



RCIA catechesis throughout the parish

Objective: This session will show you how to significantly increase the level of catechesis the parish provides, without adding any more volunteers to your process and barely any more work to your to-do list.

If you want to significantly increase the level of catechesis your parish provides, you need to rely on your primary team member—the parish community.

The parish *is* the curriculum

Just for fun, I Googled “parish calendar.” I chose one of the parishes that popped up to see what they have going on. I counted over 20 potential catechetical events in just one week! And only one of those events was run by the “catechetical ministry” of the parish.

I looked at a few more calendars, and then I made up my own fictional version based on a mash-up of several typical parishes. Your parish won’t have all the events I’ve listed, but you’ll have others that I didn’t. In [*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*](#), the U.S. bishops said the parish *is* the curriculum (p. 41). Your parish calendar is **your** RCIA curriculum for the catechumens.

[Click here to download](#) my fictionalized calendar for a parish curriculum. This is a suggested catechetical plan, based on the calendar I made up, for a typical parish. You will need to rely on the sponsors to help you implement this plan. If the sponsors are not up to the task, you can still pull this off, but it will mean more coordination and follow up from you or from another team member.

Two keys to success

To make a plan like this successful, there are two important points to keep in mind. First, this will not work in an abbreviated catechumenate that is squished into the fall and winter months before Lent—October through February, for example. A catechesis that is “complete in its coverage” (RCIA 75.1) will require at least one full liturgical year (see National Statutes for the Catechumenate, 6).

And secondly, this plan is not for baptized candidates who want to complete their initiation or be received into full communion. If the candidates are completely uncatechized—meaning they have no relationship with or understanding of Jesus—then they “may participate in the elements of catechumenal formation so far as necessary and appropriate...” (National Statutes for the Catechumenate, 31).

However, a great many of our baptized candidates have received *some* catechesis. Those folks should not be treated as catechumens. You

For this plan, we're going to assume your next Rite of Acceptance will be celebrated on Sunday, September 28. The dates don't really matter, however. In this fictional plan, you would hold a traditional, doctrinal catechesis session once a month. During the other weeks of the month, the sponsors would take the catechumens to parish events. The participation of the catechumens in the life of the parish is how you will meet all the criteria of paragraph 75 of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These criteria are grouped under the broad catechetical categories of word, community, worship, and service.

will need to create a different, less intense, less lengthy process for these folks. Many times, they will need only some brief instruction in Catholic traditions that they may be unfamiliar with or may have some difficulty fully accepting.

A month of parish-wide catechesis

So a typical month of catechesis would look like this:

Week 1

- Sunday Mass with dismissal
- Formal catechetical session with catechumens and sponsors

Week 2

- Sunday Mass with dismissal
- Sponsors take catechumens to a parish small group
- Informal mystagogical reflection with catechumens after the event

Week 3

- Sunday Mass with dismissal
- Sponsors take catechumens to parishioner homes for dinner
- Informal mystagogical reflection with catechumens during or after dinner

Week 4

- Sunday Mass with dismissal
- Sponsors take catechumens to a parish committee
- Informal mystagogical reflection with catechumens after the event

This is simply a suggested template, and you don't have to follow this exact pattern each month. I would encourage you, however, to include at least one formal catechetical session each month. You can use a resource like *Faith, Life & Creed* for that. And, as much as possible, try to have the catechumens in different parishioners' homes for dinner once a month or at least every other month.

For the informal mystagogical reflection, you could train the sponsors to ask depth questions of their catechumens about their experiences. You could also ask the catechumens to keep a journal of their experiences and discuss those during your monthly formal catechetical sessions.

Mystagogical questions

Here are some examples of mystagogical reflection questions:

- From your experience here, what have you learned about our community?
- Did you experience the presence of God here? In what ways?
- Did God's Word speak to you in this event? How?
- From what you witnessed, how would you identify the mission or purpose of our parish?
- What was a high point for you? What was boring or not engaging?
- Based on what happened, how will you try to live differently this week?

Once the catechumens have successfully completed their year-long catechumenate and you have discerned that they are ready to become elect, the role of the parish community in the formation process changes. That's what we'll look at in the next session.

Please go to <http://tinyurl.com/wpeval5> to evaluate this session.
