

Rehearsal Outlines

REHEARSAL OUTLINE: RITE OF ACCEPTANCE (RCIA 48-68)

(This schedule assumes it is still light enough at the beginning of rehearsal to read outdoors. If that is not the case, adjust the rehearsal time or provide light.)

6:30 Before everyone arrives turn on lights and set up microphones; put the lectionary or Book of Gospels on the ambo; put the presider's script or ritual book on his chair; put the catechumenate director's script on her chair or pew; place name tags in the pews where you want the catechumens and their sponsors to sit.

If necessary, mark the spots in the aisles where the catechumens will stand with a piece of masking tape.

7:00 Welcome the participants: the presider, the director of the catechumenate, the sponsors, an acolyte to hold the presider's book, a cross bearer, perhaps a hospitality minister, and perhaps the musician. (The inquirers are not present.) Ask the presider, sponsors, acolyte, and catechumenate director to sit in their places. Lead a brief prayer.

7:05 Remind the sponsors of these essential points; be lighthearted, but still convey the importance of the information:

- Point out to the sponsors that this rite has two primary elements—the embrace of the cross and the gospel way of life and the crossing over the threshold.
- Sponsors need to pick up their inquirers from home or meet them in front of the church before Mass.
- The sponsors and inquirers remain outside the church; the assembly will be processing out to greet them. They need to stand with their candidates at the places you will show them in a minute.

- From the minute they meet their inquirer on Sunday, until the minute the new catechumens are dismissed, the sponsors need to be in physical contact. A hand on an arm or shoulder at all times.
- It is the sponsors' responsibility to know the details of the rite. They need to project an air of confidence and always reassure the inquirer that things are under control.

7:15 *Receiving the candidates:* Ask the cross bearer to retrieve the cross and lead everyone outside. Remind the sponsors they will already be outside.



Ask the musician to prepare an appropriate processional song that can be sung without books.

If you have a hospitality minister, ask her to stay close to the cross bearer and open the doors.

Greeting: The rite presumes the presider is greeting the candidates. If he is unfamiliar with them or with the rite, the director of the catechumenate might also greet them. Whoever greets, it should be warm and inviting. No text is given in the rite, so you may need to compose something. Ask the presider to rehearse it now.

Opening dialogue: This should flow directly from the greeting and should not seem like an additional part of the liturgy. Adapt the text in the rite to have the presider speak to the sponsors. He should ask the sponsors to introduce their companions to the assembly. Ask the sponsors to practice what they will say. Remind them to speak loudly so everyone outside can hear. Go through each one. Once all are introduced, he asks each inquirer individually, “N., *what do you ask of God’s church?*”

Ask the sponsors (or a proxy for the candidates if you have other team members at the rehearsal) to answer something (anything) as though they were the inquirer for the sake of rehearsal. If you have prepared the inquirers as suggested in chapter 10, they will not likely answer, “Faith.” The presider will need to remember what each person asks for and respond, “N., *what does [what the inquirer said] offer you?*”

Alert the sponsors to remember the inquirers’ answers. They will need to repeat them later in the rite.

7:25 *Candidates’ first Acceptance of the Gospel:* Remember this is not the acceptance of the Book of Gospels or a Bible, but rather the gospel way of life. At

this point the cross bearer gives the cross to the presider who then stands with it directly in front the first inquirer.

The sponsor or the presider assists the inquirer in wrapping his hands around the cross, and the presider covers the inquirer's hands with his own. Recalling what the inquirer asked for, the presider says, "N., *this is [what the inquirer said].*"

He then continues spontaneously, using one of the three texts at paragraph 52 as a model. If your presider is not good at speaking spontaneously or if he is unfamiliar with the rite, put option C in his script. However, change the phrase, "This is eternal life" to "This is _____". The presider will fill in the blank with whatever the inquirer asked for and then continue on with the text as written.

Have him rehearse this now, using the answers given by the inquirer stand-ins for practice.



There can be a sung acclamation after each inquirer accepts the teachings of the gospel.

7:35 Affirmation by the sponsors and the assembly: Have the presider ask for the affirmation as given at paragraph 53.

Signing of the candidates with the cross: Decide before rehearsal if you are going to sign the candidates only on the forehead or sign all their senses (see paragraph 56).

Also decide beforehand if the presider is going to physically sign each candidate or if he will make a sign of the cross over all of them together.

Speak to the sponsors now, and convey these points:

- They should still have their hand on their candidates.
- After the presider signs the candidates (either one by one or all together), they turn to face their candidates, keeping a hand on them.
- They then make the sign of the cross on their candidate's forehead.
- They do this with an open palm, *not a thumb*.
- They apply some pressure so the candidate *feels* the cross.
- As the presider calls out each of the other senses, the sponsors press an open-palm sign of the cross into each sense named. Have them practice this action on each other, going through each sign.
- For the final signing, the sponsors, along with the presider, make a large sign of the cross over the candidates' whole body (without touching them).
- Point out that from this point on, the candidates are catechumens.

 Ideally, there is a sung acclamation after each declaration of the sense to be signed. The sponsors do the actual signing as the acclamation is sung.

Concluding prayer: Choose before rehearsal option A or B at paragraph 57.

 The concluding prayer could be sung by the presider.

Invitation to the celebration of the Word of God: Have the presider read the line at paragraph 60. The procession is led by the cross, followed by the catechumens and their sponsors, followed by the presider, followed by the rest of the assembly.

Once inside the church, have the sponsors sit where you have reserved spaces for them.

The Liturgy of the Word

7:45 *Presentation of a Bible:* Decide before the rehearsal if you are going to include this optional part of the rite. Decide also if you are going to adapt it to be a presentation of the Book of Gospels. (See chapter 9.) If you are including the rite, tell the sponsors these details:

- Remind them that they need to remember what their catechumens previously asked from the church at the beginning of the liturgy and what that offers them.
- After the homily, the presider will ask the catechumens to please stand.
- The sponsors will then lead their catechumens to the spots you've designated. (Have them go there now.)
- Remind them to keep a hand on their catechumens.
- The director of the catechumenate or another minister goes to the ambo to get the Book of Gospels, or she retrieves the Bibles. (Have her go there now.)
- The director will then present the (open) Book of Gospels or a Bible to each catechumen.

Ask the director to walk to the first catechumen and stand there as though the catechumen were in front of her.

The director then says to the catechumen, "N., receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Now have the sponsor mime taking the catechumen's hand and placing it on

the book. (Alternatively, you could have the catechumens kiss the book after the following dialogue).

At this point, the sponsor speaks to the catechumen by name, recalling what he asked for and offering a hope that what he seeks will be found in the Word. For example, “N., this Gospel offers [*peace*] that surpasses all understanding. May you find in it [*a community of love*] to support you on your journey.”

Remind the sponsors they won’t know exactly what to say until the day of the ritual when they hear what their candidates ask for.

Ask the director to go to each position, and have each sponsor practice.



The assembly can sing an acclamation as the director processes from catechumen to catechumen.

7:55 Intercessions: Explain that the intercessions and the prayer over the catechumens will be prayed at this point. (There is no need to actually read through them.) Tell the sponsors that they remain at their places with their catechumen during the intercessions.

Point out to the sponsors that these are intercessions *for* the catechumens and not the prayer of the faithful that we usually do at Mass.

(Remind them to keep a hand on their catechumen.)



The intercessions could be chanted.

Dismissal: The presider reads the dismissal line. (Write one or choose one of the options in the ritual text before rehearsal.)

The director of the catechumenate exits down the main aisle, carrying the Book of Gospels or the lectionary.

Tell the sponsors to tell the catechumens at that point to follow the book. Remind them that the catechumens might be momentarily confused. The sponsors should make sure the catechumens know what to do.

After the catechumens have left, the sponsors will return to their pews.



There would ordinarily be an acclamation as the catechumens leave.

8:00 End: Thank the sponsors for their time and their commitment. Remind them to be in front of the church 15 minutes early. Make sure they have your e-mail address and cell phone number in case they have any questions.

This material was excerpted from *The Way of Faith: A Field Guide for the RCIA Process*.

To learn more about this team-training resource or to order copies, go to tinyurl.com/wayoffaith

