

Terms related to Christian Initiation

Advent – A period of four weeks prior to Christmas. It has a twofold theme: preparing for the Second Coming of Christ and preparing for the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Candidate – One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who now is preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of reception, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed, and receive Eucharist. In the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, “candidate” is also used for those participating in the precatechumenate (baptized and unbaptized).

Catechumen – An unbaptized person who has entered the order of catechumens in the Church through celebration of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. Catechumens are preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through baptism, confirmation and Eucharist.

Catechumenate – Second period of the Christian initiation of adults, which involves intense preparation in word, worship, community life, and apostolic works.

Initiation of Children – The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults includes the initiation process adapted for children of catechetical age (which usually means seven years and older).

Cycles A, B, C – The three-year cycle of liturgical readings: Cycle A: Matthew; Cycle B: Mark; Cycle C: Luke. All three cycles incorporate John.

Easter Season – A period of seven weeks beginning with Easter Sunday and ending with the feast of Pentecost.

Elect – The name given to catechumens who celebrate the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent, signifying their being chosen by God for the initiation sacraments.

Evangelization – In the context of the initiation of adults, evangelization is the task of the Church during the precatechumenate. It involves the inviting, welcoming, witness, and sharing of faith, and the proclamation of the Gospel to inquirers/candidates.

Inquirers – Those who participate in the precatechumenate of a parish. They are “inquiring” into Christianity in the Catholic Tradition.

Lectionary – The book used in liturgical celebrations that contains the scripture readings of the liturgical year.

Lent – A six-week period extending from Ash Wednesday to sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a retreat time for the Church in preparation for the Easter Triduum.

Liturgical Year – The seasons and cycles of the Christian year. It is the instrument and means for leading God’s people along the way to the Lord. The prayers and readings introduce and invite us into the Paschal Mystery. The liturgical year includes: Christmas Cycle (First Sunday of Advent through the Baptism of the Lord), Easter Cycle (Ash Wednesday through Pentecost), and Ordinary Time.

Minor Rites – Rites during the period of the catechumenate which include exorcisms, blessings, and anointings.

Mystagogy – The fourth and final period of the Christian initiation of adults, which is from Easter to Pentecost. The U.S. National Statutes envision an extended mystagogy for one year.

Neophyte – One who has been initiated at the Easter Vigil. The term comes from the Greek word meaning new plant, as in a new sprout on a limb/branch.

Ninety Days – A term used to mean the combination of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and the Period of Mystagogy which corresponds with Lent (40 days) and the Easter Season (50 days).

Ordinary Time – The third cycle within the liturgical year in addition to the major liturgical seasons (i.e., Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter). This time provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of God’s gift to us in Christ, our attitudes, our prayer life, and our service to others.

Precatechumenate – First period of the Christian initiation of adults, which is the initial introduction of an inquirer into the Christian way of life in the Catholic Tradition. It is also the period of evangelization on the part of the Church.

Presentation – During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the elect are presented with the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer through special rites. For pastoral reasons, both presentations can be anticipated during the Period of the Catechumenate.

Purification and Enlightenment – Third period of the Christian initiation of adults, which usually coincides with the Season of Lent. It is the final period of preparation for initiation at the Easter Vigil.

RCIA – Acronym for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for use in scholarly references to identify the text paragraph. The term RCIA is discouraged for popular usage.

Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults – English title of *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*. This is the official collection of rites of the Roman Catholic Church for initiation of adults (including children of catechetical age) and the reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Rite of *Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens* – The bridge between the precatechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.

Rite of Welcome – The bridge between the inquiry period and the period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate. It is for those already baptized.

Rite of Election – Presided over by the bishop, this rite inaugurates the final period of preparation for the catechumens (unbaptized) before initiation. It is the bridge between the catechumenate and purification and enlightenment.

Rite of *Call to Continuing Conversion* – Coincides with election, but is the rite for the already baptized (candidates).

Scrutiny – Three rites of exorcism for elect (unbaptized) during Lent.

Penitential Rite – Celebration for candidates, similar to rite of scrutiny.

Sacraments of Initiation – Usually celebrated at the Easter Vigil; include baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

Sunday -The first day in the Christian liturgical week, the original feast day, the heart of the calendar, the basis and nucleus of the liturgical year.

Triduum -The “three days” of the celebration of Easter, which begins with sundown on Holy Thursday evening and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. Includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.