportunities will provide catechists and other initiation ministers the formation and tools they need to journey with catechumens as they approach the waters of rebirth.



**National Gathering
on Christian Initiation™**

A Conference for Catechumenal Ministers
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Join us for the 2019 National Gathering on Christian Initiation™, conference for parish leaders, initiation ministers, and regional or diocesan trainers. On July 2-3, 2019 at the Loyola University Chicago Lakeshore Campus, we will explore our theme: The Year-Round Catechumeneon. When parishes engage in a year-round catechumeneon, they welcome people when God calls them. Come to the NGCI to hear from parish ministers who have established a year-round catechumeneon and discover the benefits of the process. The NGCI team will help you imagine, envision, understand, implement, and sustain a year-round catechumeneon in your parish.

www.NGCI.org

Diversity and Unity in the Rite of Christian Initiation

MEGAN MIO

The basic nature of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* assumes diversity. The people who approach the Catholic Church in faith come with a variety of backgrounds. Most obviously, each brings a faith experience that may be quite different than that of the other participants. The Rite already distinguishes between those who have not yet been baptized, those who have been baptized in other Christian contexts, and those who were baptized Catholic but received little or no catechesis. RCIA participants from these different backgrounds naturally have varied experiences and prior knowledge of the Christian faith. There is even diversity within these categories of participants. Those who were baptized, though they have a common Christian background, may still be familiar with a variety of theological and liturgical settings. The Rite responds according to each person's needs.

In addition, individuals will show diversity in what they are seeking from the Church. Some will come with a desire for a sense of belonging and history. They may have witnessed a sacrament or celebrated a liturgy that touched them and brought about a call. They may be attracted through a particular devotion or ritual, or they may be interested in a form of spirituality or service that the Catholic Church has cultivated. Others will be responding to a drawn-out longing that has eaten at them for many years. There will also be those who approach the RCIA with a more superficial desire that waxes and wanes depending on the motivating factors.

A pastoral form of the Rite will naturally recognize the great diversity in personality and identity of the men and women who approach this Rite. Each person has been called by name at a point in his or her life: some are young and just beginning an adult life and others are older and realizing that they have put this off long enough. The experience of men will be different from that of women. Some seekers will be well-educated with high-ranking positions in the community and others will serve from a position that requires less skill. Some will have limited physical abilities, others will have sensory disabilities, and others will have limitations that are not so easily recognized. Some will be married, others will not; some will have children and others will have grandchildren.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* exists for all of these people. We belong to a universal Church, and we are called as Christians to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). How do we as catechists present the Rite to so many different "nations" of peoples? How do we fulfill this great commission? We must be sensitive to the diversity of peoples that we serve, and we must take time to make sure that what we offer is truly a representation of God's election.

Christian initiation coordinators know that the people who come forward to participate will reflect the nature and the makeup

of the community that is already cultivated at the parish. If the life of the parish includes significant communities of certain ethnic or racial groups, the Christian initiation process will likely exemplify this as well. At my parish, we have significant numbers of Hispanics, Anglos, and Asian-Americans. Among the Hispanics are people of Mexican and Puerto Rican backgrounds, and the community is a mix of English-speakers, Spanish-speakers, and bilingual persons. The Anglos, who come from families who have lived in the United States for generations, are from a variety of European backgrounds. The Asian-Americans, as well, are from a number of ethnic origins. Where does a pastoral minister begin to center the liturgy in a situation like this? We try to begin with what we have in common: our faith. But when it comes to initiation, that common denominator gets a little fuzzy, since RCIA participants have not yet delved deeply into the Catholic faith. Over the past few years, the parish has seen our fledgling process group grow, little by little, in that we have had more people come through the Rite but also in that many of our participants have become involved in catechesis the following year.

In addition, we have seen our process group grow to be more inclusive and sensitive to the diversity that our parish represents. While I can offer no simple guide to the challenge of offering Christian initiation process to a diverse community, I would like to share some insights and reflections for representing the inclusive love of our Trinitarian God.



Diversity in the Church

Often we US Catholics assume that the religious practices and spiritual lives of minority groups in our country are not normative and do not represent a starting point for Catholicism. This is a mistake that can lead to weak forms of multicultural liturgies and communities in which only a superficial view of minority groups is encouraged and little true interaction can take place (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 59). This attitude also leads to a number of other assumptions when it comes to catechesis. If I am an RCIA catechist and I say that because we have few ethnic/racial minorities in our community, we do not need to incorporate these different practices of the Catholic faith in our Rite, then I am buying into this assumption.

Even a cursory glance at the history of the Catholic Church will show that interactions between different ethnic and cultural groups have persisted since the very beginning. In terms of one “normative” form of Christianity, one may argue at length about which *one* that is. Even from the time of the Apostles it was clear that God did not intend this new movement within Judaism to be limited only to the circumcised community (Herrera). In Acts chapter 10, a centurion named Cornelius has a vision of a messenger from God. This messenger says that God had heard Cornelius’ prayers, and that as a response, Cornelius is instructed to find Peter. In the context that it was written, such a thing was unheard of. How could God reach out to a Gentile? Why would God instruct a Gentile man to ask Peter, a good and pious Jew, into his home? This was against Jewish Law.

After this passage, Peter has a vision in which he is encouraged to consume each of the animals on earth, despite the Jewish dietary laws. He clearly hears this message: “What God has made clean, you are not to call profane” (Acts 10:15). This passage is properly thought to point to the experience Peter has in the house of Cornelius, where he is offered food. But another interpretation might look further into the story when Peter meets the members of Cornelius’ household. Peter begins to teach them, but he is interrupted: “While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word” (Acts 10:44). He wonders how this can be, another astounding act on God’s part. But Peter reasons, how can he deny what is so clearly God’s will for the people present? He decides that they should be baptized. Perhaps the “profane” that the vision was referring to was not the animals or the food but the people. This story, among others, has been used to show that the true Christian mission was not only to the Jewish community but beyond that, as Christ had commanded, to *all* the nations.

This passage is especially relevant to the RCIA since it is about Baptism, initiation into the Christian faith, and an unmistakable call from God. It is a passage about the journey of faith and the steps one takes in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it is also a story about finding the presence of God already at work in persons and communities who are “outside” the recognized people of God. At the time of Peter and Cornelius, there were the circumcised and the uncircumcised. They were separated not just religiously but racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. Nevertheless, the Spirit of God moved beyond these divisions. Today we continue to recognize God’s work in the peoples and places all over the world through missionary activities. In our parish communities, we may find God’s divine work present in the lives and experiences of the unbaptized and the unchurched. We also may find God’s presence in the cultures and histories of a variety of racial and ethnic communities.

If we truly believe that God already lives in all the communities on earth, then this must translate into a catechetical process that not only respects the theologies of any ethnic-racial group but that emphasizes the diversity of worship and prayer styles. I challenge Christian initiation coordinators and catechists to avoid

the attitude of normative Catholicism versus exceptional Catholicism (the practices and spirituality of minority Catholics). And I encourage you to offer your catechumens and candidates a true picture of the Catholic Church. We must take the word “Catholic” seriously! We must take the history of the Church seriously. And we must present the great diversity that exists in our larger faith community. It is this diversity that may well be what attracts our inquirers. It may be that a person is fascinated and drawn in by the incredible spirituality that surrounds the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. It may be that another person is inspired and challenged by gospel music. These can and should be included in any true Catholic catechesis, for they represent parts of the Catholic Body of Christ.



Catechists and coordinators should not only know the diversity that is in the history of the Church and the present diversity of the world Church, but also the diversity of the local church. Who composes our diocese? Who lives in our neighborhood? Who belongs to our parish? Who are we as catechists? And how is all of this changing and evolving? The RCIA design presupposes that the process is implemented at the parish level. It is not to be done through the diocese or vicariate. This means that each parish’s experience of Christian initiation should represent the identity and worship style of the community to some degree. It also recognizes the changing and developing nature of every community. It presumes inculturation of the faith. Each person receives a formed and specific catechesis that participates in the universal faith of the Church but is properly incarnated in the local context.

With regard to the local church, it is essential that catechists focus on the particular person in front of them. Who are we serving? Who is serving us? Are there needs that we must meet? Are there interests in the diversity of the Church that we must respond to? In this instance, the goal is to pay attention to how the Spirit of God may be falling upon these modern “Gentiles.” There may be an opportunity for everyone to learn something new, or an opportunity to emphasize unity as well. For we believe in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:5–6).

Unity in the Church

Unity is not just about sameness. Unity is a gift of the Spirit that must be cherished and requires work. If the RCIA includes the discussion of diversity, it must therefore also include the discussion of unity. The Body of Christ has many members, and each of us not only needs one another to function, but also shares a sense of solidarity: “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” (1 Corinthians 12:26). The diversity of the history of the church, the diversity of the present Church, and the defining diversity of the local Church are all aspects of this unity in Christ. God’s presence in all of these contexts shows the oneness of our faith and the oneness of our very existence. The fact that so many cultures and peoples make up our Church allows us to find that which unites us. We can learn from one another at a deeper level. We can listen to the voice of our one God in their voices. Diversity is a lesson in unity. How can so many different people come together into one massive social organization such as the Catholic Church? Because of the unifying and inclusive power of our Triune God! It is a wonder and a sign that God remains with us even today.

What a lesson for our catechumens and candidates! I have found that this is a lesson that the cradle Catholics need just as much. At our parish where two liturgical languages are regularly used, I still get asked why we have Mass in Spanish. I find that developing our sense of unity is often painful. Any intercultural liturgical experience will require some sacrifice and loss. I think that some discomfort on the part of Mass participants is a good thing. It means that we are being confronted with something new. We are being challenged. If we are not getting out of our liturgical comfort zone, then we are not hearing the prophetic voice of God. As liturgist Mark Francis says, “All the members of a multicultural community are called to a conversion of heart and mind in order for the parish to worship together” (*Multicultural Celebrations*, 18). “A conversion of heart and mind” means opening yourself up to what is different and savoring the presence of God in the unfamiliar. We must give something up, but know that the benefits are beyond measure. It takes some effort, and most people are not open to that kind of challenge, but a living community of God will not realize unity without knowing diversity.

I have found the most impressive and best way to practice the Catholic spirituality of unity in diversity is at the Easter Vigil. This is the mother of all liturgies and the occasion where the whole community can witness the Profession of Faith of the Christian initiation participants. Where better to call upon our one God than at the moment of celebrating the one Baptism? This is also the occasion to highlight our multiple languages. This is the occasion to include multiple music styles. This is the occasion to involve many people to represent the community. We should use multiple symbols of our faith from the history of the Church and the present. We should use language to praise God in multiple ways. We should allow for the people of our parish community to come to know the neophytes in a deeper way. The Easter Vigil, then, becomes the most powerful moment of living out and experiencing a truly diverse and yet unified local Catholic Church.

At my parish, our Easter Vigil is the highlight of our intercultural community as well as the liturgical year. We truly come together and share a common vision of our God, and it never fails to move me. Each year I think that all of the preparations will finally overwhelm me, but on that night it all comes together and I thank God for the gift of our unity and diversity. While it is often a challenge, working with a community that is comprised of multiple ethnic/racial, cultural, and linguistic groups provides me with a sense that God is God of the universal, the grand and mighty cosmos while at the same time also God of the heart, the soul, and the most intimate, personal experience. It is the role of Church leaders and catechists to make these reflections a part of every Catholic person’s ongoing initiation into the faith.



Resources

- Francis, Mark, csv. *Multicultural Celebrations: A Guide*. 1998 Reprint, Washington, DC: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions 2002.
- Liturgy in a Multicultural Community*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991.
- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007.
- Herrera, Marina, PhD. “Theoretical Foundations for Multicultural Catechesis.” In *Faith and Culture: A Multicultural Catechetical Resource*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1987.

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The Transformative Power of the Rites

Bradley A. Zamora

As a newly ordained priest, I hit the jackpot. I was assigned to Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, a dynamic, vibrant parish on a quest for Christ. This was apparent in so many facets of parish life, most beautifully and powerfully in our way of implementing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Every year fifty people or more would seek to be welcomed through Baptism or reception into full communion or to complete the initiation begun when they were children. I felt privileged to be a frequent presenter in our catechetical sessions, but for me the greatest treasure laid in presiding at the ritual moments of their journey.



Our candidates, catechumens, sponsors, and team, seated in the front right section of the church at every 9:30 AM Mass, were a profound witness to the fertile ground that our community found for the seeds they planted while on their quest for Christ. These men and women served as constant reminders to the cathedral community of their “apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ” (RCIA, 9). The whole cathedral community, whether members of the initiation team or not, stood “ready to show the candidates evidence of the spirit of the Christian community” (9).

In the catechetical sessions, I saw the power of the Spirit working in our candidates and catechumens. Their desire to know the faith often led to questions that challenged the

team—including me, fresh from seminary studies—to think in new and more profound ways about facets of our faith that we often take for granted and speak comfortably about. Our candidates and catechumens were engaging the faith and claiming it, and they were encouraging us to do the same. It was a joy to experience our faith through their fresh eyes and open ears.

I became particularly close to one young man and his fiancée during his journey toward reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. It was a tremendous experience for me to see how seriously he was engaging with his faith, how he struggled along the way, and, ultimately, how deeply he came to know and love Christ. I’m sure the two of them had no idea how much their witness deepened and transformed my own relationship with Christ. When we celebrated the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion, when he made his Profession of Faith, when he was confirmed and received his First Communion, my spirit soared. I was truly blessed to share in his journey.

Those who accompany catechumens and candidates year after year go through the same steps and stages of the process, but it is never routine. It is more like a ritual. We Catholics know the transforming power of ritual. It is so much more than performing a series of actions in a prescribed order. Ritual is organic. Ritual is emotive. Ritual is transformative. Ritual challenges us to hear, see, and feel our relationship with Christ, and with our sisters and brothers who come to us seeking to find Christ and to be transformed ever new into the community of disciples he desires us to be. We call our process for coming to faith in Christ and into union with his Church the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. This prescribed series of actions can make us all—catechumens, candidates, and long-time faithful—into something new in Christ.



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We have never dismissed catechumens. How can I incorporate this practice at my parish? What are the first steps I should take? Who can I ask to help with this?

The dismissal of catechumens takes place at Masses during the period of the catechumenate. After hearing the Word of God proclaimed and preached, the catechumens are dismissed by the celebrant to continue reflecting on the Scriptures with a catechist. The catechumens are dismissed before the Profession of Faith and Universal Prayer because they do not yet share in the prayers of intercession and thanksgiving, which are priestly functions of the baptized.

Before the dismissal of catechumens is introduced to the parish, the assembly needs to understand why we dismiss and what it means for the catechumens and for the whole community. This catechesis should take place not only as the dismissal is introduced to the parish, but also throughout the whole process of initiation. Short bulletin notes, a few words in the homily, and even a brief instruction before Mass begins can be used to catechize. In addition, inquirers should be introduced to the idea of the dismissal well before they participate in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, when they will be dismissed for the first time. The dismissal should be explained in a positive way so they will accept it with open hearts.

The next step for incorporating this practice into the parish liturgy is ensuring that everyone involved in implementing the dismissal understands it. The initiation coordinator, priest, deacon, liturgist, musician, and catechists who will be dismissed with the catechumens should discuss the flow of the dismissal and everyone's role in it. Catechumens should be given simple instructions beforehand; during the dismissal the catechist should be prepared to offer guidance. The dismissal should be celebrated simply, prayerfully, and beautifully; this requires careful planning and rehearsal with everyone involved.

The structure for the dismissal is given in the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (RCIA, 67). First, the celebrant invites the catechumens forward after the homily. If there is a small number, he may call them by name, which will also help the assembly learn their names. The catechumens, who are seated throughout the church, walk to their place in front of the celebrant. The catechist who will be dismissed with them also goes forward. If the space permits, the catechumens might face the assembly with the presider standing in the main aisle facing the catechumens. This allows the assembly to see their faces.

Next, the presider "urges them to live according to the word of God they have just heard" (RCIA, 67). This exhortation can be taken from paragraph 67, composed by someone skilled in writing texts, or chosen from one of the various published resources. Possibilities include *Sunday Dismissals for the RCIA* by Mary K. Milne (Liturgical Press); *We Send You Forth: Dismissals for the RCIA* by Jerry Galipeau (World Library Publications); and

Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons, and Weekdays (Liturgy Training Publications), which provides a short text for each season.

After the exhortation, the catechumens and the catechist process through the assembly to a place that is set up for prayer and reflection. The catechist, who leads the catechumens as they process out, may carry the *Book of the Gospels*, a prayer candle, or nothing. During the procession, the assembly may sing a short acclamation that sends them forth. This is a great way to engage the assembly and help them focus on the ritual action. The ministers of hospitality should be prepared to open the doors as the procession leaves the worship space.



© John Zich

Finally, during the dismissal session the catechist leads prayer and reflection on the Scriptures proclaimed at Mass. Several resources are available to help the catechist prepare and lead the session, including *The Living Word™: Leading RCIA Dismissals* (Liturgy Training Publications).

Catechists for this ministry might be recruited from parishioners who have shown a love for the Scriptures, such as well-prepared lectors, members of parish Bible-study groups. Parishioners who have served as catechists for other groups in the past or those who have served as sponsors might be invited to serve in this new way.



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Searching for best practices? Email training@ltp.org if you have a question that you would like answered by one of the Catechumeneon team members.

For Your Ministry

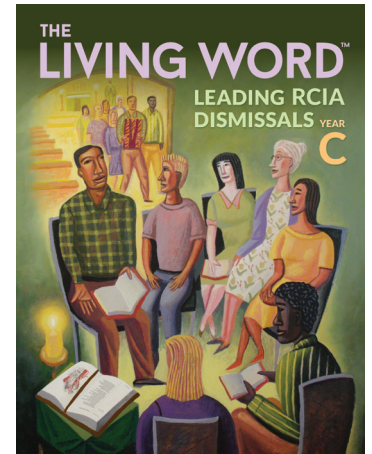
The Living Word™: Leading RCIA Dismissals, Year C

Leisa Anslinger, Mary A. Ehle, Biagio Mazza, Victoria M. Tufano

This resource provides RCIA catechists and team members with the pastoral tools needed to lead dismissal sessions with adults preparing for Baptism. Through reflection and discussion, each dismissal session guide helps to develop the catechumen's relationship with Christ, self, and neighbor by internalizing the Word, concentrating their prayer around the Scriptures, and becoming familiar with the teachings of the Church.

The Living Word™: Leading RCIA Dismissals, Year C includes:

- Guides for dismissal sessions for every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation of Year C
- Seasonal overviews, Scripture backgrounds, and preparation materials for catechists
- Complete reflection texts with discussion sparkers on the readings of the day
- Seasonal dismissal texts for the priest celebrant
- Centering ideas and closing prayers
- Suggestions for additional catechetical topics that are connected to the readings of the day



Sample pages ➔

What people are saying...

"Clearly formatted, detailed, and comprehensive; solidly grounded in concise scriptural exegesis and liturgical connections, this stellar resource for RCIA dismissal leads both catechists and catechumens on a journey of ongoing formation with absolute clarity and direction. Initiation team members will find this invaluable resource inviting, informative, and life-giving."

—Jan Wood, Director of Liturgy and Music,
St. Patrick Co-Cathedral, Billings, Montana

"This book is a truly comprehensive resource for RCIA dismissal teams everywhere. If your parish already dismisses catechumens during Mass, it offers sound pastoral suggestions that will enhance your ministry. If your parish does not yet celebrate the dismissal of catechumens during Mass, it will inspire you to start. No matter your situation, using this resource will help your catechumens to more deeply encounter the living Word of God."

—Paul Radkowski, Director of Music,
Church of St. Edward the Confessor, Granville, Ohio



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TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Focus: The Lord rescues us.

Lectionary #90C

Catechist's Preparation

Overview of the Sunday

Easter Time is about rejoicing in our salvation through the Resurrection grace of Jesus Christ. In the Resurrection, the breath of new life becomes available to us. On this Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we hear the story of Elijah praying to the Lord for the life breath to return to a widow's son in the First Reading. And, it does. The Lectionary pairs the story of the Lord rescuing the widow's son with the Gospel story of Jesus bringing to life the son of the widow of Nain. We witness how life comes from God's Word in the person of Jesus. His is the Gospel, not of human origin, but of divine revelation, of which Paul speaks in the Second Reading. It is the Gospel of Life available to everyone.

Scripture Background

1 Kings 17:17-24 Chapter 17 in 1 Kings tells the story of Elijah and the widow who cares for him by sharing the last bit of flour and oil that stood between life and death for herself and her son. At Elijah's request, she shared what she had and was rewarded by God with food for a year. Today's account happens after that experience. Her son falls ill and stops breathing. Thinking God is punishing her because of her sinfulness, she calls out to the prophet, "Why have you done this to me, O man of God?" (17:18). Yet when Elijah asks, she hands over her son from her arms. Once again, Elijah's actions show her that she has not been forgotten by God. Trusting in God, she takes her son, the one she most loves and relies upon, and hands him over the prophet, the messenger of God. Once again, she chooses to trust in the power of God to act, and God hears her cry.

Psalms 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13 (2a) Deliverance from death might be a theme for all of today's readings. It seems appropriate that the psalm is one of thanksgiving by one who has been healed of a deathly illness. The psalmist gives direct credit to God: "I will extol you, O Lord, for you drew me clear" (30:2). Weeping has turned to rejoicing, and mourning has changed into dancing. Elijah and Jesus both brought life to a widow's son and changed their grief into new life. Paul was delivered by God from a life of hatred and oppression of Christians to begin a new life as a missionary of Christ. This is cause

for hope and trust that God's power and salvation is indeed at work in all of history.

Galatians 1:11-19 If ever someone was rescued by the Lord, it was Paul! Paul himself tells the story to the Galatians about how he "persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it" (1:13). By the power of God, Paul was transformed from Saul, a Jewish zealot who hounded and imprisoned followers of Christ (remember his presence at Stephen's martyrdom in Acts of the Apostles 7:55-60, a passage we heard a few weeks ago), into Paul, a missionary intent on preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Lord called out to Paul, and his response was to give his life to God. His faithful missionary zeal toward many newly formed communities and his letters to those communities about making a response in faith to Jesus Christ echo in all our churches today.

Luke 7:11-17 In Jesus' time, families depended on their male members. As a widow whose only son had died, this woman would have lost her family, protection, and means of support. She probably would have lost a place to live and might even have been reduced to begging in order to survive. There are similarities to the story of Elijah's raising of the widow's son, but Jesus healed not with a ritual of praying three times or stretching his body out over the son as Elijah did, but rather with a command: "Young man, I tell you, arise!" (7:14). The power for new life comes from Jesus at his authority. Just before this story in Luke 7, Jesus cures the servant of a centurion, a Roman officer. In that account (which is heard on the Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C) the centurion tells Jesus that he is unworthy to have Jesus enter his house to be with the dying servant. Yet recognizing Jesus' power, he acknowledges that all Jesus has to do is to say the word. "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof . . . but say the word and let my servant be healed" (7:6-7). Amazed, Jesus comments on the man's faith: "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith" (7:9). The centurion has responded to the power that Jesus had demonstrated.

The crowd in Nain, too, reacts with awe and recognition of this powerful act by Jesus. "Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, 'A great prophet has



arisen in our midst,' and 'God has visited his people'" (7:16). This is the Son of God, a great prophet. In Jesus' actions among those in need, we recognize God's saving power to rescue and give new life. In those who listened

and followed Jesus, we see the trust of those who acknowledge that power and believe in the hope-filled possibility of new life.

Reflection Questions for the Catechist

- ⑤ Prayerfully reflect on a time when the Lord rescued you and you experienced the gift of his life breath.
- ⑤ When have you prayed to the Lord for healing for someone else as Elijah does?
- ⑤ What has been the response of your faith community to how Jesus has brought life to the catechumens?

Catechist's Guide

Objectives

- ▷ To acknowledge how God rescues us and how we express our praise and gratitude for the gift of salvation.
- ▷ To accept our responsibility to proclaim the Gospel of salvation.
- ▷ To recognize how we can act on behalf of others in need of God's breath of life.

Dismissal and Procession

Following the homily, the priest celebrant picks up the Lectionary and invites the catechumens to come forward with the catechist(s) who will lead today's dismissal session. Holding the Lectionary so that all can see, the priest celebrant sends the catechumens and catechist(s) forward using RCIA, 67, his own words, or the following:

PRIEST: My dear friends, we now send you forth, that you may continue to reflect on the Word of God which has been proclaimed in our midst. May the words which Jesus spoke long ago, and which have been proclaimed in our midst today, take root in your hearts as you prepare for Baptism. Go in peace.

All process to where the dismissal session will take place. The catechist holds the Lectionary in a reverent manner. The assembly may sing an acclamation to accompany the procession.

Centering

Upon reaching the place where the dismissal occurs, place the Lectionary on the ambo, lectern, or other dignified place (or hold the book reverently). Light the candle that is in the place of gathering and reread Luke 7:11–17 in order to refocus the group's attention. Consider singing the Responsorial Psalm or have a recording of it available to use as part of the centering, either before or after the reading.

Reflection and Discussion

The following "script" may be used or adapted to help facilitate discussion on today's readings. Begin the discussion by asking the catechumens if any words or phrases from today's readings spoke to them.

The sons of two widows are now alive in God. Revived. Arisen. Filled with the breath of life. Rescued from death. The Lectionary readings this Sunday reveal to us the power of God in Jesus. We witness how Jesus himself *is* the Word of God in person and how this Word *is* the Breath of Life. The two stories of life in the First Reading and the Gospel show us the ultimate power of God, available when a person has died. But often in life we experience times when our spirit is crushed and has died, or when our bodies are weak, or when we lack direction and do not know how to move forward, or when we hurt or are sad. We can think of these as times of death. These are times when God rescues us, too. These are times when we can inhale God's life breath.



- ☉ How has God rescued you when you were lifeless?
- ☉ What was it like to experience God's life breath within you and his word encouraging you to arise?

The Lord's Resurrection will be our salvation once and for all. Neither the death of sin nor our physical death will have the final say. What amazing news this is! When we personally experience this news, we can say with the crowds who witnessed the miracle of Jesus raising the son of the widow of Nain, "God has visited his people" (Luke 7:16).

- ☉ What has been a turning point in your journey of faith when you knew God came to you with his gift of life in Jesus?
- ☉ What was your response to God visiting you?

Overcome by fear, the disciples and the crowds glorified Jesus after the widow's dead son arose and began to speak. They testified to God's presence in their midst in Jesus. They knew he was a great prophet. They could not keep to themselves what they had seen. Their report about Jesus traveled miles for people throughout Judea and its surrounding area to hear.

- ☉ How will you spread the news that the Lord rescues us?
- ☉ How do you see community of faith spreading this news?

What is clear both in the Gospel and in Paul's autobiographical testimony in the Second Reading, from Galatians, is that we proclaim Jesus to Jews and Gentiles alike—to everyone. God does not restrict us to proclaiming the news about his Son only to certain groups of people. God desires to breathe life into everyone.

- ☉ To whom can you bring the words of life this week? Someone already in your life? In the faith community? In your local community?

Sometimes we need other people to bring us to God just as Elijah carried the widow's son and present him to God, and just as those whom Luke does not name who carry the widow's son out of the city gate in the Gospel. Luke tells us the detail that a large crowd was present to support the grieving widow. We experience how God visits us through other people and surrounds us with community.

- ☉ When have others carried you to God or been the presence of God for you?
- ☉ When has someone known God's life-giving presence in you because you carried them?
- ☉ When God visits us, we are forever changed. How we live our lives can become itself the way we glorify and praise the Lord for how he has rescued us. Consider how you glorify and praise the Lord.
- ☉ What way of glorifying and praising the Lord do you find most suitable to your deepening your faith life?
- ☉ How has praying and worshiping with the community of faith assisted you in praising God?
- ☉ Is there a way of glorifying and praising the Lord you would like to develop more in your spiritual life?



Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the dismissal. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion.

- Praise is a fitting response to the gift of life God offers us. Many times, God leads us away from sin and rescues us from death. The breath of life God gives is not only available to us in desperate situations, but every day, every moment. It is ours to breathe in.
- As disciples in formation, we also have a responsibility—a duty—to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others so that they, too, might know the life and wholeness available to them. Many of us might not be comfortable proclaiming the Gospel in words, but our actions and the way we lead our lives can show forth the Good News to others.
- Like the widow's sons in both the First Reading and the Gospel, sometimes we need others to carry us to God, to intercede on our behalf asking the Lord to rescue us by offering his life breath. Our companions in faith, and perhaps sometimes even those whose faith might be unknown to us (like those who carried the man to Jesus in the Gospel), can and do present us to the Lord for healing. We can do the same for those we know and those we do not.

Closing Prayer

Conclude with prayer. If time permits, sing the psalm refrain a few times before or after the following prayer.

Lord of life,
time and time again you rescue your people from death.
In your Son, Jesus Christ, you have visited your people.
May we go forth each morning accepting your call to bring others to receive
life in him
and rest each evening in the peace that we have proclaimed the Good News
to others both in word and deed.
May we praise you unceasingly, for you have saved us.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Readings for the Next Dismissal

Provide catechumens with a list of the readings for the next dismissal session. Consult the liturgical calendar on page xvi to find out what day will be observed next week. Give catechumens the questions below to guide their reflection through the week.

- ⑤ What connections are you seeing in the readings of this liturgical season? As you pray with the readings, around what themes do your thoughts seem to be coming together?
- ⑤ Where do the readings intersect with your journey of faith? What questions do they raise for you?

Extended Catechesis

Based on today's readings and liturgical observance, the following topics may be covered for extended catechesis:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ✧ God's life breath | ✧ Apostolic call |
| ✧ Salvation, wholeness, and healing | ✧ Our call to proclaim God's Word of life |
| ✧ Resurrection/new life in Christ | ✧ Revelation |
| ✧ The power of God's Word | ✧ Praise as a response to God's gift of life |



Training and Events Calendar



Virtual Workshops™

To view the workshop descriptions, or to register for these sessions, visit:

www.ltp.org/virtual-workshops-current

Experience all three for \$25! Order Code: VWCIP2

September 19, 2018 1:00 PM ET & 7:30 PM ET

Developing Your Parish's Initiation Ministry Team

Order Code: VWPIT | \$10

October 10, 2018 1:00 PM ET & 7:30 PM ET

The Minor Rites of the RCIA Order Code: VWMRCI | \$10

October 24, 2018 1:00 PM ET & 7:30 PM ET

Leading Mystagogical Reflections throughout the RCIA Process

Order Code: VWLMR | \$10

Virtual Training Course

**The Essentials of Christian Initiation:
An Introduction to the RCIA**

All classes take place from 8:00–9:30 PM ET.

January 28, 2019 The Principles of Initiation
Ministry

February 4, 2019 The Responsibility of
All the Baptized

February 11, 2019 Precatechumenate,
Rite of Acceptance

February 18, 2019 Catechumenate

February 25, 2019 Rite of Election, Purification
and Enlightenment

March 4, 2019 Sacraments of Initiation,
Mystagogy

Registration fee is \$150 per person.

For more information or to register, visit
www.Catechumeneon.org

In-Person Training

Diocesan Events

Currently there are no Catechumeneon training events scheduled on a diocesan level. Contact us at training@LTP.org if you are interested in hosting a workshop, institute, or retreat.

Regional Events

November 29—December 1, 2018

Santa Clara, CA

The Catechumen's Journey: An Experiential Workshop for Christian Initiation Ministers

to be held at the Santa Clara Faith Formation Conference www.SCFFC.org

1 de Diciembre de 2018

Santa Clara, CA

Taller de RICA: Los Principios del Ministerio de Iniciación

se llevará a cabo en la Conferencia de Formación de la Fe de Santa Clara
www.SCFFC.org

National Events

July 2–3, 2019

Chicago, IL

National Gathering on Christian Initiation™

Theme: The Year-Round Catechumenate
www.NGCI.org

In-Person Training Opportunities

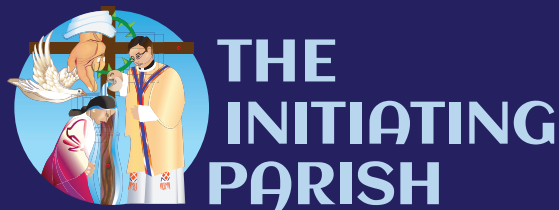
With *Catechumeneon*, LTP offers our assistance to parishes and dioceses as they seek to train and form ministers around Christian initiation. We invite you to consider hosting one of our training events to help your catechumenal ministers and parish leaders deepen their understanding and vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

These pages provide an overview of the in-person and virtual training that you can host in your parish, diocese, or region.

For more information, contact us at training@ltp.org or call 773-579-4900, ext. 3536

Formation Days

Invite LTP and our team of presenters into your diocese for an annual convocation focusing on Christian initiation. The RCIA presents a vision of parish that welcomes, accepts, forms, and challenges disciples to deepen their faith. This is not only achieved through catechesis and the liturgy but also with the whole community engaging in apostolic works of ministry.



Handing On What We Have Received

This Ministry Enrichment Gathering® will work with active initiation ministers and other parish leaders to explore the importance of the parish community in the initial and continuing formation of Christians, inspire all of its members by the spirit of baptismal catechumenate (RCIA, 75), and celebrate its liturgical rites with joy.

Envisioned to take place on a Saturday (9AM– 3PM), a parish or diocese can host this gathering and invite others to deepen their appreciation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

For more information, visit www.MinistryEnrichmentGathering.org

1-Day Workshops

Whether you are interested in a basic overview or a detailed explanation of specific topics, work with us to sponsor a one-day-RCIA workshop. Workshops can be presented in English and/or Spanish.

Topics include:

- The Principles of Initiation Ministry
- An Overview of the RCIA: The Steps and Periods
- RCIA and Baptized Candidates
- The Vision of the RCIA Adapted for Children
- Implementing and Sustaining the Year-Round Catechumenate
- Diocesan Workshop for Deacons
- Diocesan Workshop for Priests
- Other intermediate and advanced topics available upon request

2-Day Institutes

The two-day institutes are intensive training events with five presentations each day. These institutes are foundational in nature and are designed for those who have limited experience or training in the RCIA. Experienced ministers are always welcome to join, share their knowledge and experience, and serve as mentors to others in ministry.

Topics include:

- The Principles of Initiation Ministry
- An Overview of the RCIA
- Collaborate with LTP to create customized institute topics

3-Day Retreats

The RCIA is a spiritual journey for both the catechumens and the parish community. It is an extended time of prayer and formation during which the unbaptized candidates are apprenticed in faith to the baptized faithful. Conducted in a retreat-like manner, this training event will offer participants an experiential understanding of the RCIA as they walk through its periods and rites. Together they will participate in catechesis, ritual celebration, and apostolic witness adapted from the vision of the RCIA.

Virtual Training Opportunities



Virtual Workshops™

Virtual Workshops™ offer engaging and professional training and formation for liturgical ministers, catechists, and parish staffs. Participants gather virtually for 90 minutes of training, dialogue, and reflection. All *Virtual Workshops™* utilize several multimedia components at once, including live video, short films, presentation slides, chat boxes, handouts/downloads, discussion boards, and polls.

LTP offers the opportunity for your parish, diocese, or region to contract a closed session of any of our *Virtual Workshops™*.

Participation models include:

- Individual participation from home computer or mobile device
- Group participation with several people gathered from a parish meeting room or select satellite sites around the diocese
- Hybrid model that blends both of these options

Topics include:

- An Introduction to the RCIA: Exploring the Process and the Vision
- Developing your Parish's Initiation Ministry Team
- The Vision of the RCIA Adapted for Children
- Preparing the Liturgies of the RCIA
- Involving the Parish Community in the RCIA
- Effective Catechesis in the RCIA: Forming Disciples through Adult Learning Methods

For more information on any of these offerings, visit www.Catechumeneon.org

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CQ01

Virtual Formation Retreats

These virtual gatherings will provide spiritual and practical formation while helping participants deepen their understanding of their ministry. Envisioned to be held on a Saturday morning, diocese or clusters of parishes may bring participants together in various host sites. For those who are unable to attend in-person because of distance or other circumstances, they can attend virtually from their home computer or mobile device.

Retreats for:

- Sponsors and Godparents
- Parish Leaders

Virtual Workshops™ for Clergy

In collaboration with the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC), LTP has developed a series of *Virtual Workshops™* specifically designed for the ongoing formation of priests.

Choose from a list of workshops or create one that works for your diocese. You determine the date and time, and LTP will provide the technical assistance and promotional material needed to make your virtual training experience a success.

Virtual Workshops™ for Priests include:

- An Overview of the RCIA: Exploring the Vision
- The Priest as Shepherd of Christian Initiation
- Revitalizing Your Parish's Initiation Ministry Team
- Preparing and Presiding: The Rites of Christian Initiation
- Pastoral Counseling and Discernment in the RCIA
- Marriage, Annulments, and Other Canonical Issues in the RCIA Process