

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

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

*Note that this handout does not exhaust what is indicated in the [new National Statutes](#). You'll still need to read that document in its entirety. This is just a list of the new elements that emerge when one compares the new National Statutes to the current statutes and to the current RCIA text.*

## What Are the National Statutes?

From the *Forward to the Revised Edition* (available as [a preview](#) from *Magnificat*):

- The National Statutes are “the norms which 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.”
- “These statutes ... include only those statutes which are truly legislative, complimentary to the universal law, and unique to the United States.”
- “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. (Norm 5)
- **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**
  - **These books are to be kept in a Parish Archive.** (see Norms 14, 16).
- It is for the diocesan bishop to issue norms regarding preparation of candidates. (Norm 17)

### ***Precatechumenate***

- **Evangelization of inquirers during the Precatechumenate period should now include “leading them through Scripture.”** (Norm 1)
- **A parish minister will meet each inquirer to “discuss any issues (e.g., an irregular marriage) that could affect their eventual celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation.”** (Norm 2)

### ***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 that are “approved by the local ordinary.” (Norm 6)
- The Catechumenate should involve participation of catechumens in “works of service” (Norm 6) and “works of mercy.” (Norm 9)
- Unbaptized persons in irregular marriages cannot celebrate the Rite of Election until they are free to enter a canonical marriage. (Norm 7)
- Catechumens have the right to enroll their children in Catholic schools.
  - The local ordinary can establish other rights for catechumens as well. (Norm 9)
- 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. (Norm 8)
- Catechumens are dismissed after the homily and before the Creed “to reflect on the Word of God just proclaimed.” (Norm 10)
- 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. (Norm 11)

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

- “Candidates for initiation” are now called “The Elect” in order to reserve the term “candidate” for those who are already validly baptized. (see the *Forward to the Revised Edition*)

### ***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. (compare RCIA, National Statutes, 24 with OCIA, National Statutes, 13)

### **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. (Norm 4)
- 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.” (RCIA 139)
  - We must still involve the entire community, integrate inquirers and catechumens into parish life *from the beginning*, and prioritize accompaniment and disciple-making.
  - We must still form candidates (especially catechized ones) differently than we form catechumens.



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