



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

August 22, 2025

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past year, the Archdiocese of Denver has been working to strengthen OCIA and RICA ministry in our parishes. We have been accomplishing this through several different avenues, including regular workshops, individual parish consulting etc. As this has been happening, the Church in the United States has released a new translation of the OCIA text and new norms from the USCCB.

The OCIA/RICA text leaves considerable room for interpretation about what formation should be provided to catechumens. It also acknowledges the right of the local ordinary to determine what formation and training should be included in the catechumenate. In light of these considerations, I am excited to share with you our efforts to strengthen OCIA programs in our parishes.

I asked the Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries to create a document to outline what should be considered “essential formation” for the unbaptized. The document provides greater specificity within the categories of formation that are outlined in the OCIA by the USCCB (OCIA #75). A draft of this document was shared publicly and broadly with the entire community of the faithful at the beginning of 2025. The presbyterate and other local leaders involved in OCIA shared their input and feedback during numerous regional discussions and through an online forum. This feedback was considered, discerned, and assimilated into the final draft in June 2025 by a team consisting of priests, deacons, lay OCIA coordinators, and curia staff from both the English and Spanish speaking communities. I completed my review of the document in early August, and now I am sharing with you the final copy.

Every individual who approaches a Catholic church in northern Colorado seeking baptism ought to experience and receive robust and consistent Christian formation, regardless of the parish location. This document is a significant step towards ensuring this reality, better reflecting that we as a Catholic church belong to “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:5). This document will help foster an environment in which the unbaptized can expect a uniform duration and formation between our parish initiation ministries (this will also help mitigate the tendency to “parish shop” for the shortest possible program).

Please note that this document is not restrictive; parishes retain the freedom to provide additional formation topics and experiences that they believe will enrich and deepen the faith of their catechumens. At the same time, this document ensures that the foundational formation received by every catechumen in the Archdiocese of Denver is the same and leads to a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ and his Church.

This program will go into effect January 1, 2026, required for all OCIA programs in the Archdiocese. This is concurrent with our recommitment to honoring the one year minimum in the catechumenate. In both cases, this does not affect those who have gone through the Rite of Entrance during 2025, only those who enter the catechumenate after January 1, 2026.

The office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries have prepared substantial resource documents which are designed to assist you in your practical planning to implement the essential formation into a one-year catechumenate. They also stand ready to assist in your preparation for 2026 through scheduled workshops throughout the fall months, and individual consultation as needed.

Please know of my personal gratitude for your perseverance and dedication to the ministry of bringing people into the Church. I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead many people into the Body of Christ through the Sacraments and will strengthen each one of you in this work that you provide on behalf of the entire Christian community.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Samuel J. Aquila". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a cross symbol at the beginning.

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

