

## New National Statutes of the OCIA: Main Points of Consideration



*Red font indicates a point that requires a new approach to initiation ministry.*

### What Are the National Statutes?

- “The National Statutes are norms that regulate the discipline of Christian Initiation as well as the duties and prerogatives of catechumens.”
- “They have been revised to better reflect the experience of the Church in U.S.”
- “They include only those statutes which are truly legislative, complimentary to the universal law, and unique to the U.S.”
- “They do not reiterate norms already contained in the ritual text or universal law.”

### What's New?

#### ***Structure of the Statutes***

- These statutes are fewer in number: 18 vs. 37.
- The word “Norm” in front of each paragraph number reminds us that they are legislative, not merely suggestions or reiterations.
- There’s now a Norm for the period of Purification & Enlightenment. (Norm 12)

#### ***Initiation in General***

- It is now “a general rule” that the preparation of catechumens for the Sacraments of Initiation takes place in a parochial setting or its equivalent.
- **There should be a Register of Catechumens and a Register of Reception Into Full Communion** – this is not new to the text but probably is new to common practice!
  - **There is also new information to be recorded in each one** (see Norms 14-16).
  - **These books are to be kept in a Parish Archive.**
- The local ordinary has authority to issue norms regarding preparation of candidates.

#### ***Precatechumenate***

- **Evangelization of inquirers during the Precatechumenate period should now include “leading them through Scripture.”**
- **A parish minister will meet with each inquirer to “discuss any issues (e.g., an irregular marriage) that could affect their eventual celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation.”**

#### ***Catechumenate***

- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults* are now named as “approved catechetical texts” for use during the catechumenate.
  - Other texts can be used, assuming they are “approved by the local ordinary.”
- **The Catechumenate should involve participation of catechumens in “works of service” and “works of mercy.”**
- **Catechumens have the right to enroll their children in Catholic schools.**

- The local ordinary can establish other rights for catechumens as well.
- Not only do catechumens have certain rights, they also now *incur certain obligations*.
  - This includes participation in the Liturgy of the Word on holy days of obligation as well as on Sundays.
- Catechumens are dismissed after the homily and before the Creed “to reflect on the Word of God just proclaimed.”
- Unbaptized persons in irregular marriages cannot celebrate the Rite of Election until they are free to enter a canonical marriage.
- Because liturgical ministries arise from Christian Baptism, it is inappropriate for catechumens to proclaim the Word of God or serve at the altar during the liturgy.

### ***Purification & Enlightenment***

- “Candidates for initiation” are now called “The Elect” in order to reserve the term “candidate” for those who are already validly baptized.

### ***Mystagogy***

- “At least monthly assemblies” up to the anniversary of initiation are no longer a required element of the program of formation for neophytes after Pentecost.

### **What’s the Same?**

- The paragraph numbering in the ritual text has remained the same.
- The Catechumenate period should still last at least one year.
- The general approach to each period (Precatechumenate, Catechumenate, Purification & Enlightenment, and Mystagogy) is the same. In other words:
  - We must still welcome and accommodate people whenever they come to us.
  - We must still make disciples *before* the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate.
  - The Purification & Enlightenment period should still consist “more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction.” (OCIA 139)
  - We must still involve the entire community, integrate inquirers and catechumens into the life of the parish *from the beginning*, and prioritize accompaniment and disciple-making.
  - We must still form candidates differently than we form catechumens.

### **Questions?**

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