



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

of the Essential Catechumenal Formation for
the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

The Office of Evangelization
and Family Life Ministries

Introduction

In 2024 the USCCB promulgated a revised edition of the “Order of Christian Initiation of Adults”. Though the primary update was a more accurate English translation of the liturgical rites associated with initiation, the Archdiocese of Denver saw this as an opportunity to consider what would make initiation ministry effective in this apostolic like time. This reflection led to a set of “core convictions” that both the Archbishop and the Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries share about what would make Catholic initiation ministry most fruitful in the coming years. These convictions are:

- **The norm of a “one year minimum” in the catechumenate** is crucial for truly apprenticing catechumens in the Christian life and preparing them for lifelong discipleship (Norm 4, OCIA 76).
- **The “Evangelization Period” should be happening year-round**, allowing parishes to begin walking with those interested in joining the Church at any point in the year and ensuring that sufficient human/material resources are dedicated to the work of evangelization in the parish (OCIA 36-38).
- **There should be at least (2) opportunities for individuals to begin the catechumenate during the year** (at least two Rite of Entrance offered) (OCIA 18).
- **The formation provided to catechumens should be wholistic** (not focused solely on intellectual formation) **and be experienced as an “apprenticeship”** (OCIA 75).
- **The role of a parish sponsor should be better leveraged** to ensure each catechumen is intentionally accompanied throughout their preparation for the sacraments (OCIA 10, 75).
- **Reasonable similarities should exist between initiation ministries within the Archdiocese** to ensure that all catechumens receive comparable formation in preparation for their full initiation. Reasonable similarities should exist in content, duration, and experience (OCIA 34, 77).

Incorporating these convictions into an average parish initiation ministry (OCIA program) will likely involve a significant restructuring. Given this reality, the Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries has been working to flesh out an example of what a practical application of these convictions may look like in the parochial setting. That is the main purpose of this document.

This document outlines our best attempt at describing the “destination”, a snapshot of Catholic initiation ministry at a parish which has fully implemented the core convictions.

The process of working towards this destination will likely entail a multi-year process of addressing/implementing certain aspects over time. Since the context of each parish’s current initiation ministry is unique, it’s not possible to provide specifics or a “one size fits all” implementation plan for the above core convictions. The Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries is equipped and excited to work with any of our parishes on an individual basis to think through an effective transition strategy.

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(2) Two Different Approaches to Structuring Catholic Initiation Ministry: Liturgical vs Linear

A fundamental question arises when planning to allow individuals to enter the Catechumenate more than one time per year. “How should the Catechumenate be structured if individuals are entering this stage at multiple times throughout the year”? There seem to be two distinct options, both based on sound/reasonable theological opinions.

The first option, the one which the Archdiocese of Denver would highly encourage, **is to organize the formation in the catechumenate based on the liturgical year** (Norm 6) and have only (1) group for catechumens. Meaning, regardless of what time of the year an individual enters the catechumenate through the Rite of Entrance, they join the group of all catechumens who meet regularly throughout the year. This individual would then remain in the catechumenate for at least one year, receiving the entire formation of the catechumenate (even if their “starting point” in that formation may be different than other individuals). This prevents the parish from needing to organize multiple cohorts of catechumens receiving different formation based on when they entered the catechumenate (as required by the linear approach). Because the catechetical formation is organized topically based on the liturgical year and *not sequentially as presented in the catechism*, catechumens would never enter the catechumenate feeling like they’ve “missed out on (x) months and need to catch up”. We would encourage parishes to provide a short “onboarding period” for new catechumens to help orient them to the catechumenate before inserting them into regular sessions. An example of how you might organize formation based on the liturgical year can be found on page 4-5 and in depth starting on page 18.

The second option would be to organize the formation in the catechumenate in a “linear” way, based on the order that catechetical topics are arranged in the Catechism. Since, in this approach, formation would be *sequential* and *linear* there would not be an effective way to invite “new” catechumens to join formation once it has begun; each new set of catechumens would need to start “at the beginning” of the formation as a new cohort and complete an entire year of formation prior to attending the Rite of Election. **This approach would require the parish to be forming multiple cohorts of catechumens simultaneously.** An example of how you might organize formation in a sequential/linear way can be found on page 6-9 and continued starting on page 24.

Though this document gives more attention/detail to the catechumenate (the second of the four stages of the process of initiation) you will also find information on the period of “Purification and Enlightenment”, “Mystagogy” and the “Neophyte Year”. For a more substantial overview of the “Period of Evangelization”, the Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries will be releasing a standalone document entitled, “Vision for Parish Evangelization” which will be found on missionsupport.archden.org. In addition to descriptions/suggestions for the different periods of the initiation journey, you will also find information about the role of sponsors, an explanation of proper use cases for the minor and optional rites in the OCIA during the Catechumenate, and a possible list of the volunteers/teams to build up for full implementation of this kind of model.

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What to do when a catechumen is in the catechumenate longer than 12 months?

Depending on the timing of their entrance into the catechumenate and when the next Easter vigil would fall after spending a year in formation, it's likely that some catechumens will have additional time in the catechumenate period after they've completed one year of formation. This "extra time" should *not* be viewed as "fluff time" or "lag time". This period of time, after a catechumen has finished the full cycle of formation during a catechumenal year and before they experience the Rite of Election, is **a privileged time for their sponsor to continue to apprentice them in the natural process of "ongoing" or "lifelong" formation**. The sponsor should take the time to explain and accompany the catechumen in the process of discerning what the Holy Spirit is inviting them to go deeper with and how to find resources to support this deepening of their faith. This is foundational "apprenticeship" for what will become the primary task of their Christian spiritual life going forward.

This document is solely focused on formation for catechumens

A final introductory word, this document is primarily about how to prepare an unbaptized and uncatechized individual for initiation. It does not take into account the context and necessary adaptations which are required when walking with validly baptized individuals seeking full communion with the Catholic Church (commonly referred to as "candidates") or when receiving an unbaptized but highly catechized seeker. We believe that the first step in providing updated resources and strategies for effectively accompanying candidates or Catholics seeking the remaining sacraments of initiation is to clarify the formation and strategies for the unbaptized. You can expect additional resources to be created and shared in the near future which will address these additional contexts.

Example of How to Structure Formation: Liturgical Year

Onboarding

- God's Pursuit of Humanity
- What is a Sacrament?
- Addressing a Secular Worldview
- What is Prayer, How to Pray, & How to Use the Bible

December

- Who is Jesus Christ?
- The Blessed Virgin Mary
- *With Sponsor: Witnessing to the Faith in Words*

January

- Sacraments of Initiation and Baptism
- The Universal Call to Mission
- *With Sponsor: Witness to the Faith in Deeds*

February

- Marriage
- Commandments 6 & 9 and Theology of the Body

March

- Sacraments of Healing and Penance/Reconciliation
- Commandments 7, 8, and 10 and Catholic Social Teaching
- *With Sponsor: Introduction to Fasting*

April

- Creation
- The Paschal Mystery
- *With Sponsor: How to Hear God's Voice*

May

- Sacraments of Initiation and Confirmation
- The Holy Spirit
- *With Sponsor: Praying with the Holy Spirit*

June

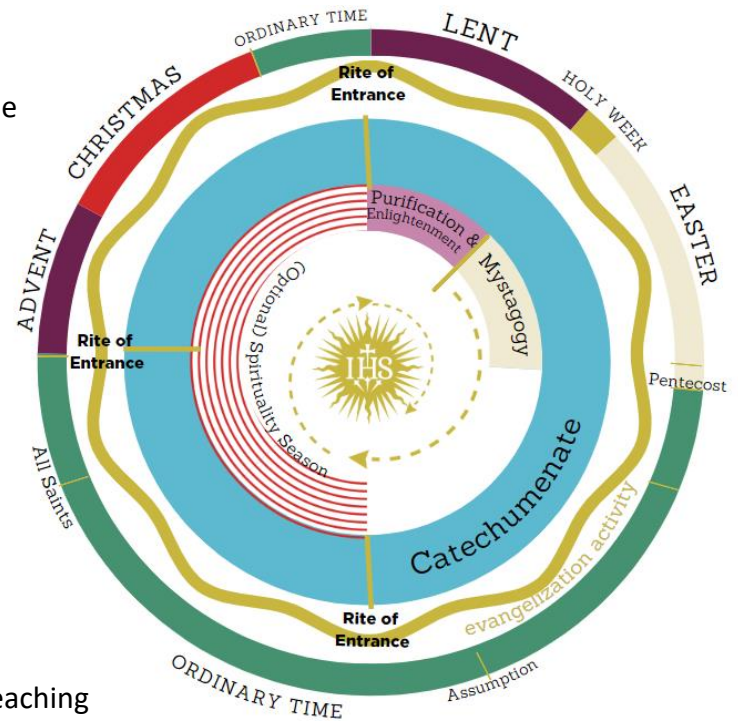
- The Trinity
- *With Sponsor: Communal Prayer*

July

- Healing Sacraments & Anointing of the Sick
- *With Sponsor: Popular Devotions*

August

- Sacraments of Initiation and Eucharist
- Commandments 4 & 5 and What Does it Mean to Be Human?
- *With Sponsor: How to Pray the Mass*



September

- Holy Orders
- Consecrated Life
- *With Sponsor: Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy*

October

- The Church (One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic)
- Commandments 1-3 and Ecumenism and Treatment of the New Age
- *With Sponsor: Forgiveness*

November

- The Final Judgement
- The Saints and the Angels
- *With Sponsor: intercession of the saints*

Example of How to Structure Formation: Liturgical Year (cont.)

For a catechumen to be able to enter at any point in the year, it is necessary that a brief “onboarding” occur for the first month to give context to all of the topics coming up. These topics can be taught one on one or in a small group of catechumens upon entrance to the catechumenate. Upon completion, the catechumens enter whatever month of the catechumenate and remain in for a minimum the completion of all months of the catechumenate.

You will also notice that the introductions to the Sacraments are repeated throughout the year. This is to give context to the sacraments and reaffirm their connection to the other sacraments. The explanation of Ordinary time is also repeated for clarification.

Onboarding (to be completed at the beginning of the catechumen’s journey):

God’s pursuit of humanity

- God has constantly been pursuing communion with humanity
- Briefly go over the stories of Noah, Abraham, Moses (before and after freedom from Egyptian captivity), David, and Solomon with the intention of highlighting God’s pursuit of man
- Should be made aware of the Bible as divine revelation & divine inspiration from God

What is a sacrament

- Difference between a covenant and a contract
- The Sacraments and the Pascal Mystery (Connection to Christ life and the Liturgy)
- The effect of the Sacraments and the grace they impart
 - (Transmission of Christ’s life into us)

Addressing a Secular Worldview

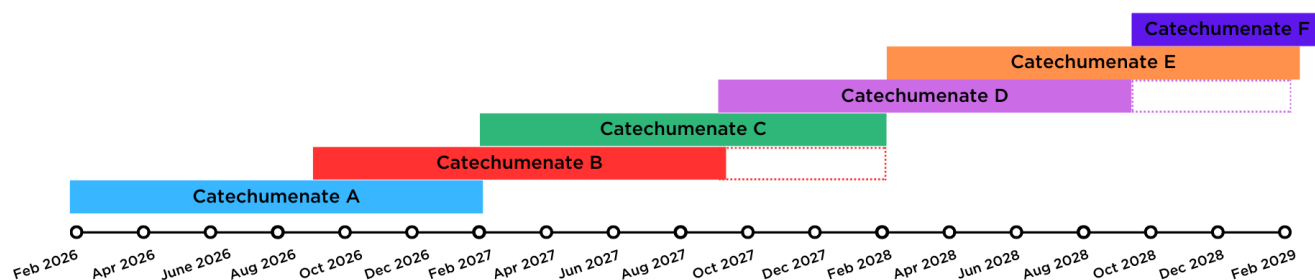
- Man-centered, performance-based salvation, reliance on the self
- Moral Therapeutic Deism, Hyper-individualism, subjective truth & reinvention (Relativism)
 - With each of the above topics, introducing the “counter” Christian Worldview: the Gospel (the inverse of the secular worldview)

Beginning explanation of “What is prayer?” and “How to pray?” and How to Use the Bible

- Prayer is “communion with God”, “dialogue”, etc
- Exposure to different ways of praying, such as: imaginative prayer, lectio or visio divina, vocal prayer, praise and worship, etc.
- Introduction on how to use the Bible
- Basic instruction on how to find chapter/verse, where to find the Gospels, etc.
- Explanation that the Church helps us learn more about the context and content of the bible
- Praying with scripture is a foundational spiritual practice, assist them in building the habit

For additional outlining for the Liturgical Year, please refer to page (18) at the end of this document.

Examples of How to Structure Formation: Linear Model



*It is suggested that in the first year of implementation, the first group of catechumens (**Catechumenate A**) begin formation in February and follow the structure below. After a presumed “Rite of Entrance” in August, the second group (**Catechumenate B**) would begin formation in September. This alternating set of catechumens could follow the visual diagram above for the following years. Since the starting of Lent varies each year, the suggested time to start in this example is February. The reason for this is to avoid an overwhelming amount of OCIA activity happening all at once, as after the first year of implementing the 1 year minimum in the Catechumenate there will be multiple groups of people going through the process of Initiation.*

Please Note: *Some groups of catechumens will spend an additional period of time in the catechumenate as they wait for the Rite of Election and next proximate Easter Vigil to be initiated (as indicated in the diagram above with Catechumen B and Catechumen D groups). After the first year, the parish will always have (2) catechumenate groups entering the Church each Easter Vigil.*

Year 1 of Implementation

<u>February</u>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Catechumenate A- part 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Creation & Explanation and experience of the Church’s liturgical seasons as they happen during the year • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction (build rapport) • Week 3 – God’s Pursuit of Humanity) • Sponsor Meeting – Beginning to explore “what prayer is?” and “how to pray?” 	

<u>March</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Trinity & Introduction to how to use the Bible • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 3 – Who is Jesus Christ • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to fasting 	
<u>April</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Paschal Mystery • Sponsor Meeting – How to Pray at Mass • Week 3 – The Holy Spirit & Communal Prayer • Sponsor Meeting – The Holy Spirit (w/ 1-1 prayer experience) 	
<u>May</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Blessed Virgin Mary • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – The Church • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week 	
<u>June</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 5</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Final Judgement • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – The Saints and Angels <p>Sponsor Meeting – Basic instruction on the intercession of the Saints</p>	

<u>July</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 6</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1- break • Sponsor Meeting – Check-in • Week 3 – What is a sacrament, its origin, and why God instituted them • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week 	
<u>August</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 7</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Sacraments of Initiation & Baptism • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – Confirmation • Sponsor Meeting- Topic of the Week 	
<u>September</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A – part 8</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Eucharist • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 3 – Sacraments of Communion and Mission & Marriage • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to popular devotions 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction (rapport) • Week 2 – Creation & Explanation and experience of the Church’s liturgical seasons as they happen during the year • Sponsor Meeting – Beginning to explore “what prayer is?” and “how to pray?” • Week 4 – God’s Pursuit of Humanity
<u>October</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 9</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Holy Orders & Consecrated Life • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 3 – Sacraments of Healing, Penance/Reconciliation & Anointing of the Sick • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to fasting • Week 2 – The Trinity & Introduction to how to use the Bible • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 4 – Who is Jesus Christ?

<u>November</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 10</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Ten Commandments (w/ Commandments 1-3) • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – Addressing a Secular Worldview (w/ Commandments 4-5) • Sponsor Meeting –Topics of the week 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – How to pray the Mass • Week 2 – The Paschal Mystery • Sponsor Meeting – The Holy Spirit (w/ 1-1 prayer experience) • Week 4 – The Holy Spirit & Communal Prayer
<u>December</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 11</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – What does it mean to be human? & Catholic Social Teaching (Commandments 7-8) • Sponsor Meeting – Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy • Week 3 – Theology of the Body (w/ Commandments 6 & 9) 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting- Topic of the Week • Week 2 – The Blessed Virgin Mary • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week
<u>January</u>	
<u>Catechumenate A- part 12</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Ecumenism and Treatment of the New Age (w/ Commandment 10) • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – The Universal Call to Holiness & Preparation for the Right of Election • Sponsor Meeting: Witnessing to the faith in words & Witnessing to the faith in deeds 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 5</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 2 – The Church • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 4 – The Final Judgement

For additional outlining for “Year 2”, please refer to page (24) at the end of this document.

OCIA Minor Rites Use Guide

Celebrations of the Word of God

“Celebrations of the Word of God should be held, suited to the liturgical time, which serve both for the instructions of the catechumens and for the needs of the community. These Celebrations of the Word are: first, celebrations held specially for the catechumens; second, participation in the Liturgy of the Word at the Sunday Mass; third, celebrations held in common with catechetical instruction.” (OCIA 81)

The intention of these Celebrations of the Word specially held for catechumens are to further flesh out and explain the teachings they are receiving, to give “instruction and experience” in prayer, particularly within the liturgy, to “explain the signs, actions, and seasons of the liturgy”, and to “lead them gradually into the worship of the entire community” (OCIA 82). This is essentially a “Liturgy of the Word” held separately and specially for catechumens, described in OCIA 85-89. The ritual text explains that catechumens are eventually incorporated into the general liturgy on Sundays from this initial Celebration, which can include the Breaking Open the Word and a Sunday touchpoint with everyone together. Note: it is expected that catechumens participate in the liturgy every Sunday either in the format of the Celebration of the Word or in the Sunday mass according to Norm 8-1 of the National Statutes.

Minor Exorcisms

Minor exorcisms may be experienced by the community “on several occasions in various circumstances” including before, during, or after a catechetical instruction meeting, during a special Celebration of the Word for catechumens, and for individual circumstances requiring such a rite, in which it is to be done privately (OCIA 92). Their intention is to “put before the catechumens the true character of the spiritual life, the battle between flesh and spirit, the importance of renunciation in order to obtain the beatitudes of the Kingdom of God, and the continual need for divine help” (OCIA 90). They are conducted by a priest, deacon, bishop, or by a lay catechist specially appointed by a Bishop for this ministry.

Best Use Cases & Tie ins: when an individual catechumen is struggling with breaking free of a particular vice or sin; as a group after discussing certain elements of the moral life, particularly with the first commandment; in other circumstances of high stress and anxiety. Minor exorcisms can be done more than once (and there are 11 different prayer options to choose from), but they should be done with openness and awareness of the participants and after discussion of the spiritual implications so as to not cause confusion or scandal.

Blessings of the Catechumens

Catechumenal blessings are to be experienced by the community in order to support them in their journey so that “while they still lack the grace of the Sacraments, nonetheless, they may receive from the Church courage, joy, and peace in pursuing their task and journey” (OCIA 95). They are ordinarily given by a priest, deacon, or an appointed catechist at the end of a Celebration of the Word, at the end of a catechumenal lesson, or given privately to catechumens in need of spiritual encouragement.

Best Use Cases & Tie ins: when an individual catechumen is in need of spiritual graces and encouragement, at transition periods within the catechumenate not already marked by a Rite such as the moment by which a catechumen completes their doctrinal catechesis but is still waiting for the Easter Vigil, and even during the liturgical season, such as Christmas time.

Anointing of the Catechumens

The catechumens may be anointed with the Oil of Catechumens in “places where this is found useful and desirable” (OCIA 98). It is “intended to signify the need for divine strength, so that the one to be baptized, unhindered by the binds of his or her past life and having overcome the opposition of the Devil, may steadfastly take the step of professing faith and hold it unfailingly throughout his or her life” (OCIA 99). It is to be given by a Priest or Deacon at the end of a Celebration of the Word of God to all catechumens, and it may also be conferred privately to individuals. A catechumen may be anointed several times.

Best Use Cases & Tie ins: as a symbol of the catechumens’ desire for baptism, which could be after learning about baptism in their catechetical instruction or if a catechumen express an individual desire to be baptized. It also could be done at the Epiphany or any other liturgically appropriate day.

Rite of Sending Catechumens for Election

In cases where the Rite of Election is not being held in the parish (the majority of cases), it may be fitting and appropriate to have an optional Rite of Sending Catechumens for Election, which “offers that local community the opportunity to express its approval of the catechumens and to send them forth to the celebration of Election assured of the parish’s care and support” (OCIA 107). This rite takes place after the Homily, either in a Celebration of the Word for catechumens or at Mass before the Rite of Election.

Best Use Cases & Tie ins: It would be appropriate to use this rite if community between the catechumens and the wider parish community was emphasized during formation. There is also an option to combine this rite with the Call to Continuing Conversion (OCIA 530-546) in the parish, ideally the last weekend before Lent.

The Handing on of the Creed & of the Lord’s Prayer and The Ephphatha Rite

These minor rites ordinarily take place during the period of Purification and Enlightenment. If for some reason there is a case to be made for these to occur during the Catechumenate due to the brevity of the period of Purification and Enlightenment, “they should be celebrated when the catechumens seem to be mature; otherwise, they should not take place” (OCIA 104). If the rites occur during the Catechumenate, it should be taken care that “catechumen” is used; if they occur during Purification and Enlightenment, the term “elect” should be used instead.

Purification & Enlightenment

(Primarily Spiritual; these sessions are intended to be treated as prayer and reflection days, not catechesis)

Session 1: Rite of Election & Enrollment of Names

Guided Examination of Conscience

Session 2:

The Woman at the Well- preparation for the First Scrutiny
Lectio Divina and reflection on the journey of faith

Session 3: First Scrutiny

Presentation of the Creed- during the week if possible
The Man Born Blind- preparation for the Second Scrutiny
Lectio Divina and reflection on truth and false values

Session 4: Second Scrutiny

The Raising of Lazarus- preparation for the Third Scrutiny
Lectio Divina and reflection on eternal life and restoration of original holiness

Session 5: Third Scrutiny

Presentation of the Our Father- during the week if possible
Lectio Divina and reflection on Palm Sunday readings

Session 6: Holy Week

Final Preparation for the Vigil

Purification and Enlightenment Retreat Day

(basic guidelines offered here; use proper discernment and creative liberty for what best benefits the elect within your parish community)

Objective for this Retreat:

The time of purification and enlightenment is given to a more intense preparation of spirit and heart, which has the character of recollection rather than of catechesis and is intended to purify hearts and minds by examination of conscience and penitence (OCIA 139).

Components to include:

- Group-led spiritual reflections and examens
- Space for group and personal reflection (optional small groups)
- Time for personal prayer
- Opportunity to make a commitment prayer to Christ
- Spiritual counsel available

Mystagogy

(Equally Catechetical and Spiritual; these sessions are intended to be a deeper look at previous catechetical points without simply being a reteaching of the curriculum)

Session 1: Revisiting Salvation History: Unpacking the Vigil

- Representation of the Kerygma & Relevant Covenants (connecting to Vigil readings)
 - Adam (Gen. 2:1-3; 2168-2173; CCC 54)
 - Noah (Gen. 6:9-18; CCC 56-58)
 - Abraham (Gen. 15, 17:1-14, 22:1-19; CCC 59-61)
 - Moses (Ex. 24: 1-8; CCC 62-64)
 - JESUS
- Reflection on the Vigil
 - What struck you the most?
 - How did Christ encounter you throughout the Vigil?
 - What signs relevant to the sacraments did you notice during the Vigil?
 - How did receiving the Sacraments impact you? Did you feel different before or after?

Session 2: Revisiting the Sacraments

- Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist (see relevant sessions of CCC)
 - Baptism: Sonship/Daughtership in Christ (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:15)
 - Confirmation: Missional identity (Commissioned for Christ)
 - Eucharist: our daily bread
- Reflection on the Sacraments

Session 3: Revisiting Morality

- What does it mean to be in the image and likeness of God?
- Virtues- What is a virtue?
 - The Cardinal Virtues (CCC 1804-1811; Phil 4:8; Wis 8:7)
 - Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance
 - The Theological Virtues
 - Faith, Hope, Charity
- Prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - Examination of conscience with the Ten Commandments

Session 4: Revisiting the Call to Holiness

- What is holiness?
- Universal Call to Holiness
- Relationship between holiness and mission (Pope Benedict's homily, Sunday June 15, 2008)
- Practical ways to live it out:
 - Prayer, works of charity, personal vocation
 - Make a plan to practice a corporal or spiritual work of mercy

Session 5: Revisiting the Call to Mission

- Universal Call to Mission:
 - priest, prophet, king
- Effective ways to evangelize
 - Learn the journey of faith (lost, trust building, curiosity, openness, and seeking)
 - Discuss living out evangelization in personal relationships (Relational Evangelization)

Neophyte Year

While not mandated by the OCIA text, it is recommended that the parish stays in contact with the newly initiated Catholics for their first year. This can be achieved in many ways, including but not limited to the suggestions below:

Suggested Format for the year:

- Once a month, meeting with a godparent to check-in
- Become involved in a ministry in the parish (participation at least once a month)
- Liturgical roles (usher, lector, altar server, eucharistic minister, etc)
- Social Justice/Outreach involvement (food pantry, clothing donation assistance, volunteering in kitchen, assisting with RCIA the next year)
- Faith Formation roles/involvement (becoming a catechist, religious ed helper, join a bible study, faith classes)

Quarterly meetings as an entire neophyte cohort to receive catechetical formation based on a topic relevant to where the neophytes are in their journey of faith (suggestions below):

- Touch on the 5 precepts of the Church
- How to Vote as a Catholic
- Prayer and Holiness
- Evangelization
- Social Justice
- Morality (more in depth on a particular aspect)
- Theology of the Body

The Role of the Sponsor/Godparent

The model of OCIA being suggested requires significant touchpoints between the sponsor and the catechumen as well as regular touchpoints with the sponsor and the OCIA Leader. The goal of the sponsor is to intentionally accompany the catechumen on the journey of faith from the Rite of Entrance through the catechumenate until the Rite of Election. The sponsor plays a critical role in helping the catechumen unpack and more deeply understand the teachings that are being introduced in the catechumenate. They are also critical in helping the OCIA leader/catechists to discern where the catechumen is at in their journey of faith. Before the Rite of Election, the catechumen may ask the sponsor to become their godparent, but this would not be required as they have the freedom to choose another individual to be their godparent (a distinct and separate role).

“A godparent, however, chosen by the catechumen for his or her example, gifts, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community and approved by a Priest, accompanies the catechumen on the day of Election, at the celebration of the Sacraments,, and during the Period of Mystagogy. The godparent’s task is to show the catechumen in a friendly way how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to help at times of doubt or anxiety, to bear witness to and watch over the catechumen’s growth in baptismal life. Chosen before the ‘Election’, the godparent exercises his or her office from the day of Election, testifying for the catechumen in the presence of the community. The godparent’s task remains important when the neophyte, having received the Sacraments, needs help to remain faithful to the promises of Baptism” (OCIA, 11).

The godparent will continue to meet with the elect through the completion of their neophyte year and then continue to be an essential role model of the Christian life and what being an authentic disciple of Christ looks like.

Qualities to Look for in a Sponsor:

- Mature Catholic *at least* one year past their own initiation
- Have a consistent prayer life and can articulate what that looks like
- Passionate about getting to know people deeply

Requirements of a Sponsor:

- Attending catechesis sessions 1x a month to support catechumen (desired but optional)
- Meeting with the catechumen 2/3x a month to unpack material
- Meeting with the OCIA director/member of the catechist team 1x a month to update on how the catechumen’s understanding of the material is strengthening or where they need more assistance (or send a report/google form to OCIA director)
- Assisting with finding ways for the catechumen to get involved in the parish community
- Regularly praying and interceding for the catechumen

Requirements of a Godparent:

- Meeting with the OCIA director/catechist before the rite of election to testify to readiness
- Weekly check-in with the elect during the period of Purification and Enlightenment (and twice during the period of Mystagogy)
- Willingness to accompany and support the elect/neophyte as much as possible for the rest of their life

The Role of the Sponsor/Godparent (cont.)

Possible Sponsor/Catechumen Bi-Monthly Meeting Structure (40-90 min):

Rapport Building

Catch Up conversation to deepen trust and friendship

Survey Questions

What were your thoughts on (x) in the last teaching session?

What struck you about (y) in the last teaching session?

Had you ever thought about (z) in the last teaching session?

What connections were you able to make between (x) and (y)?

What is your understanding of (q) now?

How does this connect/relate to your personal life?

Zoom/Follow Up Questions

Can you tell me a little more about that?

Why do you think that?

How does that relate to your previous conception of the Church?

Strengthening Steps

It seems to me that God is doing (x) in your life right now. Would you agree?

Let's both dig deeper into that and read about it in the catechism together.

Can I pray with you on this right now?

I think it would be great to set up a time to meet with Father and ask him about this.

I'll check-in with you later this week to see how you're doing in (new practice or change).

Possible OCIA Leader/Sponsor Monthly Meeting Structure (30-45 min):

Rapport Building

Catch Up conversation

Catechumen Comprehension

What areas of this month's material is the catechumen grasping well?

What evidence do you have of that?

What areas of this month's material is the catechumen struggling with?

What are some ways to strengthen their understanding of the topic?

Collaboration Check

What are ways that we can help your catechumen? Let's brainstorm together.

How is your catechumen getting involved in the parish? How is that going?

Intercessory Prayer

Let's pray together for your catechumen right now, giving thanks to God for softening their heart and asking for His guidance as to where they will need help next.

Pre-Rite of Election OCIA Leader/Sponsor/Godparent/Catechumen meeting (20-30 min):

1. Where are you with your relationship with Christ?
2. What questions about Church teaching do you still have?
3. How have you been living out the faith in your daily life?
4. Do you intend to receive the sacraments of initiation at the nearest Easter Vigil?

Possible OCIA Team Roles

OCIA Coordinator

- Primary focus is coordination of the OCIA team and organizing logistics.
 - Ensuring catechists are prepared to teach
 - Sponsors are supported in their role
 - Any additional “core team members” are coached and effective in working with sponsors
 - Works with the pastor and other parish staff to organize rites and logistics around formation throughout the year.
 - Collaborate closely with evangelization director or volunteers to coordinate Rite of Entrance and ensure a smooth transition for seekers into the catechumenate.

OCIA Catechist

- Provide catechetical instruction.
- Ideally they are well formed and able to communicate the truths of the faith in a simple and relatable way.

Sponsors

- Focus is on intentional accompaniment and the relationship with the individual catechumen.
- A sponsor can be assigned by the parish or chosen by the catechumen.
- (See for reference pages 16 and 17)

OCIA Core Team Members (if there are more than 10 seekers)

- Assist the OCIA coordinator by working closely with sponsors to ensure each sponsor is, themselves, accompanied as they are working with individual catechumens

Spirituality/Liturgy Core Team Members

- Primary focus is the godparent/elect pairs and neophytes
- May also assist in helping with minor rites and liturgical touchpoints throughout the year
- May also assist in spiritual formation and provide prayer nights or a retreat for catechumens

Evangelization Team (Not technically part of an “OCIA Team”)

- Primary focus is on providing year-round evangelization
- Both coordinate parish ministries which support evangelization and individually accompany people who are on their way towards an initial conversion
- Communicate regularly with OCIA director and help connect individuals who have had an initial conversion with the OCIA team so they can go through the Rite of Entrance and enter the catechumenate.

Detailed Outline of Liturgical Year Format

December (explanation of Advent)

Who is Jesus Christ (to coincide with Advent)

- Explain that he is both fully man and fully God
- An introduction to the life of Jesus' as recounted by the Gospels

The Blessed Virgin Mary (to coincide with Advent and several Marian feast days)

- Introduction to the person of Mary. Her role in God's plan of salvation and our relationship with her
- A brief explanation of the four Marian Dogmas held by the Church and why they matter
- Brief discussion on why the Church has deemed them "required belief"

To Discuss with Sponsor: Witnessing to the faith in words (to testify to family over holidays)

- How to engage in spiritual conversations
 - Witnessing in words does not mean "preaching at" or "arguing with" others.
 - Witnessing to our faith effectively through words requires us to engage in fruitful, open ended spiritual conversations with others.
 - "How to" initiate and participate in spiritual conversations with others.
- How to share their testimony
 - The "what" of what we are sharing through our words with others should begin with the "testimony" of our encounter with Jesus and the difference our faith has made in our lives.
 - "How to" share my experience of Jesus in a clear, engaging and fruitful way.

January (explanation of the season of Christmas)

Sacraments of Initiation and Baptism (to coincide with the Baptism of Christ)

- We are created for communion with God who is love and the sacraments of initiation bring us into the restored relationship offered to us through Christ (reminder of the connection to the kerygma)
- Connection of these sacraments to the universal call to holiness and mission
- Jesus is Priest, Prophet, and King; in receiving the sacraments of initiation (especially baptism) we are given a share in these "offices" of Jesus
- Explanation baptism's connection with the life of Christ (ie: Jesus' baptism, Jesus giving the great commission, etc)
- Effects of the sacrament
 - Taking away original sin, personal sin, and all its punishment
 - Adoption into God's family
 - Participation in the life of the Trinity & Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

The universal call to "mission"

- Every Catholic is called to play a part in the mission of the Church
- Each of us is called to bear witness to Christ
- Our witness to Christ happens through our "words and deeds" (Evangelii Nuntiandi #21-22)

To Discuss with Sponsor: Witnessing to the faith in deeds

- The "witness of how I live my life" is a necessary & powerful way to participate in evangelization
 - Things like – offering forgiveness, being patient when experiencing opposition, joyful when experiencing suffering, intentionally looking for ways to serve those in need, etc.

February ([explanation of the season of Ordinary Time](#))

Marriage (to coincide with National Marriage Week)

- Explanation of Christ's role as servant and our invitation to imitate him
- Though all of us share the "universal" call to holiness and mission, Christ invites each of us to a "specific" mission – our "vocation"
- Explanation of the difference between a "secular" view marriage and a sacramental view of marriage
- Marriage is ordered towards both procreation/education of children and unity of spouses
- Introduction into the four marks of married love: free, total, faithful, fruitful and their connection to Jesus' love for the Church.

6th & 9th Commandment and Theology of the Body (*Humanae Vitae*)

- 6th Commandment: You Shall Not Commit Adultery
 - Divorce vs Annulment
- 9th Commandment: You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife
- Theology of the Body
 - The meaning and purpose of sex
 - Church teaching on contraception and IVF

March ([explanation of the season of Lent](#))

Sacraments of Healing and Penance/Reconciliation (to coincide with Lent)

- Sin and its consequences
 - Mortal vs venial sin
 - God's infinite love and mercy
- What is confession?
 - Effect of the sacrament
- How to properly receive the sacrament (both the mechanics and spiritual disposition)

Commandments 7, 8, & 10 and Catholic Social Teaching

- 7th Commandment: You shall not steal
- 8th Commandment: You shall not bear false witness
- 9th Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods
- Political involvement as a Catholic
- Basic introduction to the Social Doctrine of the Church

To Discuss with Sponsor: Introduction to fasting

- Brief instruction on what fasting is and its purpose
 - Fasting as a precept of the Church
- Exposure to the simple practice of fasting within the proper liturgical season, such as ember days during Advent or abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent, etc.

April (explanation of Holy Week)

Creation (to preface the Paschal Mystery)

- We are created in the image and likeness of God
- The creation narrative and the account of the Fall
- Revisit the first two points of the kerygma:
 - God created us out of love for a personal relationship with Him
 - This relationship was broken through Original Sin, and is continuously harmed through our sins today

The Paschal Mystery (to coincide with holy week/lent)

- Revisit the third point of the kerygma:
 - By his cross, Jesus restores the relationship between humanity and God, providing “a bridge” to cross the gap created by our sins
- The crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension narratives
 - What happened and the importance of why it matters today

To Discuss with Sponsor: How to Hear God's Voice

- Share God’s desire to speak and commune with us, as well as how to hear God’s voice in prayer through reading of Scripture, the use of the imagination, attentiveness to own’s own thoughts and inner voice
- How to respond God’s promptings and grace in a concrete way

May (explanation of the Easter Season)

Sacraments of Initiation Intro and Confirmation (to coincide with Confirmations in the parish)

- We are created for communion with God who is love and the sacraments of initiation bring us into the restored relationship offered to us through Christ (reminder of the connection to the kerygma)
- Connection of these sacraments to the universal call to holiness and mission
- Jesus is Priest, Prophet, and King; in receiving the sacraments of initiation (especially baptism) we are given a share in these "offices" of Jesus
- Explanation of its connection to the life of Christ (ie: descent of the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ baptism, Jesus sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, etc)
- Effects of the sacrament
 - Deepening of baptismal graces and a special outpouring of Holy Spirit
 - Gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - Special strength to witness to the Christian faith
- Why the practice of choosing a patron saint?

The Holy Spirit (to coincide with Pentecost)

- Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives as an advocate
- Understand the meaning of Pentecost Sunday

To Discuss with Sponsor: Praying with The Holy Spirit

- Basic instruction on the importance of being attentive to God’s presence within us and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as wisdom, knowledge, understanding, etc.
- Introduction to “charisms” and the reality that the Holy Spirit gives each of us unique gifts
 - Helping the Catechumen begin to discern and exercise the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to them

June (minimal topic coverage because of summer) [\(explanation of Ordinary Time\)](#)

The Trinity (to coincide with Trinity Sunday)

- Introduction of God as one nature, three persons
- General explanation of the Son proceeding from the Father and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son
- Clarification that God is not in different “modes” or “parts” but exists fully in all three persons in a monotheistic sense

To Discuss with Sponsor: Communal Prayer

- Since we are “one body” in Christ, prayer is not only an individual activity
- Opportunities to experience 1-1 or small group intercessory prayer with and for one another
- Opportunities to experience communal prayer of thanksgiving, adoration, petition, etc.

July (minimal topic coverage because of summer)

The Sacraments of Healing and Anointing of the Sick

- Sin and its consequences
 - Mortal vs venial sin
 - God’s infinite love and mercy
- What is the anointing of the sick?
 - Effect of the Sacrament
- When the sacrament could be received

To Discuss with Sponsor: Introduction to popular devotions

- Basic explanation and brief exposure to popular devotions, such as the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, the Liturgy of the Hours, novenas, pilgrimages, relics, etc.

August

Sacraments of Initiation and Eucharist (to coincide with the Bread of Life Discourse)

- We are created for communion with God who is love and the sacraments of initiation bring us into the restored relationship offered to us through Christ (reminder of the connection to the kerygma)
- Connection of these sacraments to the universal call to holiness and mission
- Jesus is Priest, Prophet, and King; in receiving the sacraments of initiation (especially baptism) we are given a share in these “offices” of Jesus
- Explanation Eucharist’s connection to the life of Christ (i.e.: feeding of the multitudes, the Last Supper, the road to Emmaus, etc)
- Effects of the sacrament
 - Increased union with Christ and his Church
 - Preserves and renews life of grace
 - Strengthens charity, etc.
- How to properly receive the sacrament (both physical posture and spiritual disposition)

August (continued)

Commandments 4 & 5 and What Does it Mean to Be Human? (Dignitas Infinita)

- 4th Commandment: Honor Your Father & Mother
- 5th Commandment: You Shall Not Kill
 - Explanation of how to apply the commandments to everyday life
- Church teaching on Transhumanism
- Explanation of gender ideology through a Catholic lens
- Church teaching on euthanasia and abortion

To Discuss with Sponsor: Formation in how to "pray the Mass"

- Basic instruction on the different parts of the Mass as well as how to develop the proper disposition to enter and experience them
 - The Liturgy of the Word and the importance of attentiveness in listening
 - The Liturgy of the Eucharist and its connection to praise, adoration, and thanksgiving
- Basic teaching and opportunities for personal or small group reflection on the various prayers of the Mass, such as the Confiteor, the Lamb of God, the Our Father, etc.

September

Holy Orders (to align with Priesthood Sunday at the end of the month)

- Explanation of Christ's role as servant and our invitation to imitate him
- Though all of us share the "universal" call to holiness and mission, Christ invites each of us to a "specific" mission – our "vocation"
- Basic introduction to priesthood (ie: instituted by Jesus, act "in persona Christi", etc)
- Introduction to the diaconate; modeled after "Christ the servant"

Consecrated life

- Although not a sacrament, consecrated life is a particular way of life and service in the Church and witness to the world
- Introduction to the evangelical counsels

To Discuss with Sponsor: Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy

- Brief explanation and exposure to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, etc.
 - 5th precept of the Church
- Opportunities for building a habit of putting the works of mercy into practice in their way of life

October

The Church (One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic)

- The need for a hierarchical Church
- Apostolic succession
- The Church as “the Body of Christ”
- The five precepts of the Church and their importance

First Three Commandments and Ecumenism and Treatment of the New Age (Halloween)

- 1st Commandment: I am the Lord your God, You Shall Not Have Gods Before Me
- 2nd Commandment: Do Not Take the Name of the Lord in Vain
- 3rd Commandment: Keep the Sabbath Day Holy
 - Explanation of how to apply the commandments to everyday life
- How does the Catholic Church see other Judeo-Christian religions
- Church teaching on the occult, new age practices like reiki and tarot, and paganism

To Discuss with Sponsor: Introduction to forgiveness

- Brief explanation of what forgiveness is and the practice of it as an essential virtue in the Christian way of life and the Kingdom
 - The Our Father petition: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”
- The importance of giving and receiving forgiveness
 - Its connection to healing (spiritual, emotional, and physical)
 - The “embodiment” of God’s mercy and love in us
 - Forgiveness as a spiritual work of mercy

November [\(explanation of Christ the King and the end of the liturgical year\)](#)

The Final Judgement (All Soul’s Day)

- Brief explanation of the difference between Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory
- Emphasis on how holiness gets us to heaven
- Explanation of the resurrection of the body

The Saints and The Angels (All Saint’s Day)

- Explanation of the meaning of “sainthood” and intercession (communion of saints)
- An exploration of a few different saint stories
- Guardian angels and the role of angels in general
- A brief discussion on the reality of the spiritual realm

To Discuss with Sponsor: Basic instruction on the intercession of the Saints (All Saint’s Day)

Year 2 of Implementation

<u>February</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Creation & Explanation and experience of the Church’s liturgical seasons as they happen during the year • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction (build rapport) • Week 3 – God’s Pursuit of Humanity • Sponsor Meeting – Beginning to explore “what prayer is?” and “how to pray?” 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 6</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Basic instruction on the intercession of the Saints • Week 2 – The Saints and Angels • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 4 – What is a sacrament, its origin, and why God instituted them
<u>March</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Trinity & Introduction to how to use the Bible • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 3 – Who is Jesus Christ • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to fasting 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 7</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 2 – Sacraments of Initiation & Baptism • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 4 – Confirmation
<u>April</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Paschal Mystery • Sponsor Meeting – How to Pray the Mass • Week 3 – The Holy Spirit & Communal Prayer • Sponsor Meeting – The Holy Spirit (w/ 1-1 prayer experience) 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 8</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 2 – Eucharist • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to popular devotions • Week 4 – Sacraments of Communion and Mission & Marriage

<u>May</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Blessed Virgin Mary • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – The Church • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 9</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 2 – Holy Orders & Consecrated Life w/ a Celebration of the Word of God • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 4 – Sacraments of Healing, Penance/Reconciliation & Anointing of the Sick
<u>June</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 5</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – The Final Judgement • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – The Saints and Angels • Sponsor Meeting – Basic instruction on the intercession of the Saints 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 10</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 2 – The Ten Commandments (w/ Commandments 1-3) • Sponsor Meeting –Topics of the week • Week 4 – Addressing a Secular Worldview (w/ Commandments 4-5)
<u>July</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 6</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1- break • Sponsor Meeting – Build Rapport (How is everything going/check in) • Week 3 – What is a sacrament, its origin, and why God instituted them • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 11</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy • Week 2 – What does it mean to be human? & Catholic Social Teaching (w/ Commandments 7-8) • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 4 – Theology of the Body (w/ Commandments 6 & 9)

<u>August</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 7</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Sacraments of Initiation & Baptism • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 3 – Confirmation • Sponsor Meeting- Topic of the Week 	<u>Catechumenate B- part 12</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Topic of the week • Week 2 – Ecumenism and Treatment of the New Age (w/ Commandment 10) • Sponsor Meeting: Witnessing to the faith in words & Witnessing to the faith in deeds • Week 4 – The Universal Call to Holiness
<u>September</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C – part 8</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Eucharist • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 3 – Sacraments of Communion and Mission & Marriage • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to popular devotions 	<u>Catechumenate D- part 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction (rapport) • Week 2 – Creation & Explanation and experience of the Church’s liturgical seasons as they happen during the year • Sponsor Meeting – Beginning to explore “what prayer is?” and “how to pray?” • Week 4 – God’s Pursuit of Humanity & Suitable Liturgical Rite (e.g. Blessings of the Catechumens)
<u>October</u>	
<u>Catechumenate C- part 9</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 – Holy Orders & Consecrated Life • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 3 – Sacraments of Healing, Penance/Reconciliation & Anointing of the Sick • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week 	<u>Catechumenate D- part 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor Meeting – Introduction to fasting • Week 2 – The Trinity & Introduction to how to use the Bible • Sponsor Meeting – Topics of the week • Week 4 – Who is Jesus Christ