

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 had very little, if 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 on 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, as soon as possible, in the RCIA process.

A Catechumen or Candidate who is divorced, but not re-married and is not considering re-marriage, is not required to undergo the annulment process during the time of instruction. It needs to be made clear, however, that if he/she ever wishes to marry in the Church, all prior bonds must be successfully proven null in a Church Tribunal.

A Catechumen or Candidate who has been divorced and is currently re-married will need to have his/her prior attempt(s) at marriage successfully proven null in a Church Tribunal before being baptized or received into the Church. A Catechumen or Candidate who is divorced but considering remarriage, either by way of a committed dating relationship or engagement, also needs to have his/her prior attempt(s) at marriage successfully proven null in a Church Tribunal before being 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.

If a Catholic ceremony is held for the couple, it should be done after the Easter Vigil. At that point, the only permission required is that of permission for convalidation. If the couple desires to convalidate their union prior to the Easter Vigil, 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.