



# CHRISTIAN INITIATION

ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

Thurs, Feb 27, 2025

## Marriage Issues and the Catechumenate



## Agenda

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1:30p

Welcome, Prayer, Intros

1:35p

Practical and Pastoral Considerations

2:25p

Announcements

2:30p

End



OCIA/RICA

## Opening Prayer

God enlightens everyone who comes into the world,  
and from the created world  
he manifests his invisible attributes to each,  
that all may learn to give thanks to their Creator.

To you, therefore, who have followed his light,  
behold now, the way of the Gospel lies open.  
In laying down solid foundations,  
may you acknowledge the living God  
who truly speaks to human beings.  
Walking in the light of Christ,  
may you put your trust in his wisdom.  
Entrusting your life to him day by day,  
May you come to believe in him with your whole heart.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

*R.* Amen.

*- Rite of Entrance, "Initial Commitment," Option A (OCIA 52)*



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# Introductions



**Nicholas Hardesty**  
Center for New Evangelization  
Associate Director  
Adult Evangelization & OCIA



**Deacon Rich Hobbes**  
Tribunal  
JCL Defender of the Bond



**Deacon Mike Lippman**  
Center for Parish Vitality  
Director, Pastoral Planning

## Policy on Marriage Cases and the OCIA

### Background

- Before the OCIA and the new National Statutes, there was no guidance within the text regarding how much of the process someone in an irregular marriage could participate in before the person was free to marry
- Our guidance in the Archdiocese was to say that an unbaptized inquirer could not celebrate the Rite of Acceptance (now "Entrance") until his/her case was resolved
- The new National Statutes now allow for entering the catechumenate stage but not celebrating the Rite of Election until the person is free to marry
- This means that our policy must change

### New Policy

- The initial interview (see National Statutes, Norm 2) will be conducted with inquirers *and* candidates
- Based on National Statutes, Norm 7, those inquirers in irregular marriages will be permitted to celebrate the Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate, thus becoming catechumens, and participate in the Catechumenate period of the OCIA process, but they cannot celebrate the Rite of Election or continue to the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation until they are free to enter a canonical marriage.
- A candidate cannot celebrate the Order of Reception Into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church until he/she is free to enter a canonical marriage.

## Discerning the Catechumenate

### New Pastoral Reality

- Along with requiring a policy change, the new National Statutes also introduce a new pastoral reality
- We now have individuals in irregular marriages potentially becoming catechumens
- This means that part of the conversation regarding their involvement in the initiation process must involve helping them to discern the implications of this next step
- Should an inquirer in an irregular marriage become a catechumen or should they not?

### Obligations of Becoming a Catechumen (see Norm 8)

- They are to participate in the Liturgy of the Word, preferably on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, with the community if possible (see OCIA 81)
- They will continually purify their motivation for Baptism
- They will live an upright life
- They will be ready to witness to their conversion to Christ
- They will seek to grow in their knowledge of and assent to what the Church believes and teaches (CIC cc. 206 and 865 §1)

## Discerning the Catechumenate

### Pros of Becoming a Catechumen

- Catechumens may receive a formal blessing (Can. 1170) and a sacramental (OCIA 47)
- They may receive a Catholic funeral/burial (Can. 1183)
- They have a special rite they can use for their marriage (OCIA 47)
- They may participate in the apostolic and charitable works of the Church, especially works of mercy (Norm 9)
- They may take advantage of opportunities given to Catholic parents in the parish or region concerning the enrollment for their children in Catholic schools (Norm 9)
- They may participate in the Catechumenate period
  - Celebrations of the Word of God
  - Rites for Handing On
  - Rites for Anointing and Minor Exorcism
  - Opportunity to continue their learning in a formal way

### Cons of Becoming a Catechumen

- "Catechumen" could become their permanent state in relationship to the Church, even though this is not meant to be a permanent stage
- Without pastoral accompaniment and direction, could create false hope that the irregular marriage will be annulled
- Could create bitterness if someone is able to celebrate this major Step but not the subsequent ones

## Practical and Pastoral Considerations

### Balance Speed with Caution

#### Process Suggestions

- Notify parish procurator advocate (P/A) ASAP Create proper expectation of timing with Candidate
- Communicate regularly with that P/A and Candidate
- Clarify this is not a 'school year' process

#### Rite of Election

- Not until marriage case resolved
- This would also preclude participation in the time of Purification and Enlightenment and any retreat.

## Practical and Pastoral Considerations

### Common objections – how to respond pastorally

Why does my marriage before I was Catholic matter?

*We respect that sacrament!, just like we respect all Christian baptism*

Why does this process take so long, but for others its quick?

*Each case is unique. A marriage is valid until proven otherwise*

But I don't plan on getting married again...

*You never know what God has in store for you!*

*Again, each case is unique*

We want to come in at Easter with the rest of our "class"!

*Readiness for entry into the church is individual*

Others?



## Practical and Pastoral Considerations

### Keeping them warm while waiting

- Ongoing inquiry and formation
- Sponsor relationship

### Your thoughts and experiences?



QUESTIONS

What questions of clarification do you have about what has been presented?



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## DISCUSSION

What are the biggest challenges you face in working with catechumens in difficult marital situations?

Based on all of this, how will it change your approach to Christian Initiation?



## Formation Opportunities

- **March 25** (West Chester)/**March 26** (Tipp City): One-day workshop for all initiation ministers w/ Fr. Paul Turner – **register by March 10!**
- Updated documentation on everything on AoC websites (one-page coaching sheet, FAQs, etc.)
- Webinar series: all resources posted online; planning for more in spring/summer...stay tuned!
- Location-based training for each Family team offered on demand
- Boot Camp for new initiation ministers annually TBD



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