

Some Possible Implications for RCIA/Adapted for Children (Catechumenate)

What are some implications for the initiation of our children that come out of the RCIA and other church documents regarding catechesis?

Family Involvement:

- **Family-centered catechesis.**
 - Why? Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith.
 - How? **Whole group/intergenerational activities; smaller groupings** for discussion/projects (Individual families for discussion/projects; or pairing two or three families on discussions or projects); **Specific age groupings:** primary/intermediate/teen/adults
- **Sponsoring Families.** An opportunity to connect the families in our initiation process with parishioners who can “mentor” them **in parish life** – inviting them to participation in parish events (social, liturgical, service, etc.) – and also **in everyday life** – being Catholic in a secular world.

Training in the Christian Life:

- **Peer Sponsors.** Positive peer pressure! Modeling Christian living as a Catholic child
- **Sponsoring Families.** (see above)
- **Service.** Not about the number of hours, but an attitude of service – an expectation of service as part of the Christian life.
- **Liturgy/Worship.**
 - The Mass as the source and summit of our faith, of course,
 - but also, the other ways that we as a Catholic community pray: Stations of the Cross; Advent prayer; Liturgy of the Hours; Penance Services;
 - encourage family rituals: offer www.vibrantfaithathome.org as a resource for parents
 - the liturgical rites of the RCIA, one of which is
 - dismissal and Breaking Open the Word
- **Prayer.** Exploring different ways of praying; opening them up to a variety of prayer experiences

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One final thought on catechesis in the catechumenate: We sometimes tend to equate the catechumenate with the teaching of the *catechism*. However, quantifiable knowledge of doctrine is not the sole answer; rather, we should be seeking to encourage the child’s participation in the life of the community, and his or her growth in relationship with Jesus Christ and the meaning of discipleship through prayer, service, familiarity with the Word, and – yes – “a suitable catechesis.”

RCIA Adapted for Children: The Catechumenate

RCIA

“The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life.” RCIA, #75

RCIA, #75.1 “A suitable catechesis”:

- “planned to be gradual and complete”
- “accommodated to the liturgical year”
- “solidly supported by celebrations of the word”

“This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.”

RCIA, #75.2 “As they become familiar with the Christian way of life...the catechumens...”

- Develop a prayer life
- Bear witness to the faith
- Keep their hopes set on Christ
- Grow in listening to Christ
- Practice love of neighbor

RCIA, #75.3 Suitable liturgical rites help the catechumens on their journey, including taking part in the liturgy of the Word at Mass and being “kindly dismissed” to Break Open the Word.

RCIA, #75.4 “Since the Church’s life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.”

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Catechesi Tradendae (John Paul II, apostolic exhortation, 10/16/79)

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”

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National Directory for Catechesis (USCCB, 2005, chapter 4, sec. 29, p. 101)

“Within the Christian family, parents are the primary educators in the faith and ‘the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.’ ...Family members learn more of the Christian life by observing each other’s strengths and weaknesses than by formal instruction. They learn intermittently rather than systematically, occasionally rather than in structured periods.”

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Lumen Gentium, (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church 11/21/64), No. 11

“In what might be regarded as the domestic church, the parents, by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.”