



# ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

May 27, 2025

Dear brothers,

I'm writing to provide clarity around our Archdiocese's transition to following the USCCB's norm regarding the length of the catechumenate period (the second of the four periods which make up the initiation process for unbaptized adults). In the United States it has been the norm that unbaptized adults should spend a minimum of one year in the catechumenate period. This norm was first established in 1988 (Norm #6, 1988) and was recently renewed by the USCCB in the National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults which went into effect December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 (Norm #4, 2024).

As I shared in my letter to you in August of 2024, I believe providing this extended period of formation is critical to apprentice the unbaptized person in the life of faith and ensure that they continue as Jesus' disciple for the remainder of their life. To that end, I shared my intention to ask each of our parishes to update their programs to be in alignment with this norm (minimum one year catechumenate). In the last several months Andrew McGown has visited most of your deaneries and spoken with you about this transition.

To assist with your planning and to ensure that those seeking baptism are given appropriate expectations regarding the length of their time in formation (regardless of their home parish) I am asking that:

**All individuals who enter the catechumenate (through the Rite of Entrance) after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2026, should spend a minimum of one year in the catechumenate before they are presented at the Rite of Election.\***

*\* (Parishes are not required to begin a new cohort of catechumens in January of 2026; simply ensure that when they begin a new cohort of catechumens after January 1<sup>st</sup> that they plan to provide a minimum of one year of formation.)*

As has been the case since this norm was established in 1988, pastors may request permission to adjust the length of catechumenal formation in individual cases and to even initiate individuals outside of the Easter Vigil for a very serious pastoral reason (OCIA #331-332). Examples of very

serious pastoral reasons which could lead to a shortened catechumenate or initiation outside of the Easter Vigil include danger of death, serious illness, or military deployment.

Reducing the length of the catechumenate to ensure an individual is baptized before a previously set wedding date is *not* considered a very serious pastoral reason.

The Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries has created a document, “Suggestions for Implementation”, which provides two different examples of how to structure an OCIA program to accommodate this norm. I encourage you to become familiar with this document, even if you discern there is a better structure for your local OCIA program which will incorporate this norm.

### **Coming this Summer**

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to update you on the progress made towards promulgating an “Outline of Essential Formation for the Catechumenate” and an additional resource document which will support your efforts to provide year-round evangelization/inquiry.

#### Outline of Essential Formation for the Catechumenate

A draft of this document was shared with you and your lay leaders this past January. The Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries hosted several regional discussions/feedback sessions this past spring. They also collected feedback from those who couldn’t make an in person meeting through an online form.

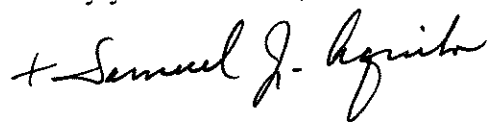
This feedback is currently being discussed and used to make updates to the original draft by a small focus group consisting of priests, deacons, and lay leaders. They will provide me with a final draft in late June or early July. After my personal review, I will officially decree an outline of essential formation which must be provided to adults preparing for baptism. This outline of formation will go into effect in conjunction with the transition to the one year catechumenate (2026).

#### Year-Round Evangelization Resource Document

Providing year-round evangelization initiatives/programs at the parish is a central component to a fruitful initiation ministry. This provides a place for spiritual seekers to hear the kerygma and experience an initial conversion at their pace and prior to the Rite of Entrance. The Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries is finalizing a robust resource document to assist you and your parish in deepening your efforts to evangelize. This document will be ready to be shared by the end of summer.

Evangelization and sharing faith are vital parts of our mission as disciples and I am grateful to you for all your efforts in carrying out this mission. When I was a parochial vicar and pastor one of the great joys I had was accompanying people at the beginning of their encounter with the Lord into the sacramental life of the Church. To see them grow in faith and confidence in Jesus brought great joy to my heart knowing they discovered the unconditional love of the Father, repented, and believed in the mercy of God that brought them into a living relationship with Jesus. May this encounter with Jesus continue to grow and deepen in the years ahead through these efforts! Know of my gratitude for you and your priestly ministry to God's people here in Northern Colorado and be assured of my prayers for you.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samuel J. Aquila". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small cross-like mark at the beginning.

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.  
Archbishop of Denver