

Appendix 12: Definitions of Terms Pertaining to Right of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Catechumen vs. Candidate

A Catechumen is a person who has not been baptized. He or she probably has not had much or any faith formation. Therefore, the instruction of Catechumens should be more basic and intense, since Christianity itself must be presented, along with Catholicism.

A Candidate is a person who has been baptized in a Protestant denomination, and more than likely has had some or much faith formation. Therefore, the instruction of Candidates can be geared more toward the teachings of the Catholic Church, and may not take as long.

Catechumens and Candidates, if possible, should not be taught together in one homogeneous group. Catechumens should always be baptized, confirmed and receive Holy Communion for the first time at the Easter Vigil. Candidates may be received into the Church at any time during the year after the Pastor has determined they are ready. The Pastor must receive delegation from the Bishop to confirm persons outside of the Easter Vigil.

Prior Marriages

The Church's teaching on marriage is normally presented at some point during the year (or longer) of instruction. However, each individual or couple who is seriously considering entering the Church (whether through baptism or reception) should be interviewed regarding prior bonds.

A Catechumen or Candidate who is divorced, but not re-married or considering re-marriage, is not required to undergo the annulment process during the time of instruction. Such persons, though, will need to have any and all prior bonds examined by the Office of Canonical Services when he/she wishes to remarry in the Church. They should be instructed to immediately contact the Office of Canonical Services (701-222-3035) to begin this process.

A Candidate who has been divorced and is currently re-married will need to have his/her prior attempt(s) at marriage examined before being baptized or received into the Church. If the couple agrees to live as brother and sister until such time as the prior bond(s) have been declared invalid, they/he/she may be baptized or received into the Church.

Convalidation

It is not always necessary for a couple who are married and then one or both enter the Church to have their marriage convalidated. If one or both were not baptized, their marriage automatically becomes a sacramental union with the baptism of the person(s).

If one of the parties in the marriage was Catholic but the couple married outside the Church without dispensation from canonical form, then a Catholic ceremony is required prior to the other party being received into the Church.

The civil union is to be convalidated prior to the Easter Vigil and the ceremony should be held on the morning of Holy Saturday. In that case, dispensation for disparity of worship or permission for mixed religion, along with permission for convalidation, is required.