



RCIA Workshop

Sponsors & Intentional Accompaniment

6 June 2024



Agenda

- Opening prayer
- OCIA Updates
- The Role of the Sponsor
- break
- Sponsor Training
- Lunch & Fellowship



Opening Prayer: 2 Timothy 2:8-15

Beloved:

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David:

such is my Gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal.

But the word of God is not chained.

Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen,

so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus,

together with eternal glory.

This saying is trustworthy:

If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him.

But if we deny him he will deny us.

If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Remind people of these things and charge them before God to stop disputing about words.

This serves no useful purpose since it harms those who listen.

Be eager to present yourself as acceptable to God,

a workman who causes no disgrace, imparting the word of truth without deviation.



New Translation—we have a decree of promulgation!!!

- OCIA available for purchase November 1
- WORKSHOP led by Liturgy Dept & EFLM on November 12
- Optional use beginning December 1
- Mandatory use beginning March 1 (Ash Wednesday)

Changes to Expect

- Clarity of differences between candidate vs catechumen
- Clearer, more concise language throughout
- More user friendly for actual rites

National Statutes—What are they?

- The particular "laws of the land" for the United States as written by the USCCB
- Have canonical weight
 - canon 788 §3 → "It is for the conference of bishops to issue statutes which regulate the catechumenate by determining what things must be expected of the catechumens and by defining what prerogatives are to be recognized as theirs"
- New National Statutes effective December 1, 2024
- Contain 18 norms as opposed to the 37 norms previously and with clearer language
- Sections for each period of RCIA in addition to particular circumstances and initiation-related acts

Note: our department is not a compliance organization, but you should have a conversation among your parish about a plan to eventually move towards/arrive at these standards set by the USCCB!

Some Highlights to Draw Attention to in the NS

Norm 4 Ordinarily, a person who has entered the catechumenate **is to remain in it from at least the Easter Time of one year until the beginning of the Easter Time of the next year**; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year.

Norm 6 The formation of catechumens is to be comprehensive. It is to be:

1° suited to the liturgical year and **supported by the Church's liturgy**;

2° **rooted in Sacred Scripture, the truths of Catholic doctrine and the moral life, and aided by catechetical texts**, such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, texts based upon that Catechism, such as the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, and other texts approved by the local ordinary;

3° **exercised in works of service and charity** (OCIA 75).

Norm 8 Upon entry into the catechumenate, catechumens incur the following obligations:

1° They are to participate in the Liturgy of the Word, preferably on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, with the community if possible (see OCIA 81);

2° They will continually purify their motivation for Baptism, live an upright life, and **be ready to witness to their conversion to Christ**, as they seek to grow in their knowledge of and assent to what the Church believes and teaches (CIC cc. 206 and 865 §1).



The Role of the Sponsor



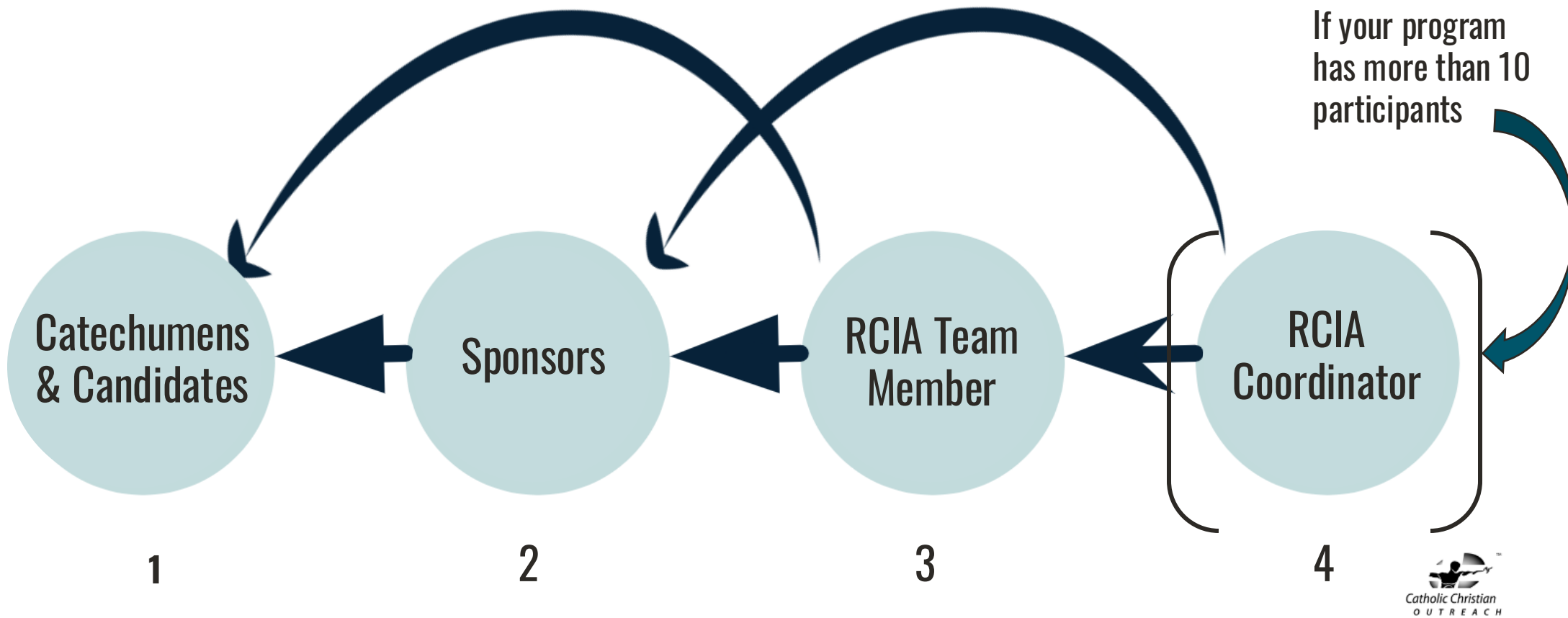
"A sponsor **accompanies** any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are persons who **have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention.**" (RCIA 10)

What should we be expecting of our sponsors?

- Accompaniment (*aka ministry's favorite buzzword*)
 - Individualized attention to each catechumen's faith journey
- Ability to testify to catechumen's:
 - Moral character
 - Faith
 - Intention

**How can we actually
implement this into our RCIA
program practically?**





You may ask, *"Why reinvent the wheel?"*

"Is all of this really necessary?"

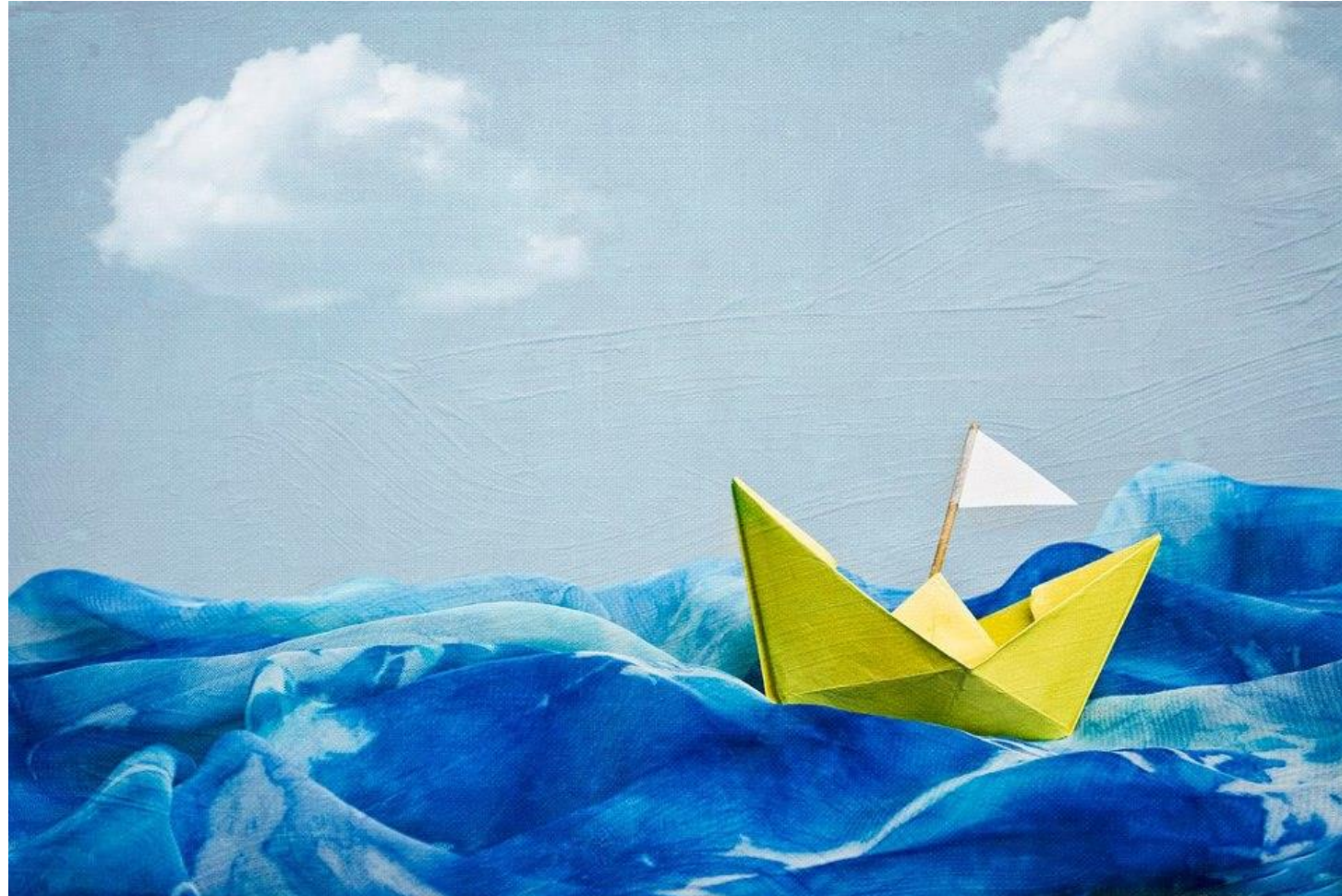
"This seems too complicated!"



Why (4)-3-2-1 is worth the try!

- Individualized attention to each catechumen/candidate's spiritual growth (not just academic) without overburdening RCIA Coordinator
- Provides a clearer image to the catechumen/candidate of who you have to be to be Catholic (i.e. they don't have to have all the answers!)
- Ensures that the experience of RCIA is "individualized" while still maintaining the group/cohort model for community & learning together
- Strengthens the role of *sponsor* to the intended role as described in the RCIA handbook
- Simultaneously helps the sponsors grow in holiness by guiding them into becoming missionary disciples

Dispositions to Infuse into Your Program for Intentional Accompaniment



Dispositions: Direction



Where are we going?

What is our context?

What happens when we don't have clarity on the destination?

Dispositions: Docility

What am I hearing? What am I not hearing?

What sound should I respond to?

What observance should be parked for later?



constant dialogue with the Holy Spirit

Dispositions: Detachment



Holy Indifference

"My People"

Readiness

Patience

Discuss at your tables:

Which disposition is the hardest for you? Why do you think that is?

Break



Sponsor Training



Sponsor Recruitment

Who should our sponsors be?

- Mature Catholics (at least one year past their own initiation)
- Consistent prayer life and relationship with the Lord (and can verbalize what that looks like)
- Good at seeing people and getting to know others deeply

Where should we look for sponsors?

- The "quiet and consistent" faithful that may not be involved in parish ministries yet—it's possible they haven't felt that they were qualified to ever be in a ministry but would do well living out their missional call in a one-on-one environment

Questions when Vetting a Potential Sponsor:

- How would you describe your relationship with God?
- What does accompaniment mean to you?
- Describe one of your friendships. What makes it a good friendship?
- Which teaching of the Church is the hardest for you to understand or come to terms with? Why?
- What do you do when you come across something in the Church that you disagree with or don't understand?

Suggestions for (4)-3-2-1 Implementation

- Request that the sponsor connects with the catechumen every single week. Two of these meetings should be an intentional "1 on 1" meetings regarding their faith journey and the content that was covered/prayer practices that were introduced
- After every one of these "1 on 1" meetings, the sponsor should give a sense of where the catechumen is at to either a Team Lead or the Coordinator (dependent on the size of the parish)
- These insights from the sponsor can and should spark meetings between the coordinator and the sponsor to discuss how to best help the catechumen along their faith journey

4 Elements of the 1-1 Sponsor Meeting

Rapport

Survey

Zoom

Strengthen

Authenticity

Attentiveness

Honoring Commitments

Relating & Sharing

Celebration &
Encouragement

4 Elements of the 1-1 Sponsor Meeting

Rapport

Survey

Zoom

Strengthen

"What is going on here?"

Seeking to understand

"I hear you saying x, what do you mean by that?"

Their narrative, not yours

4 Elements of the 1-1 Sponsor Meeting

Rapport

Survey

Zoom

Strengthen

Clarify and unpack:

"Why is this happening?"

"What is the Lord saying?"

"What is being revealed?"

Deepening the grace of
the encounter

4 Elements of the 1-1 Sponsor Meeting

Rapport

Survey

Zoom

Strengthen

New insights, like new construction, require stability and support

Practical next steps (prayer, follow-up, etc)

Let's Play this Out!

Topic of the Month: Marriage and Family Ethics

- Survey question- What is your experience of marriage?
 - Survey (seek to understand)
 - Zoom (deepen the encounter)
 - Strengthen (support the new insight/respond)
- Survey question- How do you feel about God being a part of your relationships?
 - Survey (seek to understand)
 - Zoom (deepen the encounter)
 - Strengthen (support the new insight/respond)

Now Let's Practice!

Topic of the Month: Mary

Survey questions

- What were your thoughts about Mary before this lesson? What are they now?
- What is your relationship like with your earthly mother?
- How do you feel about having a relationship with Mary as your heavenly mother?

Rapport

introduce yourself

Survey

seek to understand

Zoom

clarify and unpack

Strengthen

support and practical next steps

Creating Your Sponsor Training

- Focus on how to walk with people!
 - How to ask survey questions and zoom in where necessary
 - How to teach prayer (inviting others alongside in prayer)
 - How to model the Christian life (what to do when you have a question, what to do when you sin, what to do when you want to encounter Christ, etc)
- Resources:
 - *Intentional Accompaniment* by Michael Hall
 - Evangelization Workshop (hosted by the ArchDen :)
 - *Your Roadmap to a Conversion-Centered Catechumenate* by John McGlynn

Save the Dates for the next RCIA Workshops:

Note the changes in red

August 6- Parish Leadership Summit w/ Andre Regnier

August 22- Navigating Annulments & Other Circumstances

October 10- Discerning Readiness in Seekers

November 12- Christian Initiation New Translation

December 5- Community Involvement in the RCIA

