



POLICY DOCUMENT

ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

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I. Purpose

This document defines the guidelines and norms for the implementation and use of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)

II. Definitions

1. **OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults)**
 - The official process by which adults are initiated into the Catholic Church, replacing the former RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).
2. **Catechumen**
 - An unbaptized person who has entered the catechumenate and is preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
3. **Candidate**
 - A baptized Christian (not Catholic) seeking full communion with the Catholic Church, or a baptized Catholic seeking Confirmation and Eucharist.
4. **Neophyte**
 - A person who has recently received Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, especially during the Easter Vigil.
5. **Elect**
 - Catechumens who have been chosen ("elected") by the Church to receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.
6. **Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate**

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- The initial stage where inquirers explore the faith before formally entering the catechumenate.
- 7. **Catechumenate**
 - The period of formation and preparation for unbaptized persons before receiving the sacraments of initiation.
- 8. **Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate**
 - The liturgical ceremony marking the formal beginning of the catechumenate for inquirers.
- 9. **Rite of Election**
 - The liturgical celebration where catechumens are formally chosen to receive the sacraments of initiation.
- 10. **Period of Purification and Enlightenment**
 - The final stage of preparation for the sacraments, typically during Lent.
- 11. **Mystagogy**
 - The period after receiving the sacraments, focused on deepening understanding and integration into the Church.
- 12. **Parochial Minister**
 - A person designated by the pastor to assist with pastoral care and accompaniment in the initiation process.
- 13. **Canonical Marriage/Irregular Marriage**
 - A marriage recognized (canonical) or not recognized (irregular) by the Catholic Church, which can affect eligibility for sacraments.
- 14. **Sponsor**
 - A baptized Catholic who accompanies and supports a catechumen or candidate through the initiation process.
- 15. **Dismissal**
 - The practice of sending catechumens out of Mass after the Homily to reflect on the Scriptures, as they are not yet fully initiated.
- 16. **Book of the Elect**
 - The register in which catechumens sign their names before receiving the sacraments of initiation.
- 17. **Register of Catechumens/Reception into Full Communion**
 - Official parish records documenting those entering the catechumenate or being received into the Church.
- 18. **Paschal Fast**
 - The tradition of fasting from Good Friday through Holy Saturday in preparation for the Easter Vigil.
- 19. **Mystagogical Reflection**
 - Reflecting on the meaning of the sacraments and Christian life after initiation.
- 20. **Parish Evangelization Services (PES)**
 - The archdiocesan office supporting parishes in implementing the OCIA.



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III. Policy

I. DECREE OF PROMULGATION AND TIMELINE OF IMPLEMENTATION

In March 2024, with the approval of the Holy See, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgated the revised Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA), replacing the 1988 edition of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. In December of that year, the National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults, replacing the 1986 National Statutes of the RCIA, took effect. The new OCIA was permitted for use on December 1, 2024, the First Sunday of Advent, and became mandatory on March 5, 2025, Ash Wednesday.

In 2025, Archbishop Shawn McKnight granted parishes and institutions of the Archdiocese an extension to prepare for the full implementation of the revised norms. This extension concludes on September 1, 2026. During this period of exemption from the full implementation of the OCIA, all parishes have been expected to review and study the revised Order of Christian Initiation of Adults in its entirety and to bring their pastoral practice into conformity with the National Statutes.

Assisted by a special commission of his creation, the Archbishop has provided in these guidelines and norms the pastoral guidance and direction necessary to support faithful and consistent full implementation of the OCIA across the entire Archdiocese. While some norms call for significant pastoral development, and others require more modest adjustments, everything is to be received and implemented with care and intentionality. The Office of Parish Evangelization Services of the Archdiocese (PES) is available to accompany and assist parishes as they fully implement the OCIA and its statutes and norms..

II. A VISION FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults is rooted in Christ's mandate to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19–20). Christian initiation is neither merely a catechetical program nor a series of liturgical rites, but an ecclesial journey of conversion and formation through which individuals are gradually and intentionally incorporated into the life of the Catholic Church. This journey unfolds through the proclamation of the Gospel, liturgical celebration, catechesis, and participation in the communal life of the faithful. More than simply reflecting an early ecclesial structure, it mirrors the experience of the first disciples, who were each drawn into a relationship with Christ, formed through accompanying him during his earthly ministry, and shaped by an ongoing conversion of heart and life.

The parish, as the ordinary setting of Christian life, bears primary responsibility for this work. The entire parish community—clergy, catechists, sponsors, and all the faithful—shares in the accompaniment of catechumens (and, to a degree, candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church) through each stage of the initiation process, witnessing to the Gospel through word and example.

Through this shared responsibility, Christian initiation becomes an expression of the Church's identity as a community of missionary disciples. The celebration of the sacraments of initiation marks not an end, but rather

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a beginning, calling the newly initiated to full, conscious, and active participation in the life and mission of the Church and inviting the parish family itself to continual renewal.

III. GOALS OF THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The fundamental and primary goals of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults are to:

- Foster a personal and communal encounter with Jesus Christ
- Respect and support the gradual process of conversion
- Integrate catechumens (and candidates for full communion) into the liturgical, communal, and apostolic life of the Church
- Provide solid and integrated catechetical formation appropriate to each stage of initiation
- Support ongoing Christian formation and lifelong discipleship

IV. PASTORAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Christian initiation is guided by the following principles:

- Conversion is at the heart of initiation
- Initiation is ecclesial and communal
- Liturgical rites are encounters with the risen Christ, provide structured, sacred moments of transition and growth in the journey of faith, and are integral to the initiation process, providing their own manner of catechesis (“lex orandi est lex credendi est lex vivendi”—“the law of prayer is the law of belief is the law of life” or “as the Church prays, so she believes, and so she lives”)
- Initiation helps form missionary disciples
- Pastoral flexibility takes into account and appreciates individual journeys with the goal of conformity in Christ

V. NATIONAL STATUTES FOR THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The National Statutes (Norms 1–18) are each presented below with the following information:

- The Norm Itself
- Commentary
- Keys to Pastoral Implementation
- Pastoral Recommendations
- Concrete Implementation Guidance
- Key Ecclesial References



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The norms themselves are to be observed carefully and faithfully, ensuring a unified, consistent pastoral practice throughout the Archdiocese while at the same time recognizing legitimate pastoral diversity whenever possible and permitted.

The format of this document seeks to promote clarity and accountability and to support faithful and pastorally sound application of the Church's expectations and particular aims.

The following norms and pastoral guidance are thus presented to support the implementation and use of the OCIA within the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas and are to be read in light of the entire Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, including its directives and rubrics.

PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

NORM 1 — The evangelization of unbaptized persons during the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate will lead them through Scripture, prayer, and friendly conversation to an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ as the fullness of God's revelation.

Commentary

This norm establishes that the primary purpose of the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate is to bring unbaptized persons into an authentic encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, the fullness of God's revelation. This period is not primarily catechetical in nature, but rather evangelical. Its focus is the awakening of faith and the invitation to conversion.

Sacred Scripture, prayer, and personal, faith-filled conversation are identified as the ordinary means through which this encounter with Christ takes place, while allowing for pastoral flexibility in response to individual circumstances. Through these means, inquirers are invited to recognize God's presence in their lives, to begin a relationship with Christ, and to discern the call to deeper participation in the life of the Church.

The emphasis of this period is not the transmission of doctrinal content, but rather the cultivation of the inquirer's openness to Christ and the first stirrings of Christian conversion. It takes into account both the freedom of the individual as well as the gradual nature of faith, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead each inquirer toward readiness for the next stage of initiation.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm calls for a relational and accompaniment-centered approach to evangelization. The Church accompanies inquirers through authentic human connection, spiritual conversation, shared prayer, and the witness of lived faith. Authentic evangelization is never reduced to the transmission of information, nor is it fully satisfied by self-directed or other, purely academic models of formation.



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While books, videos, and digital resources may serve as supportive tools, they cannot replace personal encounter, dialogue, and pastoral presence. The length of this period is not predetermined. The pace of evangelization must respect the unique journey of each seeker and avoid any sense of urgency or pressure that could hinder authentic conversion.

Those entrusted with initial encounters or interviews must exercise pastoral sensitivity and discernment, helping each seeker identify an appropriate starting point in the initiation process. While this norm primarily addresses the unbaptized, there are circumstances in which baptized Christians seeking full communion or baptized Catholics seeking Confirmation may benefit from participating in this period of evangelization and inquiry.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Fostering a culture of welcome and encounter within parish life, so that every person who inquires experiences the Church as a place where they will be known, listened to, and valued. Evangelization begins with genuine human presence and attentive listening to how God is already at work in their lives and in the heart of every person.
- Encouraging parish leaders and OCIA teams to approach evangelization as accompaniment rather than simply instruction, walking with seekers at their pace and honoring the sacredness of their personal stories, questions, and experiences of God.
- Cultivating parish awareness that evangelization and accompaniment are shared responsibilities. Through prayer, hospitality, and personal invitation, the entire parish participates in welcoming those responding to the Holy Spirit's drawing them more deeply into the heart of the Church.
- Cultivating a disposition of missionary discipleship among parishioners, encouraging them to notice, invite, and accompany seekers within their families, workplaces, and communities, and trusting that God is already at work in their lives and in the heart of every person.
- Affirming flexibility in the initiation journey, recognizing that some individuals—whether unbaptized inquirers, baptized Christians seeking full communion, or baptized Catholics seeking Confirmation—may benefit in different ways from participating in this period of evangelization and inquiry.
- Creating opportunities and spaces where personal faith and witness can be shared naturally through meals, testimony, storytelling, and small, faith-sharing gatherings, allowing trust and belonging to develop organically.
- Encouraging evangelization that unfolds without the need for rushed decisions or artificial deadlines, allowing conversion to emerge gradually through prayerful accompaniment.
- Pastors, parish leaders, and OCIA teams are to continually remind themselves and one another that the fruits of this period are not measured by content mastery or strict attendance when formal opportunities are presented, but by signs of openness to Christ, growth in prayer, desire for relationship with God, and emerging conversion of life.

Concrete Implementation

Pastors are encouraged to educate and invite the entire parish community into a deeper understanding of Christian initiation as a shared responsibility of the whole Church. Through preaching, catechesis, and pastoral



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leadership, the pastor gives voice to the Church's call for the entire community to participate in welcoming, accompanying, and forming those whom God is drawing to faith.

- Offering clearly identified and consistently available inquiry opportunities throughout the year that are easy to access and widely communicated through parish bulletins, websites, personal invitations, and parish ministries. At a minimum, parishes should ensure multiple points of entry during the year, while remaining mindful of the pastoral needs, rhythms, and capacities of each parish community.
- Encouraging a small team of trained parish companions to take responsibility for accompanying inquirers during this period, emphasizing consistency, relational presence, prayerful listening, and pastoral accompaniment rather than instruction. This accompaniment is understood as a distinct ministry of evangelization, not as the role of sponsor proper to later stages of initiation.
- Establishing welcoming moments or simple rituals (such as blessings, introductions, or shared prayer) that help inquirers experience belonging from their earliest encounters with the parish community.
- Integrating inquirers intentionally into parish life beyond OCIA gatherings by inviting them to parish meals, social events, service opportunities, prayer groups, and seasonal celebrations.
- Providing formation and encouragement for the entire parish community, helping all the faithful recognize evangelization and accompaniment as a work of the heart shared by every baptized person. This formation should foster a mindset that sees daily encounters—in families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and parish life—as opportunities to welcome, listen to, and accompany those who are seeking truth, beauty, and goodness.
- Offering flexible formats for inquiry, including one-on-one accompaniment, small groups, or home-based gatherings, responding to the comfort level, readiness, and circumstances of each seeker.
- When appropriate, encouraging an “Inquiry Household” model, in which seekers gather in a home setting to foster relaxed conversation, prayer, and relationship-building.
- Incorporating regular opportunities for shared prayer with inquirers, modeling different forms of prayer and helping them experience prayer as relationship rather than obligation.
- Providing opportunities for inquirers to engage in acts of service and/or charity alongside parishioners, allowing them to experience faith expressed through love and action.
- Inviting OCIA teams and the entire parish community to engage in periodic reflection on the fruits of evangelization, discerning together how the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of inquirers and within the parish community.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 36–47

Pope St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

Code of Canon Law, c. 211, 213

NORM 2 — Early in the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, a parochial minister will meet inquirers individually to hear of their “first faith” (see The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults [OCIA] 42),



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discern the continuing impact of their encounter with the Lord, and discuss any issues (e.g., an irregular marriage) that could affect their eventual celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation.

Commentary

This norm establishes the importance of early and individualized pastoral discernment during the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate. The purpose of these initial meetings is to listen attentively to the inquirer's first experiences of faith and to recognize signs of conversion already present, and to begin discerning readiness for deeper engagement in the initiation process.

The term "early" is understood pastorally rather than chronologically. It does not imply haste or premature evaluation, but rather the timely initiation of an ongoing process of discernment that accompanies the seeker throughout each stage of Christian initiation. Discernment begins in this period and continues, in various ways, through all of the periods and steps of the OCIA, and beyond.

These initial conversations also provide an appropriate and compassionate setting to identify any pastoral or canonical matters—particularly marriage circumstances—that may affect the celebration of the sacraments. Addressing such matters early helps to avoid misunderstanding or disappointment later in the process and allows the Church to accompany the inquirer with clarity and hope.

Discernment is never based solely on attendance, the number of sessions completed, or the ability to articulate doctrinal knowledge. While these elements have certain value, readiness is measured primarily by signs of conversion, a desire for relationship with Christ, openness to prayer, a sense of desiring to belong to the Church, and a willingness to undertake the full journey of Christian initiation.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally speaking, this norm safeguards both the integrity of the sacraments and the dignity of the individual inquirer. Early interviews allow pastoral leaders to listen deeply, to build trust, and to walk with inquirers as companions rather than merely evaluators. Discernment is a shared process of prayerful listening to the Holy Spirit, carried out in collaboration between the inquirer, the designated parish ministers, the OCIA team, and the pastor.

In this context, the term "parochial minister" refers to one or more persons designated by the pastor to assist with these initial individual encounters. Whenever possible, the pastor should identify trained parish ministers who are skilled in pastoral accompaniment, attentive listening, and spiritual discernment. These ministers should also receive basic formation in canonical considerations, particularly those related to marriage and sacramental readiness, so that concerns may be identified early and referred appropriately.

Marriage situations and other canonical considerations should be treated as part of the overall journey of initiation, not as obstacles or interruptions. When approached with pastoral sensitivity, clarity, and patience, these situations can become moments of growth in faith, trust, and deeper conversion.



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Discernment is integral to every stage of the initiation process, including:

- Discernment for the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate (OCIA 42–43)
- Discernment throughout the Catechumenate (OCIA 75)
- Discernment for the Rite of Election (OCIA 120)

Advancement to each stage presumes a willingness to participate fully in the entire process of Christian initiation. Individuals who are not yet ready to undertake the full journey should be accompanied pastorally until such readiness emerges.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Providing formation for OCIA ministers in pastoral accompaniment skills, including prayer with and for inquirers, spiritual discernment, confidentiality, and compassionate listening. Basic canonical formation—particularly regarding marriage situations—is also essential, so that ministers can recognize concerns and refer them appropriately.
- Communicating clearly from the beginning that discernment is an expected and ongoing part of the initiation process for all participants.
- Approaching irregular marriage situations with patience, clarity, and hope, connecting inquirers promptly with appropriate pastoral and canonical resources and clearly explaining the steps involved.
- Incorporating elements of spiritual direction into discernment conversations, asking about prayer life, desire for conversion, spiritual curiosity, and experiences of God.
- Identifying parishioners trained in spiritual direction or mentoring who can serve as discerning listeners, accompanying seekers throughout the initiation process and helping them reflect on how God is at work in their lives.
- Reinforcing that discernment is oriented toward growth and accompaniment, not exclusion. When readiness is lacking, offering a clear pastoral invitation that supports continued formation and conversion.
- Intentionally naming and affirming signs of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of inquirers—such as growing openness to Christ, desire for prayer, trust in the Church, and concrete steps toward conversion—in order to encourage perseverance and deeper engagement in the journey of faith.
- Considering the formation of period-specific teams trained in the distinct skills needed for each stage of initiation, especially for the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate and the Period of the Catechumenate (both of which, ordinarily, should be offered year-round).

Concrete Implementation

- Establishing a standard initial discernment interview that includes prayer, listening to the inquirer's story of faith, and a preliminary review of pastoral or canonical considerations.
- Developing a clear referral process for marriage situations, including timely collaboration with the pastor and the Marriage Tribunal, and communicating realistic timelines and expectations.
- Providing OCIA teams with concise reference materials outlining common marriage situations and appropriate pastoral responses.



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- Encouraging sponsors to participate actively in discernment by offering testimony regarding the inquirer's readiness and growth.
- Internally and pastorally documenting discernment milestones to support continuity of accompaniment across the stages of initiation, without creating a checklist or evaluative mentality.
- Offering ongoing formation opportunities through the Archdiocese to support clergy and lay ministers in discernment, accompaniment, and pastoral listening.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 42–43, 75, 120;

Code of Canon Law, c. 864-865

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1-10

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

NORM 3 — The term “catechumen” is to be strictly reserved for the unbaptized who have entered the catechumenate and who are joined to the Church in a special way while they strive to lead a life of faith, hope, and charity (Code of Canon Law, c. 206 §1).

Commentary

This norm safeguards theological and canonical precision in the use of “catechumen” as a proper term. Only those who are unbaptized and who have celebrated the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate may properly be called catechumens. Through this rite, the unbaptized attain a certain and real juridic status in the Church and are joined to her in an authentic, particular way, sharing in certain prerogatives proper to Christians (Code of Canon Law, c. 206 §2).

Validly baptized persons—whether baptized Catholics who have not completed initiation or baptized Christians from other ecclesial communities—are not catechumens and may never be referred to as such. Through Baptism, they have already been configured to Christ and incorporated into the Catholic Church, even if they are not yet in full communion with her.

The celebration of the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate (OCIA 41–74) marks the first formal and public step of adult Christian initiation. With this liturgical celebration, the unbaptized inquirer becomes a catechumen and assumes a new ecclesial identity, one that shapes both their formation and their participation in the life of the Church.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation



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While juridical in nature, this norm has significant pastoral implications. It affirms the dignity of catechumens as persons who already belong to the Church and are to be treated as such within parish life. Catechumens are not observers or outsiders; they are members of the Church engaged in discernment and formation.

At the same time, this norm protects the theology of Baptism by clearly distinguishing catechumens from baptized candidates. Maintaining this distinction avoids confusion, honors the sacramental reality of Baptism, and supports ecumenical integrity. Clear language and consistent ritual practice help the parish community understand and live this distinction faithfully.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Educating parish staff, catechists, sponsors, and liturgical ministers on the clear distinction between catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (already baptized), emphasizing the theological and canonical reasons for this distinction.
- Maintaining consistent terminology in all parish communications, including bulletins, announcements, catechetical materials, and forms. In particular:
 - Inquirer refers to a person who is exploring the Catholic faith during the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate and has not yet celebrated the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate.
 - Catechumen refers only to the unbaptized who have celebrated the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate.
 - Neophyte refers exclusively to those newly baptized.
 - Newly confirmed refers to baptized Catholics who receive Confirmation.
 - Newly received refers to baptized Christians received into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- Affirming the status of catechumens within the parish community, for example, through prayer intentions, appropriate acknowledgments, or community blessings, to reinforce their belonging and raise awareness within the parish early in the initiation process.
- Observing the proper liturgical practice of dismissing only catechumens after the homily (OCIA 75.3), while recognizing that baptized candidates are already members of the faithful and ordinarily remain for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Using this norm as a catechetical opportunity for the wider parish to deepen its understanding of baptismal theology and to encourage the faithful to invite unbaptized family members and friends to consider the journey of faith.
- Reserving the Easter Vigil as the primary normative celebration for the full initiation of the Elect, while identifying other appropriate times during the liturgical year for the reception of baptized Christians into full communion and/or for the confirmation of baptized Catholics.

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- Reviewing parish language, forms, and digital platforms to ensure consistent and correct use of terms related to initiation.
- Providing brief formation sessions or written guides for parish staff and volunteers explaining the distinctions between catechumens, candidates, neophytes, newly confirmed, and newly received.
- Establishing parish practices that visibly affirm catechumens, such as periodic blessings or introductions at Sunday Mass.
- Coordinating with liturgical ministers to ensure that dismissal practices reflect baptismal theology and avoid causing confusion among the faithful.
- Planning reception and Confirmation celebrations for baptized candidates at times that respect the distinct pathways of initiation outlined in the OCIA.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 41–74

Code of Canon Law, c. 206

NORM 4 — Ordinarily, a person who has entered the catechumenate is to remain in it from at least the Easter Time of one year until the beginning of the Easter Time of the next year; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year.

Commentary

This norm underscores that the catechumenate is not a program governed by a fixed calendar, but a process of conversion shaped by the grace of God and the gradual formation of faith. While a minimum of one full liturgical year is ordinarily envisioned, the determining factor for progression is not the mere passage of time but readiness rooted in discernment. At the same time, less than a full year for the Period of the Catechumenate contravenes the Church’s ordinary desire for catechumenal development; thus, a shorter period of the catechumenate, especially the practice of completing the entire OCIA process from “Labor Day to Easter”—although prevalent even today, is not a licit practice, and must not be permitted.

The catechumenate respects God’s gentle pedagogy, allowing faith to mature through prayer, personal relationships, catechesis, participation in the liturgy, and engagement with the parish community.

This norm affirms that the parish must resist the temptation to reduce initiation to a seasonal schedule or to presume that all catechumens will be ready to advance at the same pace. When readiness is lacking, it is pastorally appropriate to extend to the catechumenate additional invitations of engagement so that the sacraments of initiation may flow authentically from a mature and freely embraced faith.



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At the same time, when emergent cases arise, particularly those where the danger of death is present, the Church provides remedies which correspond to those particular situations. Such options, however, are permitted only by the local ordinary, and on a petitioned, case-by-case basis.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm calls parishes to prioritize conversion over routine or convenience. The rhythm of parish life, including the liturgical calendar, should support discernment rather than dictate it. Catechumens should not be advanced to the Rite of Election solely because Lent has arrived, attendance requirements have been fulfilled, or a calendar deadline has been reached.

Discernment during the Period of the Catechumenate is communal and ongoing, involving the catechumen, sponsor, OCIA leadership and team, and pastor. Each person presented for the Rite of Election should be ready to proceed together towards Easter, reflecting the Church's confidence in their ongoing personal conversion and shared preparedness.

Implementing a year-long Period of the Catechumenate invites a broader participation of the parish community and requires thoughtful pastoral planning. This approach may challenge long-standing patterns, including the assumption of seasonal pauses or times of reduced parish activity. With careful organization, thoughtful planning, and shared responsibility, parishes can sustain their catechumenal ministries while avoiding fatigue or burnout.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Shifting parish language away from references such as the "RCIA class" and toward language that reflects Christian initiation as a process of conversion, such as "Becoming Catholic," the "OCIA journey," or the "process of Christian initiation."
- Providing opportunities for entry into the catechumenate not only just before Lent but, as needed, on other fixed days throughout the year, trusting the work of the Holy Spirit and recognizing that individuals respond to God's call according to diverse timelines and circumstances.
- Celebrating the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate preferably within Sunday Mass, to engage the parish community and highlight the ecclesial nature of initiation.
- Developing formation pathways, even individual ones, based on spiritual markers of readiness rather than predetermined calendars or program timelines.
- Encouraging pastoral patience, recognizing that it is better to delay initiation than to rush it without sufficient discernment, resulting in clarity of personal readiness.
- Engaging the wider parish in accompaniment by expanding roles for sponsors, mentors, and catechists, and by communicating clear invitations to active participation in the catechumenal process.
- Acknowledging the pastoral demands of a year-round process and a year-long catechumenate, addressing sustainability by organizing teams thoughtfully, rotating responsibilities, and sharing leadership as needs are best served.



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- Educating clergy, parish leaders, and parishioners—through formation and resources offered by the archdiocesan Office of Parish Evangelization Services—to understand Christian initiation as a process of conversion versus a program to be completed.

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- Establishing predictable and clearly communicated entry points for formal inquiry and the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate throughout the year.
- Identifying and training multiple catechumenate teams that can rotate responsibilities, especially for dismissal catechesis and ongoing formation, to support both a year-round model and a year-long catechumenate.
- Incorporating parish-wide invitations—through preaching, announcements, and visible signage—encouraging seekers to explore Catholic life at various times of the year. Identify specific areas/communities of potential interest, both within the parish community (i.e. parish school or school of religion parents) and the broader parish geography (i.e. prison ministry, assisted living centers).
- Aligning catechumenal formation with the liturgical year, integrating the Sunday readings, prayers, and seasons into ongoing catechesis, conversation and reflection.
- When catechumens are not ready to advance to the Rite of Election, offering a clear pastoral invitation that includes continued participation in the catechumenate, ongoing accompaniment, and specific opportunities for growth in prayer, community life, and conversion, with clarity about next steps in the journey.
- Offering periodic formation, through the Office of Parish Evangelization, to support pastors, OCIA coordinators, parish leaders, and volunteers in understanding the theology of conversion and the pastoral implications of a catechumenal process.
- Evaluating parish capacity annually to adjust team structures and schedules in ways that promote sustainability and shared responsibility.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 75–76; 78

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, esp. 40-45 (on gradualism)

Code of Canon Law, c. 851.

NORM 5 — §1. As a general rule, the preparation of catechumens for the Sacraments of Initiation takes place in a parochial setting or its equivalent.

§2. Catechumens prepared at a center, school, prison, or other institution are to be introduced into the Christian life of a parish or similar community, insofar as possible from the very beginning of the catechumenate, so that after their Initiation and Mystagogy they will not find themselves isolated from the ordinary life of the Christian people.

Commentary



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This norm affirms the parish as the ordinary and normative locus for Christian initiation. The emphasis is not merely on a physical parish building or program site, but on the parish community itself as the living Body of Christ in which faith is formed, professed, celebrated, and lived.

When catechumens are prepared in non-parochial settings—such as schools, universities, prisons, or other institutions—the norm requires that a real and ongoing connection to a parish community be established from the very beginning of the catechumenate. This connection is essential to ensure that, following initiation and the Period of Mystagogy, catechumens do not experience isolation from the ordinary worship, life, and mission of the local Church.

This norm highlights the ecclesial nature of initiation: catechumens are not formed apart from the Church, but within a concrete parish community of believers who worship together, serve one another, and bear witness to the Gospel.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm calls parishes to understand Christian initiation as an apprenticeship in Christian life rather than a certification process or a classroom-based program. Formation occurs not through instruction alone, but through immersion in the lived faith of the parish community.

The parish community itself—through its liturgy, ministries, diversity of vocations, parochial relationships, and daily witness—becomes the primary context in which catechumens learn what it means to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. By participating in the ordinary life of the parish, catechumens encounter the Gospel as it is prayed, proclaimed, served, and lived, and are gradually formed into full and active members of the Church.

For catechumens formed in institutional settings, intentional pastoral planning is required to build meaningful and sustained bridges to parish life. Without such intentional integration, there is a real risk that newly initiated Catholics may feel disconnected from parish life once formal preparation concludes. Early and ongoing participation in the life of a parish community helps foster continuity, belonging, and lifelong discipleship.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Affirming the parish community as the primary setting for initiation by intentionally involving catechumens in parish worship, service, and communal life throughout the catechumenate, clearly communicating the necessary boundaries of engagement (i.e. liturgical roles) for catechumens.
- Emphasizing that the parish is fundamentally a community of persons, not simply a building or meeting space. In light of this, pastors are encouraged to form parish-based teams that intentionally reach out to catechumens who are being formed in non-parochial institutional settings by visiting them, meeting with them regularly, and building sustained relationships that foster belonging and continuity.
- Establishing clear and collaborative relationships between parishes and schools, universities, assisted living centers, prisons and correctional facilities, and other institutions involved in catechumenal formation, ensuring shared responsibility and consistent pastoral practice.



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- Ensuring that catechumens prepared in these non-parochial settings are publicly welcomed and recognized, as able, within a parish liturgical celebration early on and throughout the catechumenal process.
- Encouraging parishioners to discern personal gifts of time, talent, and energy in developing relationships of accompaniment, serving as sponsors or mentors for catechumens formed in institutional settings, and strengthening personal and communal bonds.
- Communicating clearly parish expectations for sacramental preparation with families, school staff, and institutional leaders to ensure consistent policies that avoid confusion between parishes and which support collaborative efforts and a certain unity of practice across the Archdiocese.
- Emphasizing that integration into a parish community involves both identity and mission, and inviting catechumens to participate actively in the Church's life and mission.

Concrete Implementation

- Establishing formal parish–institution liaisons that clearly define roles, expectations, and communication pathways for catechumenal formation, parish engagement and shared discernment.
- Assigning each catechumen formed in a non-parochial setting a parish sponsor or mentor who accompanies them consistently through initiation and the Period of Mystagogy.
- Scheduling parish-based liturgical moments (such as blessings or introductions at Sunday Mass) to welcome catechumens early in the catechumenate.
- Regularly inviting catechumens to parish events, spiritual gatherings, and service opportunities beyond OCIA gatherings, encouraging participation in the ordinary life of the parish, and supporting genuine integration into the community. Additionally, bringing together leaders and staff from both the parish and participating institutions to build relationships of trust and collaboration grounded in a shared understanding of the OCIA process.
- Providing formation for parish and school staff on the OCIA process so that all can respond knowledgeably and pastorally to questions about initiation.
- Periodically reviewing parish–institution collaboration to ensure catechumens are experiencing real connection to parish life.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 3

General Directory for Catechesis, 257–258

NORM 6 — The formation of catechumens is to be comprehensive. It is to be: 1° Suited to the liturgical year and supported by the Church's liturgy, 2° Rooted in Sacred Scripture, the truths of Catholic doctrine and the moral life, and aided by catechetical texts, such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, texts based upon that Catechism, such as the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, and other texts approved by the local ordinary; 3° Exercised in works of service and charity (OCIA 75).

Commentary

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This norm calls for a holistic and integrated formation that addresses the whole person—mind, heart, and way of life. Comprehensive formation is not limited to intellectual instruction, but is shaped by the liturgical rhythm of the Church, grounded in Sacred Scripture and Catholic doctrine, and expressed concretely through moral living, service, and charity.

By rooting formation in the liturgical year, catechumens are formed within the Church's prayer and sacramental life, allowing doctrine and moral teaching to emerge organically from worship. Catechetical texts, especially the Catechism of the Catholic Church and those derived from it, serve as authoritative references that ensure fidelity to the Church's teaching while supporting mature and integrated faith.

The inclusion of works of charity and service emphasizes that faith is integrated in the life of discipleship and personal witness. Catechumens are formed not only to believe, but to practice the Gospel through love of neighbor, participation in the Church's mission, and concrete expressions of mercy.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

This norm resists any reduction of formation to simply classroom instruction or isolated catechetical sessions. Formation must engage catechumens in prayer, worship, learning, and service as interrelated dimensions of a single journey of discipleship.

Parishes are encouraged to integrate catechumenal formation with Sunday liturgy, allowing the Word of God, the prayers of the Mass, and the liturgical seasons to shape catechesis. Doctrinal formation should be presented in a way that connects belief with daily life, moral decision-making, participation in the mission of the Church, and growth in holiness, the root of authentic happiness.

This norm also underscores the importance of approved and consistent catechetical resources. Fidelity to the Church's teaching is ensured when formation draws regularly from the Catechism and other texts approved by the Archbishop. At the same time, formation should remain pastoral and accessible, attentive to the lived experience and questions of the catechumens themselves.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Integrating catechumenal formation closely with the Sunday Eucharist, recognizing the liturgy as the privileged place for catechesis of the People of God. When possible, scheduling formation sessions immediately before or after Sunday Mass.
- Aligning catechetical themes with the liturgical year, drawing from the Sunday readings, the Collect, and the Prayer after Communion, especially during the seasons of Advent, Lent and Easter.
- Ensuring a robust and consistent use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and approved adult catechetical texts to ground formation in the Church's doctrinal and spiritual tradition.
- Encouraging catechumens to participate regularly in works of charity and service alongside parish ministries, allowing them to experience faith expressed through love and action.
- Inviting parishioners and members of parish groups to accompany catechumens in prayer, service, and community life, reinforcing formation through lived witness.

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- Employing lectio divina, mystagogical reflection, and shared prayer to deepen catechumens' engagement with Scripture and to teach them how to pray.
- Prioritizing ongoing formation for parish staff, clergy, and OCIA teams so that those entrusted with formation are well-equipped both theologically and pastorally.
- Emphasizing missionary discipleship throughout formation, helping catechumens articulate their personal story of faith and integrate Christian belief into daily life and engagement with the wider world.

Concrete Implementation

- Developing a catechumenal formation plan explicitly aligned with the liturgical year and the Sunday lectionary.
- Identifying approved catechetical texts and resources to be used consistently across parish formation, ensuring clarity and fidelity.
- Encouraging catechumens to engage in at least one sustained work of charity or service during the catechumenate through the parish community, in collaboration with others and including guided reflection.
- Providing formation and ongoing support for catechists and team members in catechesis based upon Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Liturgy, including mystagogical reflection.
- Establishing regular opportunities for catechumens to pray with the parish community outside of Sunday Mass (e.g., Liturgy of the Hours, seasonal prayer services).
- Collaborating with archdiocesan offices to share formation resources, workshops, and continuing education opportunities for OCIA leaders.
- Periodically reviewing formation practices to ensure a balanced integration of the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions of Christian initiation.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 75

Catechism of the Catholic Church

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

NORM 7 — While unbaptized persons in irregular marriages can enter the catechumenate, they are not to celebrate the Rite of Election until they are free to enter a canonical marriage.

Commentary

This norm governs the participation of unbaptized persons in irregular marital situations within the catechumenate. It affirms that such individuals may enter and participate fully in catechumenal formation, while also establishing a clear limit: they are not to enter the Period of Purification and Enlightenment until their marital situation has been resolved in a manner consistent with canonical form.



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The norm reflects the Church's commitment to both pastoral accompaniment and sacramental integrity. It upholds the sacredness of marriage and the coherence of sacramental life, while recognizing that many seekers come from complex family and marital situations that require time, discernment, and compassionate pastoral care.

Resolution of marital situations is not a peripheral concern but an integral part of preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The competent authority for determining whether a case can be resolved in time for initiation is the Marriage Tribunal.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm must be implemented with great sensitivity, patience, and clarity. While it protects the integrity of the Rite of Election and the sacraments that follow, it also calls the Church to accompany catechumens generously and without judgment as they navigate often difficult personal circumstances.

Early identification of marriage situations is essential. Addressing these matters during the initial discernment process allows catechumens to understand expectations clearly, avoids unrealistic assumptions about Easter initiation, and provides time for appropriate pastoral and canonical steps.

Marriage regularization or investigation should never be presented as a punishment to full communion with the Church. Rather, it is part of the Church's pastoral care and an element of the catechumen's ongoing journey of conversion. Even when the Rite of Election must be delayed, catechumens should continue to be supported in formation, prayer, and participation in parish life.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Welcoming unbaptized persons in irregular marriages into the catechumenate with openness and hospitality, affirming their desire to follow Christ and to grow in faith.
- Identifying and addressing marital situations as early as possible in the initiation process, ideally during the initial discernment interview, to provide clarity and pastoral support to the inquirer regarding their situation.
- Collaborating promptly and closely with the pastor and the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal to assess the feasibility and timeline of resolving marriage situations, and to avoid setting unrealistic expectations for initiation at Easter.
- Communicating clearly and compassionately that any delay in celebrating the Rite of Election is not a judgment on personal worth, but a reflection of the Church's respect for the sacramental order and the sanctity of marriage.
- Encouraging catechumens whose initiation must be postponed to continue active participation in catechumenal formation, parish worship, prayer, and community life.
- Providing pastoral accompaniment, including mentors or couples who have walked similar paths, to support catechumens spiritually and emotionally during periods of waiting or discernment.

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- Including a focused review of marital status as part of the initial discernment interview for all inquirers.
- Establishing a clear referral process to the pastor and, when appropriate, a trained advocate, as well as to the Marriage Tribunal, upon identifying an irregular marriage situation.
- Ensuring that catechumens are connected with and supported in understanding the written materials and explanations provided by the Marriage Tribunal regarding marriage processes (e.g., declarations of nullity), including realistic timelines and next steps.
- Ensuring continuous pastoral accompaniment for catechumens who remain in the Period of the Catechumenate due to unresolved marriage situations, in order that their formation, participation, and connection to the parish community may continue without interruption.
- When possible and appropriate, celebrating the sacraments of initiation at another suitable time after Easter if a marriage situation is resolved soon after the Easter Vigil, in accord with liturgical and diocesan norms.
- Training OCIA teams to address and speak about marriage-related issues with pastoral clarity, sensitivity, and consistency, and to communicate accurately about the role and processes of the Marriage Tribunal without creating unrealistic expectations.

Key Ecclesial References

Order of Celebrating Matrimony 32
Code of Canon Law, cc. 1066–1085.

NORM 8 — Upon entry into the catechumenate, catechumens incur the following obligations: 1° They are to participate in the Liturgy of the Word, preferably on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, with the community if possible (see OCIA 81); 2° They will continually purify their motivation for Baptism, live an upright life, and be ready to witness to their conversion to Christ, as they seek to grow in their knowledge of and assent to what the Church believes and teaches (Code of Canon Law, cc. 206 and 865 §1).

Commentary

This norm articulates the spiritual and ecclesial obligations assumed by catechumens upon entering the catechumenate. These obligations reflect the catechumen's new status within the Church and express a commitment to ongoing conversion, participation in the worshipping community, and growth in faith and moral life.

Participation in the Liturgy of the Word—especially on Sundays—situates the catechumen within the prayer of the parish community and allows the Word of God to shape their faith. This participation is not limited to attendance, but calls for attentive listening, reflection, and gradual integration into the rhythm of ecclesial life.

The obligation to purify one's motivation for Baptism underscores that initiation is rooted in conversion of life. Catechumens are invited to grow in virtuous living, prayer, and witness, allowing their assent to the Church's teaching to mature alongside their lived experience of faith.

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Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm frames the catechumenate as a communal journey of discipleship, not a private or isolated preparation. The “community” envisioned is the parish itself, not merely the catechumenal group. Through regular participation in the Sunday Liturgy of the Word, catechumens come to recognize themselves as members of the Church who are being formed through prayer, proclamation, and communal worship.

Pastoral sensitivity is essential when addressing challenges that may affect participation, such as work schedules, family responsibilities, or personal circumstances. Growth in discipleship is fostered through encouragement, accompaniment, and patience, rather than through rigid enforcement, exclusion or punitive measures.

Sponsors, catechists, and parish leaders play a vital role in modeling faithful participation in worship and Christian life, helping catechumens understand that these obligations are invitations to deeper relationship and conversion rather than burdens imposed from without.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Explaining clearly the obligations of catechumens to inquirers before they enter the catechumenate, so that readiness for this commitment can be discerned honestly and pastorally.
- Ensuring that catechumens are welcomed, recognized, and prayed for regularly within parish liturgies, fostering a visible sense of belonging.
- Encouraging sponsors to accompany catechumens to Sunday Mass whenever possible, modeling faithful participation and offering personal support.
- Providing opportunities for reflective dismissal sessions following the Liturgy of the Word to help catechumens internalize and apply Scripture to their lives.
- Addressing obstacles to participation pastorally, offering guidance and flexibility where appropriate, while encouraging continued growth and commitment.

Concrete Implementation

- Reviewing catechumenate orientation materials to ensure that obligations are clearly communicated before the Rite of Entrance.
- Assigning/approving sponsors with the explicit expectation that they will attend Sunday Mass with catechumens whenever possible.
- Providing structured Sunday dismissal catechesis for catechumens only, focusing on prayerful reflection rather than instruction alone.
- Including regular opportunities for catechumens to reflect on how participation in worship is shaping their faith and daily life.
- Coordinating parish announcements and prayer intentions to consistently include catechumens
- Offering pastoral follow-up for catechumens who struggle with participation, combining encouragement and patient accompaniment with clear teaching about the real obligations and

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responsibilities assumed upon entering the catechumenate, and supporting ongoing discernment toward faithful and consistent Christian living.

Key Ecclesial References

Code of Canon Law, cc. 206, 865
OCIA 79, 81

NORM 9 — §1. In addition to the prerogatives granted in universal law (see Code of Canon Law, cc. 1170 and 1183 §1 and OCIA 47), catechumens may: 1° participate in the apostolic and charitable works of the Church, especially works of mercy; 2° take advantage of opportunities given to Catholic parents in the parish or region concerning the enrollment for their children in Catholic schools; 3° be buried in a Catholic cemetery. §2. If it seems appropriate, the diocesan bishop can establish other prerogatives.

Commentary

This norm articulates the specific ecclesial rights and prerogatives granted to catechumens by universal law, recognizing their unique juridic status within the Church. Although not yet baptized, catechumens are already joined to the Church in a special way and therefore enjoy certain rights that flow from their intention and preparation for Baptism.

These prerogatives affirm that catechumens are not merely “Potential Catholics,” but persons who already belong to the household of the Church and share in her life and mission in a real, though incomplete, way.

The provision allowing the diocesan bishop to establish additional prerogatives affirms the bishop’s authority to respond to particular pastoral circumstances within the local Church, in accord with universal law.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm invites parish communities to recognize and honor the dignity and belonging of catechumens. Catechumens should experience welcome as participants in the life of the Church, not viewed as outsiders or temporary guests.

Parishes, schools, and diocesan institutions must be attentive to these rights to ensure that catechumens are not inadvertently excluded from opportunities that the Church intends to make available to them. Clear communication and consistent practice help to prevent confusion and foster trust.

Honoring these prerogatives also provides a powerful catechetical moment for the parish community, highlighting the Church’s understanding of community, identity, mercy, and the gradual nature of Christian initiation.

Pastoral Recommendations

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- Educating parish staff, school administrators, and pastoral leaders regarding the canonical prerogatives and rights of catechumens, ensuring consistent and informed pastoral practice.
- Encouraging catechumens to participate actively in apostolic and charitable works of the parish, especially works of mercy, as an expression of their growing discipleship.
- Ensuring that Catholic schools and parish offices understand that catechumen families may legitimately access enrollment opportunities offered to Catholic parents, in accord with diocesan policy.
- Communicating clearly with catechumens and their families about these rights so that they can participate confidently with full understanding .
- Providing pastoral support and clear guidance regarding Catholic burial rites for catechumens, affirming the Church's hope and trust in God's saving mercy.
- Considering opportunities at the parish or diocesan level to publicly acknowledge and pray for catechumens, reinforcing their dignity and ecclesial belonging.

Concrete Implementation

- Including a summary of catechumens' rights and prerogatives in parish OCIA handbooks or orientation materials.
- Providing training or written guidance for parish and school staff to ensure catechumens are treated consistently and in accord with Church law.
- Encouraging catechumens to discern participation in specific parish ministries of service or charity appropriate to their stage of formation.
- Establishing clear communication channels between parishes and Catholic schools regarding enrollment policies affecting catechumen and their families.
- Ensuring parish records and pastoral responses reflect the catechumen's juridic status and associated rights.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 47

Code of Canon Law, cc. 1170, 1183 §1

NORM 10 — It is praiseworthy that catechumens be dismissed from the liturgical assembly, at least on Sundays, after the Homily and before the Creed to reflect on the Word of God just proclaimed.

Commentary

This norm affirms the ancient and venerable practice of dismissing catechumens from the liturgical assembly after the Homily and before the Creed. This dismissal is not an act of exclusion, but a theological and pastoral expression of the catechumen's stage of initiation.

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Because catechumens have not yet been baptized into Christ's Paschal Mystery, they do not participate in the Profession of Faith, the Universal Prayer, or the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Their dismissal respects the integrity of baptismal theology and highlights the unique dignity of the Eucharist, while simultaneously honoring the catechumen's journey toward full sacramental participation.

Only catechumens are dismissed. Baptized candidates, having already been incorporated into Christ through Baptism, are members of the faithful and remain for the entire Eucharistic celebration, even though they are not prepared yet to receive Holy Communion.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, the dismissal of catechumens should be experienced as a sending forth, not a separation. It is a moment of blessing and transition, inviting catechumens to continue their participation in the Liturgy of the Word through prayerful reflection, catechesis, and discernment.

Care must be taken to explain this practice clearly to catechumens, candidates, and the parish community so that it is understood as an expression of reverence for the grace of Baptism and respect for the stages of initiation. When properly celebrated, dismissal deepens the catechumen's desire for the sacraments and strengthens the parish's awareness of the journey of Christian initiation.

Dismissal catechesis should be thoughtfully prepared and rooted in the Scriptures proclaimed that day, helping catechumens integrate God's Word into their lives and value the truth it offers in their ongoing discernment.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Using the ritual formula of dismissal provided in the OCIA, allowing its language of blessing and mission to shape the parish's practice of dismissal.
- Ensuring that the presider or deacon blesses catechumens publicly before their dismissal, reinforcing the sacred character of this moment.
- Providing well-prepared Sunday dismissal catechesis focused on prayerful reflection and application of Scripture, rather than instruction alone.
- Educating the parish community regularly about the meaning of dismissal so that it is understood as a sign of baptismal theology and not exclusion.
- Maintaining clear and consistent liturgical practice: that only catechumens are dismissed after the Homily and before the Profession of Faith and the Universal Prayer, baptized candidates remaining for the entire celebration of the Mass.
- Ensuring that dismissal catechesis is facilitated by a designated catechist or dismissal leader who attends a different Mass, so that only catechumens participate in the dismissal. Sponsors and baptized candidates should fulfill their own Sunday obligation and join catechumens afterward for the regularly scheduled OCIA session to support ongoing accompaniment and reflection.

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Concrete Implementation

- Developing and using a consistent ritual text for dismissal across the parish to foster clarity and reverence.
- Training a designated catechist or dismissal leader to facilitate dismissal catechesis rooted in the Sunday Scriptures.
- Preparing dismissal sessions in advance, connecting the Word proclaimed at Mass with the lived experience of catechumens.
- Providing occasional catechesis to the assembly—through preaching, bulletin inserts, or parish communications—on the purpose of dismissal.
- Evaluating parish practice regularly to ensure dismissal is celebrated faithfully and pastorally.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 75
Apostolic Tradition.

NORM 11 — Because liturgical ministries arise from Christian Baptism, it is inappropriate for catechumens to proclaim the Word of God or serve at the altar during the liturgy.

Commentary

This norm affirms the fundamental theological principle that liturgical ministries flow from Baptism. Through Baptism, the faithful are incorporated into Christ and share in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. Liturgical service is therefore an expression of baptismal identity and ecclesial communion.

Because catechumens have not yet received Baptism, they do not exercise liturgical ministries such as proclaiming the Word of God, serving as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or serving at the altar during the liturgy. This limitation is not a judgment on personal worth or readiness, but a recognition of sacramental reality and the stages of Christian initiation.

The norm safeguards the integrity of liturgical ministry while also affirming the dignity of catechumens as persons in formation who are journeying toward full participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm must be implemented with clarity and sensitivity. Catechumens should understand that this limitation is temporary and rooted in baptismal theology, not exclusion or lack of trust.



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At the same time, pastoral leaders must take care that catechumens do not experience this restriction as marginalization. While catechumens do not exercise liturgical ministries, they are encouraged to participate actively in other aspects of parish life, particularly works of charity, hospitality, prayer, and communal service.

This norm also provides an opportunity to catechize the parish community about the meaning of Baptism and the relationship between sacramental initiation and ministry in the Church.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Explaining clearly to catechumens the baptismal foundation of liturgical ministries and the reason for this temporary limitation.
- Avoiding assigning catechumens to liturgical roles that are reserved to the baptized, even when there is a practical need for volunteers.
- Encouraging catechumens to participate in non-liturgical ministries, such as hospitality, parish outreach, service projects, and small faith-sharing groups.
- Using this norm as a catechetical moment to deepen parish understanding of Baptismal grace as the root of our liturgical service and its transformative effects.
- Offering invitation and intentional preparation for candidates interested in liturgical ministry following their initiation, helping them discern gifts and charisms to serve the Church fruitfully.

Concrete Implementation

- Reviewing parish ministry guidelines to ensure that liturgical roles are assigned only to those who are baptized and appropriately formed.
- Providing formation for parish staff and liturgical coordinators on the relationship between Baptism and ministry.
- Offering catechumens opportunities to serve alongside parish ministries in non-liturgical capacities, accompanied by reflection and discernment.
- Following initiation, inviting neophytes to participate in discernment of charisms and training for appropriate liturgical and/or pastoral ministries.
- Including periodic parish catechesis—through preaching or parish communications—on the theology of Baptism and ecclesial ministry.

Key Ecclesial References

Code of Canon Law, c. 230.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

NORM 12 — The Elect, as well as those who assist them and participate in the celebration of the Easter Vigil with them, are encouraged to keep and extend the paschal fast of Good Friday, as determined by Code of



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Canon Law, canon 1251, throughout the day of Holy Saturday until the end of the Vigil itself (see Sacrosanctum Concilium 110, and OCIA 185.1).

Commentary

This norm highlights the ancient and venerable tradition of the paschal fast, which extends from Good Friday through Holy Saturday until the celebration of the Easter Vigil. Rooted in the practice of the early Church, the paschal fast ordinarily includes the fasting and abstinence observed on Good Friday—abstaining from meat and limiting oneself to one full meal, with two smaller meals if needed—and is traditionally continued through Holy Saturday as a time of prayerful waiting. This fast expresses the Church’s profound participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection.

For the Elect, this fast serves as an immediate spiritual preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It invites them to enter more deeply into prayer, recollection, and expectant waiting, disposing their hearts to receive the grace of new life in Christ. While fasting on Good Friday is a canonical obligation, the extension of the fast through Holy Saturday is strongly encouraged as a voluntary spiritual practice.

The norm also affirms that participation in the paschal fast is adaptable to each person’s capacity. Those who are unable to fast physically may participate through other forms of penitence, prayer, simplicity, and interior preparation.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm calls parishes to recover the sacred character of Holy Saturday as a day of quiet expectation and spiritual preparation. The paschal fast is not intended as a burden, but as a means of fostering humility, attentiveness, and longing for the new life celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

The parish community—especially sponsors, catechists, clergy, and family members—is encouraged to accompany the Elect during this period by modeling prayerful observance and offering personal support. When celebrated communally, the paschal fast deepens not only the Elect’s preparation but also the parish’s shared participation in the Paschal Mystery.

Clear pastoral catechesis is essential so that the Elect understand the meaning of the fast and feel invited rather than pressured. Emphasis should be placed on freedom, reverence, and spiritual readiness rather than uniformity of practice.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Providing catechesis prior to Holy Week explaining the meaning, history, and spiritual purpose of the paschal fast.
- Encouraging sponsors, catechists, and parish leaders to observe the paschal fast alongside the Elect, fostering a sense of shared journey.

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- Inviting the Elect to dedicate Holy Saturday to prayer, silence, and recollection, avoiding unnecessary work and distractions.
- Offering guidance on alternative forms of participation for those unable to fast physically, such as extended prayer, acts of charity, or intentional simplicity.
- Ensuring that families of the Elect, especially minors, receive appropriate pastoral guidance regarding fasting and participation.
- Framing the paschal fast as a joyful and hopeful preparation for the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

Concrete Implementation

- Offering a parish-wide or OCIA-specific catechesis on the paschal fast during Lent, highlighting its connection to the Easter Vigil.
- Providing printed and/or digital resources outlining practical ways to observe the fast, including various levels of participation.
- Encouraging sponsors to check in with the Elect during Holy Saturday to offer prayerful support.
- Celebrating, whenever possible, Morning Prayer (Lauds) from the Liturgy of the Hours with the Elect, sponsors, and OCIA team on Holy Saturday, incorporating the Rites of Immediate Preparation (OCIA 185 ff.), followed by rehearsal for the Easter Vigil.
- Creating opportunities for quiet prayer, reflection, or retreat on Holy Saturday within the parish community.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 185.1

Code of Canon Law, c. 1251

Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 110

PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

NORM 13 — Following the Period of Mystagogy, and to the extent possible, neophytes may benefit from meeting periodically to deepen their Christian formation, especially through opportunities that enhance their participation in the life of the parish or similar community (see OCIA 244 and 245).

Commentary

This norm affirms that Christian initiation does not conclude with the celebration of the sacraments at the Easter Vigil. The Period of Mystagogy is an essential and integral stage of the initiation process, during which neophytes reflect on the sacraments they have received and discern how to live their new identity as members of the Body of Christ.

Mystagogy is not a continuation of catechetical instruction, but a spiritual and experiential reflection on lived sacramental participation. During this period, neophytes interpret their experience of Baptism, Confirmation,



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and Eucharist in the light of Scripture, the liturgy, and the life of the parish community. While the Easter Season is the privileged time for mystagogical formation, the norm encourages ongoing opportunities for continued growth beyond Pentecost.

If initiation occurs at another time of year, mystagogy ordinarily extends for six weeks following reception, allowing neophytes to reflect on their sacramental experience and to integrate more fully into the life of the Church.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

This norm calls parishes to accompany neophytes intentionally as they transition from initiation into sustained discipleship. The weeks following initiation are a time of joy, vulnerability, and discernment, during which neophytes benefit from continued support, reflection, and connection to the parish community.

Mystagogical formation should be rooted in the Sunday Eucharist, drawing especially from the readings and prayers of the Easter Season. Through guided reflection, neophytes come to recognize how the sacraments shape their daily lives and call them to mission.

Without intentional pastoral accompaniment throughout the OCIA process, neophytes may experience a sense of loss or disconnection once formal preparation ends. This norm therefore emphasizes continuity, belonging, and ongoing formation as essential components of authentic initiation.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Consistently emphasizing that the goal of the OCIA is not simply the celebration of the Easter Vigil, but the formation and strengthening of lifelong missionary disciples; this vision should be named early and reinforced throughout the initiation process and the period of Mystagogy.
- Scheduling regular mystagogical gatherings during the Easter Season, drawing primarily from the liturgical texts and rubrics of the Easter Vigil, and using the Sunday readings and prayers of the Easter Season as the foundation for reflection.
- Emphasizing that mystagogy focuses on lived experience of the sacraments rather than doctrinal instruction alone.
- Encouraging gradual integration of neophytes into parish ministries and apostolic life, respecting their readiness and discernment of gifts.
- Encouraging parish sponsors to continue to support and accompany neophytes as they are integrated more fully into parish life.
- Offering opportunities for neophytes to reflect on and articulate how God is at work in their lives through the sacraments they have received.
- Highlighting missionary discipleship, helping neophytes discern how their faith is to be lived and shared in their families, workplaces, and communities.

Concrete Implementation

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- Developing a structured mystagogical plan for the Easter Season that includes regular gatherings centered on prayer, reflection on lived sacramental experience, and communal sharing.
- Employing the liturgical texts and rubrics of the Easter Vigil, together with the Sunday readings and prayers of the Easter Season, as the primary catechetical source for mystagogical reflection.
- Providing intentional opportunities during the Easter Season for neophytes to deepen relationships within the parish community through shared prayer, faith-sharing, and participation in parish life, without overloading them with immediate commitments.
- Scheduling a follow-up gathering near the conclusion of the Easter Season (for example, around Pentecost) to reflect on the experience of initiation, name ongoing questions, and encourage continued growth in discipleship.
- Offering opportunities for discernment of gifts and call to service at an appropriate pace, helping neophytes gradually recognize how their baptismal identity may take shape in the life and mission of the Church.
- Ensuring that neophytes are intentionally invited into existing parish-based adult faith formation opportunities that support ongoing conversion, learning, and missionary discipleship.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 244–251

Acts of the Apostles

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

REGISTRATION OF INITIATION-RELATED ACTS

NORM 14 — §1. The register of those who have entered the catechumenate is to be kept in the parish archive. §2. In addition to those things required by OCIA 46, the pastor is to see that the date and place of birth of the catechumens are inscribed in the register.

Commentary

This norm affirms the juridic reality of the catechumenate as a public ecclesial act that carries rights and obligations within the Church. Entry into the catechumenate is not a private or informal step, but a liturgical and canonical moment that establishes a new status for the unbaptized person within the Church.

The maintenance of a Register of Catechumens ensures the proper documentation of this ecclesial status. Recording the date and place of birth, in addition to the information required by OCIA 46, safeguards accuracy and supports future pastoral and canonical needs.

This norm underscores the responsibility of the pastor to ensure that catechumenal records are complete, accurate, and properly preserved within the parish archive.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

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Accurate record-keeping protects the rights of catechumens and supports continuity of care throughout the initiation process. It allows the parish to accompany catechumens responsibly and ensures clarity when catechumens progress to subsequent stages of initiation.

Proper documentation also prevents confusion between catechumens and baptized candidates. Only unbaptized persons who have celebrated the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate are to be recorded in this register. Baptized candidates for full communion or for Confirmation are never to be entered into the catechumen register.

Attention to confidentiality, accuracy, and consistency reflects the Church's respect for the dignity of those preparing for Baptism and the integrity of the sacramental process.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Ensuring that parish leadership understands the juridic significance of the catechumenate and the importance of maintaining a proper Register of Catechumens.
- Distinguishing clearly between catechumens and baptized candidates in all parish records and documentation.
- Providing appropriate training for parish staff and OCIA teams regarding record-keeping procedures and confidentiality.
- Reviewing the parish Register of Catechumens periodically to ensure completeness and accuracy.
- Communicating clearly with catechumens regarding the meaning of their entry into the catechumenate as a public ecclesial act.

Concrete Implementation

- Maintaining a dedicated Register of Catechumens in the parish archive, separate from sacramental registers.
- Completing entries in the register immediately following the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate.
- Establishing clear procedures for who is responsible for recording and verifying catechumenal information.
- Reviewing catechumenal records annually as part of parish administrative oversight.
- Ensuring that baptized candidates are not recorded in the catechumen register under any circumstance.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 46

Code of Canon Law, c. 206



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NORM 15 — The Book of the Elect, in which the catechumens enroll their names in anticipation of the Sacraments of Initiation (OCIA 119), is to be kept in the archives of the parish or of the diocese, unless diocesan law directs otherwise.

Commentary

This norm addresses the proper care and preservation of the Book of the Elect, which serves as both a symbolic and juridic record of those who have been chosen by the Church for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. The enrollment of names expresses the Church's discernment of readiness and the catechumens' free and deliberate response to God's call.

The Book of the Elect records a significant ecclesial moment that precedes the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Its preservation in parish or diocesan archives ensures continuity, accountability, and reverence for the Rite of Election as a public act of the Church.

Only catechumens—those who are unbaptized and who have celebrated the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate—enroll their names in the Book of the Elect. Baptized candidates are not to be included.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Within the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, the pastoral and liturgical practice regarding the Book of the Elect is clearly defined in order to ensure unity and consistency across parishes.

The Parish Evangelization Services team, through its advocacy for liturgy and the sacramental life, maintains responsibility for establishing and overseeing liturgical norms related to the Rite of Election, including guidance regarding the Book of the Elect. In keeping with this responsibility, the Archdiocese is formally transitioning to the practice of each parish maintaining its own Book of the Elect.

Accordingly, the Book of the Elect is kept at the parish and is signed by catechumens during the parish celebration of the Rite of Sending, which takes place prior to the diocesan Rite of Election, or immediately thereafter. Following the Rite of Sending, the parish Book of the Elect is brought to the Rite of Election and presented to the Archbishop as a sign of the parish's testimony to the catechumens' readiness and the unity of the local Church.

The enrollment of names is not repeated during the diocesan Rite of Election. This practice highlights the complementary roles of the parish and the archbishop: the parish discerns and sends; the archbishop elects.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Ensuring that pastors, OCIA teams, and parish staff understand the archdiocesan practice regarding the Book of the Elect and the archdiocesan offices.
- Celebrating the Rite of Sending at the parish level whenever possible, emphasizing the parish's role in discernment and accompaniment.

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- Preparing catechumens spiritually for the signing of the Book of the Elect, explaining its ecclesial and liturgical significance.
- Communicating clearly to catechumens, sponsors, and parish leaders that the signing of the Book of the Elect occurs at the Rite of Sending (or immediately thereafter) and is not repeated at the diocesan Rite of Election.
- Providing catechesis to the parish community regarding the relationship between the Rite of Sending and the Rite of Election.

Concrete Implementation

- Maintaining a parish Book of the Elect in a secure and appropriate archival location.
- Celebrating the signing of the Book of the Elect during the parish Rite of Sending (or, immediately thereafter), ensuring that only catechumens enroll their names; when the Rite of Sending is not celebrated in a particular parish, the catechumens may inscribe their names in the Book of the Elect prior to the Rite of Election in a suitable non-liturgical setting (such as a parish office or formation space), with appropriate pastoral reverence and preparation.
- Coordinating with the Parish Evangelization Team, especially its advocacy for liturgy and sacramental life, regarding archdiocesan Rite of Election logistics and expectations.
- Designating a parish minister or OCIA leader responsible for bringing the Book of the Elect to the archdiocesan Rite of Election.
- Reviewing parish practices periodically to ensure alignment with archdiocesan liturgical norms and directives.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 119–122

Archdiocesan liturgical directives

NORM 16 — §1. The register of those received into the full communion of the Catholic Church is to be kept in the parish archive. §2. In addition to those things required by OCIA 486, the pastor is to see that the date and place of birth of the candidate are inscribed in the register, with mention made of the minister, parents, sponsors, and the date and place of Reception into full communion. §3. If married, a notation of the spouse, date and place of marriage should be noted in the register. Any future marriage is also to be noted in the register, at the time of the marriage.

Commentary

This norm establishes the requirement for a distinct and dedicated Register of Reception into Full Communion, separate from baptismal and confirmation registers. This register records the ecclesial act by which baptized Christians are received into full communion with the Catholic Church and therefore serves a purpose different from registers associated with sacramental initiation through Baptism.



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The establishment of this register represents a clear canonical and pastoral distinction between the unbaptized who are initiated through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, and baptized Christians who are received into full communion.

By maintaining a separate register for full communion, the Church ensures clarity, accuracy, and integrity in sacramental records, while honoring the sacramental history and ecclesial identity of those received into full communion.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

This norm marks an important transition in record-keeping practice within the Archdiocese. The use of a distinct Register of Reception into Full Communion requires intentional implementation to ensure consistency and accuracy across parishes.

Because this represents a shift from prior practice in many parishes, clear guidance and formation will be necessary. Parish clergy, staff, Directors of Religious Education, pastoral assistants, and others involved in sacramental records must be equipped to understand the purpose of this register, how it is to be maintained, and how it interacts with other parish records.

Special attention must be given to the ongoing use of this register. When parishes receive notifications of marriages or other sacramental acts from outside parishes, the Register of Reception into Full Communion must be consulted to ensure that all relevant notations are accurately recorded. This safeguards sacramental integrity and reflects responsible pastoral care.

Pastoral Recommendations

For the Archdiocese—

- Establishing clearly that the Register of Reception into Full Communion as a register distinct from Baptism and Confirmation registers in all parishes.
- Providing guidance on the proper use, maintenance, and consultation of this register, including procedures for updating marital notations and other future sacramental events.
- Offering orientation and formation for parish personnel—particularly parish staff, pastoral assistants, Directors of Religious Education, and clergy—on this new procedure and its pastoral importance.
- Emphasizing the necessity of consulting this register when receiving notifications of marriages or other sacramental acts from other parishes or dioceses.
- Encouraging parishes to review existing records and transition carefully to this practice to ensure continuity and accuracy.

For Parishes—

- Maintaining a Register for Reception into Full Communion, separate from the registers for Baptism and Confirmation.



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- Seeking guidance on the proper use, maintenance, and consultation of this register, including procedures for updating marital notations and other future sacramental events.
- Consulting this register when receiving notifications of marriages or other sacramental acts from other parishes or dioceses.
- Periodically reviewing existing records and transitioning carefully to the new practice to ensure continuity and accuracy.

Concrete Implementation

- (Parish) Establishing a dedicated Register of Reception into Full Communion in every parish archive, clearly labeled and maintained separately from other sacramental registers.
- (Archdiocese) Developing archdiocesan guidelines outlining standard procedures for entries, updates, and future notations in this register.
- (Archdiocese) Providing training sessions and/or written manuals for parish staff responsible for sacramental records.
- (Archdiocese) Incorporating the review of this register into routine parish record audits or administrative reviews.
- (Parish and Archdiocese) Ensuring that parish personnel responsible for receiving external sacramental notifications are trained to consult and update this register appropriately.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 486

Code of Canon Law, cc. 535, 1121

Archdiocesan sacramental recording guidelines

NORM 17 — It is for the diocesan bishop: 1° to appoint a qualified person to promote, direct, and coordinate the Christian Initiation of Adults in his diocese; 2° to issue norms concerning the qualifications for and training of catechists; 3° to approve the use of catechetical texts for the formation of catechumens and candidates for Reception into full communion (see Norm 6, 2° above); 4° to issue norms for the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation and for the preparation of baptized but uncatechized adults for Confirmation and Eucharist and for the reception of validly baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Commentary

This norm clarifies the authority and responsibility of the diocesan bishop in overseeing and ensuring the faithful implementation of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults throughout the diocese. Christian initiation is not only a parish-based ministry, but a diocesan responsibility that requires intentional leadership, coordination, and formation.

Norms concerning the qualifications and training of catechists necessarily include more than familiarity with catechetical content. OCIA catechists serve a distinct role from catechists preparing children or adolescents

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for First Holy Communion or Confirmation. Their ministry requires formation in adult pedagogy, accompaniment, discernment, and the catechumenal method proper to the OCIA.

This norm also encompasses the bishop's responsibility to provide guidance for particular forms of initiation, including: the Order of Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age (OCIA Chapter II), and the Simpler and Shorter Orders of Adult Initiation (OCIA Chapters III and IV).

Without diocesan norms, these areas risk inconsistent application across parishes. Accordingly, diocesan guidance is essential to ensure unity of practice while respecting pastoral diversity.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation

Pastorally, this norm highlights the need for intentional and differentiated formation for those entrusted with OCIA ministry. Catechists serving in OCIA require preparation distinct from other catechetical ministries, including: formation in adult learning principles; accompaniment, active listening and spiritual discernment; pastoral interviewing; and the theology and structure of the catechumenal process.

The formation of catechists should include both initial preparation and ongoing formation, as well as appropriate pastoral review and support. This ensures fidelity to the Church's vision of initiation and sustained quality of ministry.

In addition, diocesan norms are especially necessary for: the initiation of children who have reached catechetical age, and the use of the Simpler and Shorter Orders of Adult Initiation.

Both require careful pastoral discernment and should not be implemented casually or as standard practice. Although termed "simpler" and "shorter," these rites demand significant pastoral preparation and coordination and are intended for extraordinary circumstances, not routine use.

Pastoral Recommendations

For the Archdiocese—

- Establishing diocesan expectations for what constitutes appropriate formation for OCIA catechists, distinguishing this ministry clearly from other catechetical roles.
- Including formation in adult pedagogy, accompaniment, and discernment as essential components of catechist preparation.
- Providing guidance regarding authorization and accountability for those serving as OCIA catechists, in accord with diocesan norms.
- Developing archdiocesan guidance for the Order of Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age (OCIA 255 ff.), ensuring essential consistency across parishes.
- Clarifying that the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation is to be used only in extraordinary circumstances and always in accordance with archdiocesan norms.
- Accompanying the issuance of any new norms with appropriate formation and resources, within reasonable implementation timelines.

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Concrete Implementation

For the Archdiocese—

- Offering diocesan formation tracks specific to OCIA catechists, addressing theology, catechumenal methodology, adult pedagogy, and pastoral skills.
- Providing orientation for pastors and parish leaders on the distinct role and formation needs of OCIA catechists.
- Developing diocesan guidelines for OCIA with children of catechetical age to prevent widely divergent parish practices.
- Prefacing diocesan directives regarding the Simpler Order clearly, with language such as: “In extraordinary circumstances, and in accord with diocesan norms...”
- Establishing mechanisms for ongoing formation, pastoral review, and consultation for those engaged in initiation ministry.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 255 ff.

General Directory for Catechesis

USCCB guidelines

Archdiocesan norms and guidelines

NORM 18 — The term “convert” is reserved strictly for those converted to Christian belief and never used of those baptized Christians who are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Commentary

This norm safeguards a fundamental theological and ecclesial truth: conversion is a turning to Christ and entry into Christian faith, not a transfer from one Christian community to another. Those who are validly baptized in other Christian traditions are already incorporated into Christ and therefore are not “converted” when they are received into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The careful use of terminology reflects the Church’s understanding of Baptism as the foundational sacrament of Christian life and expresses respect for the ecclesial reality present in other Christian communities. Misuse of the term “convert” risks undermining baptismal theology and weakening the Church’s commitment to ecumenical dialogue.

This norm applies not only to formal documentation, but also to preaching, catechesis, parish communications, and everyday pastoral language.

Keys to Pastoral Implementation



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Pastorally, this norm calls for intentional formation of clergy, catechists, parish staff, and parishioners in the correct use of ecclesial language. Because terminology shapes belief and practice, consistent and accurate language helps foster theological clarity and pastoral sensitivity.

Care should be taken to distinguish clearly between: catechumens (unbaptized persons preparing for Baptism), neophytes (those newly baptized), and candidates (baptized Christians preparing to be received into full communion and/or confirmation).

Correct terminology affirms the dignity of each person's journey and strengthens trust with those coming from other Christian traditions.

Pastoral Recommendations

- Training clergy, catechists, and parish staff in correct terminology related to Christian initiation.
- Using the term "candidate" or "person received into full communion" for baptized Christians entering the Catholic Church.
- Reserving the term "convert" exclusively for those who are baptized for the first time.
- Modeling accurate language consistently in homilies, catechesis, bulletins, websites, and sacramental records.
- Providing catechesis to catechumens and candidates on the meaning of Baptism and Christian unity.

Concrete Implementation

- Reviewing parish communications and forms to ensure correct terminology is used consistently.
- Including a glossary of OCIA terms in parish and diocesan formation materials.
- Addressing terminology explicitly during catechist and sponsor formation.
- Encouraging respectful and accurate language when speaking publicly about initiation rites and participants.
- Correcting misunderstandings pastorally and patiently when inaccurate language is used.

Key Ecclesial References

OCIA 36

Galatians 3:26–28

Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, no. 92.

CLOSING NOTE ON PROMULGATION OF THE NATIONAL STATUTES

When these statutes take effect on December 1, 2024, the National Statutes for the Catechumenate approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 11, 1986, and confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship on June 26, 1988, are abrogated



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VI. FINAL PASTORAL NOTE

The implementation of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults calls the entire Archdiocese to a renewed fidelity to the Church's vision of initiation as a journey of conversion, discipleship, and communion. These norms and pastoral guidelines are offered to support pastors, parish leaders, and initiation teams in this sacred responsibility.

Faithful implementation will require patience, collaboration, and ongoing formation. The Archdiocese also distinguishes clearly between the need for year-round availability of inquiry and formation, and the ordinarily year-long duration of the catechumenate envisioned by the Church.

Recognizing the diversity of parish contexts, parishes are encouraged to form teams that foster meaningful connections with catechumens prepared in institutional settings, ensuring that initiation remains rooted in parish community life.

May this work strengthen our shared mission of evangelization and lead many to a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and fuller participation in the life of the church.