



# NETWORK NEWS

September 2013



## WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Elections always bring new beginnings, whether for good or ill, happy or sad. They are moments for reflection, revisioning and revitalisation. The same can be true for the process of initiating people into our faith communities. Being September, I'm sure many of you will have had some 'enquiry nights' or begun to get 'the team' back together for 'another round' of the RCIA process.

As we 'begin again' have we reflected upon how we could renew the process this year? How might we engage more of the community in what we are doing, given their role as principal minister of initiation? Let us look at five of the key formational areas for catechumens and candidates and explore some ways in which we might be able to further engage our communities.

### *Understanding of the Faith*

Undoubtedly, candidates and catechumens need to have a sound understanding of the faith. Paragraph 75 of the Rite speaks of the need for catechesis that is 'complete in coverage'. Some resources to assist this process are outlined within this issue of Network News. Here though, I offer some questions for reflection on how we might engage the community in this task of providing a 'complete catechesis':

- ◆ Who are parishioners with a love of the faith and the gift of communication?
- ◆ Are there people with a passion for an aspect of our faith who could be invited to provide input for the catechumens?
- ◆ Are there opportunities being offered for faith formation within the broader parish or diocese in which catechumens or candidates could be involved?
- ◆ Are we providing reflection time on their life experience and connecting it with faith issues? The just completed federal election could be one of these experiences.

Each of these suggestions can assist the catechumens and candidates not only gain a fuller understanding of the faith but also connect with more people in the parish and gain a sense of the broader local church.

### *Community Life*

One of the most frequent responses regarding why people stay in parishes is the quality of the community life and support they find within them. If we desire that catechumens and candidates stay connected to the Church then it is vital that throughout the periods of formation that they are practically engaged with the support and care of the community. Here are some questions that might assist in developing this area.

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Australian Catechumenate Network (A.C.N.) seeks to support all those who share the vision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

## WORDS FROM THE CHAIR...continued

- ◆ What are the social opportunities coming up in the parish in which catechumens and candidates could be practically involved (Christmas, Feast Days, fetes, dinners, etc.)? Is there someone who could 'buddy' with them during these events and introduce them to others?
- ◆ A 'cuppa' after Mass is great. Who are the 'social types' within the parish who like to get to know new people and could make them feel welcome?
- ◆ Have they been introduced to the office staff and ministry coordinators?
- ◆ In what other major initiatives or works of the community could they be involved?
- ◆ Could we place pictures of the catechumens and candidates in the foyer of the church?

### Word

Celebrations of the Word of God are central to the formation of the catechumens and candidates. The Foundations in Faith material, reviewed in this edition of Network News, provides a good resource for undertaking this task. The community can also play an important role here.

- ◆ Is there a bible study group who might be able to provide some input or occasional reflection with the catechumens and candidates?
- ◆ If the lectors or readers gather to reflect on the word during the year, could the catechumens / candidates be invited to participate?
- ◆ Consider involving them in an Advent or Lenten group within the parish.

### Worship

Participation in the celebration of the Mass is central to our lives as Catholic Christians. It both draws us together in gratitude for all that we have been given and sends us out as bearers of the good news to all those with whom we meet. Catechumens and candidates need formation not only in the 'how' of the Mass but also in the 'meaning' of the celebration for their entire lives. The community again plays a vital role:

- ◆ Have we spoken with the various choirs or musicians about appropriate music selections for the important steps along the RCIA process?
- ◆ Are our welcome and hospitality teams aware of the candidates and catechumens and ready to welcome them to the celebration?
- ◆ Are our liturgical ministers aware of their roles, and the catechumens themselves, when it comes to the liturgical rites of the RCIA?
- ◆ Are we encouraging the assembly to respond clearly and loudly during the liturgy, showing their own involvement and engagement with the celebration?
- ◆ Do the prayers of the faithful include prayers for the catechumens and candidates as they journey through different parts of the process?
- ◆ How can we get creative with the rite of acceptance? Perhaps invite members of the community to 'answer the knock at the door' during the first part of the ritual.

### Mission

At the end of Mass one of the new dismissals calls us to 'proclaim the gospel with our lives'. Mission can at times seem the most difficult of areas in which to form our catechumens or candidates. It can seem 'distant' and 'out there' rather than home and personal. How might we remedy this feeling?

- ◆ If there is a parish social justice group, can they be invited to reflect on issues with the catechumens?
- ◆ What are Vinnies doing within the parish? Can the catechumens or candidates join them for an evening?
- ◆ What happens on Mission Sunday, Social Justice Sunday, Migrant & Refugee Sunday, NAIDOC Week? Have the catechumens or candidates been given copies of the Social Justice Sunday statement and can we reflect with them about the issues it raises?
- ◆ What community groups are doing work with the homeless, migrants and refugees, those in poverty, etc. within our communities?

Catechumens and candidates can truly be a gift to our communities. As we walk the journey of faith with them, they can provide us with renewed enthusiasm and energy for living our own lives as Catholic Christians. I have offered here some suggestions for engaging the whole community in this process. Please let us know what you've been doing in this regard and we will share your ideas and thoughts with the rest of the Network.

Darren McDowell  
Chair – ACN Executive

# Christian Initiation:

## *Seven Pitfalls to Avoid if You Want to Get It Right*

SYLVIA DEVILLERS

Often when I'm talking with folks who are involved with Christian initiation in my part of the world (the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, to be exact), I encounter some interesting stories about how some parishes are preparing adults and older children for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. While I'm sure these stories are totally limited to my local church and could not possibly be happening in yours, some of them just might resonate with your experience and thus be of concern.

There are situations, I am told, where parishes disregard or lack understanding of some of the basic values and intentions that arise directly from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

I am told, for instance, that there are times when some pastors fail to exercise their faculties to confirm. There are occasions I am told, when mandated portions of the various initiation rites are eliminated in the interest of time. There are instances I am told of a drastically shortened catechumenate period for uncatechised ' catechumens. There are even, I am told, parishes where an untrained but well-intentioned volunteer organizes "classes" each week during the school year with guest speakers who follow a set curriculum and at which attendance is taken. Inquirers, candidates, and catechumens attend these sessions together and are initiated as a group at the Easter Vigil. I am told that catechized adult Catholics seeking only to be confirmed, who were baptized as infants and participate regularly in the Eucharist, are also included in this melange.

Sometimes, to be sure, parishes just drift into practices that do not best convey the meaning and intention of the liturgical text. It is easy enough when time constraints, lack of trained or knowledgeable staff, financial concerns, and demands on overworked pastors take precedence over a parish "program" that is labour intensive. When this happens, the essential and fundamental message of Jesus to "go therefore and make disciples ... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... "(Matthew 28:19) becomes just another "program" that can be adjusted and adapted to fit into what are considered to be more fundamental aspects of parish ministry.

While minor adaptations of the RCIA are not only allowed but encouraged, it is crucial-that the basic ritual text be used as a foundation to be built upon, not adapted excessively. Thus, it is essential that local customs, culture, and practice conform to the basic meaning and intent of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, not the other way around.

In considering these scenarios and others equally disheartening, it is all the more important to think about some of the implications when parishes do not follow the wise and pastoral guidance of the ritual text. Thus, it could be helpful to take a look at some of the pitfalls that lie in wait for those who are tempted to minimize or downsize a more authentic approach to Christian initiation, one that is based on a more faithful and respectful adherence to the spirit and intention of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. For those feeling their way through the labyrinth that is the process of Christian initiation, pitfalls abound, to be sure, and here are seven of them that could be avoided.

### SEVEN PITFALLS

- ◆ *Confusing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with an initialism.* The official liturgical rite that is named the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is sometimes shortened to its familiar form, the initialism RCIA, complete with italics that indicate its status as a ritual text. This liturgical rite comprises a series of initiation rites connected to one another throughout the stages of initiation from the Rite of Acceptance in to the Order of Catechumens to the sacramental rites of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It is not a group that meets once a week. (*"Come to RCIA Tuesday night to find out about becoming a Catholic."*) It is not a parish activity. (*"Call extension 410 for more information about RCIA."*) It is not a program with a beginning or end. (*"RCIA begins this week."*) It is not a course of studies. (*"RCIA classes are held in the parish hall."*) Rather, the liturgical text that is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults contains within its pages the pastoral, catechetical, and spiritual guidance that, when applied with care, results in a process that is intended to lead to conversion to Christ Jesus. Through implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, people experience the process of Christian initiation. This process is lived out through authentic and thoughtful faithfulness to the rites, prayers, pastoral advice, and catechetical methodology, not an initialism that misstates the meaning and significance of the liturgical rite.
- ◆ *Misunderstanding the role and function of catechesis throughout the process of Christian initiation.* Catechesis has its rightful place in the process of Christian initiation in helping people move toward a fuller understanding of God, Church, and their spiritual growth. *continued*



But an undue emphasis on cognitive knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church is not advised, neither in the ritual text nor in the use of good old common sense. Initiation catechists' best friend RCIA, 75, states it so well: what is expected of catechumens' is that they become **"familiar with the Christian way of life."** The process of Christian initiation is, indeed, an introduction to something, not a course of studies that results in theological expertise. Catechesis is to be "gradual and complete, accommodated to the liturgical year, and supported by celebrations of the word." Thus, an "appropriate acquaintance" with Church dogmas and precepts is called for, and at the same time, the retaining of a "profound sense of the mystery of salvation." The inherent wisdom of this outstanding statement of sound catechetical theory is sometimes ignored in an attempt to teach candidates and catechumens "everything they never wanted to know" about Catholicism.

- ◆ *Lack of involvement of the entire parish community in the process of Christian initiation.* The oft-quoted mandate of RCIA, 9, in the introduction of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults states that "the people of God should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized." This means that it's not enough for several overworked parish volunteers to do it all. This means that as many members of the parish community as possible are involved by taking a personal interest in Christian initiation: evangelizing, praying, sponsoring, and assisting with the myriad details that are a part of this complicated ministry. In a perfect world, this means that a qualified director of initiation is engaged to monitor an initiation team of people who will promote, schedule, counsel and discern, catechize, support sponsors, prepare liturgies, monitor marriage cases, organize refreshments, provide hospitality, and keep the paperwork up to date. But even in an imperfect world, it's good to recognize the value of a large and well-functioning team rather than just a few dedicated individuals and move toward that goal. When more are involved in the chores, more are involved in the rewards and joys. This spills over into the whole parish community, and the people of God benefit as much as those seeking Christian initiation.
- ◆ *Offering membership rather than conversion.* A large percentage of those seeking full communion with the Catholic Church are spouses of Catholics (83 per cent, according to *Journey to the Fullness of Life, the US Bishops' analysis in 2002 of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*). This statistic has implications for evangelization efforts, to be sure, but it also

testifies to the ongoing question as to why people seek Christian initiation. Often, it appears that what initially motivates some people to "*come into the Church*" is a desire to present a united religious front to their children. When both parents belong to the same Church, the family benefits. This is undoubtedly true but should not be construed as a rationale for promoting Church membership. There is something more at play here. When the process of Christian initiation is carried out with sensitivity, pastoral care, and concern for spiritual growth, those seeking initiation often find themselves gradually moving away from their earlier motivation. As RCIA, 42, states, they learn to pray, they experience the "*first stirrings of repentance*," they find friends within the faith community, and, best of all, they begin to "*enter into a relationship with God in Christ*." Membership in the Church is no longer the main goal: real conversion has begun.

- ◆ *Failing to make distinctions between the baptized and the unbaptized.* Some parishes have for many years been happily combining rites as well as candidates and catechumens. In a sense it was easier to bring them all to the initiation sacraments at the same time. After all, the Rite of Christian Initiation allows for combined rites, so why not? It might certainly be argued that two-rites-in-one is a bargain, somewhat akin to supermarket coupons offering two bottles of catsup for the price of one. Those who are to be received into the Church or who will complete their sacraments of initiation are blended right in with those who are to be baptized, and all are initiated at the Easter Vigil. No need to schedule alternate dates on an already packed liturgical calendar. No need to meet again with godparents and sponsors. No need to plan several post-initiation parties. And often, unfortunately, the perception creeps in that there also is not a strong need to distinguish a great deal between the baptized and the unbaptized as their spiritual journeys move them toward the initiation sacraments. But, once again, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* provides us with compelling reasons for following its advice in providing the best possible ways for true conversion to Christ Jesus to take place and to be celebrated liturgically. By taking care to respect the sacramental status of the baptized, states *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, 32, it is preferable that reception of the baptized into full communion with the Catholic Church not be celebrated at the Easter Vigil, "lest there be any confusion" as to the identity of the baptized. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 477, is equally clear: "Anything that would equate candidates for reception with those who are catechumens is to be absolutely avoided." It is fairly obvious that,

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because the value of the Sacrament of Baptism is "priceless," as they say in the credit card ads, different approaches to the process of Christian Initiation are needed. For the baptized, emphasis is on bringing individuals into unity (full communion) with the Catholic Church, and the high point of their rite of reception is Eucharistic communion. For the unbaptized, emphasis is on their dying to sin and entering into the fullness of life in Christ Jesus through the waters of Baptism. So while the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults "allows" the combined rites, a much more authentic way to respect and rejoice in the meaning of Baptism would be to celebrate the sacraments of initiation fully but only with the elect at the Easter Vigil. Likewise, for the baptized candidates, a more authentic way to respect and rejoice in the meaning of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church is to recognize the unity that this rite celebrates. Thus, this focus is allowed to emerge when the simple rites of reception take place at various times throughout the year. Once it is discerned that the candidates are indeed now "ready" to make their commitments of faith, they do so in a distinct ritual that expresses both baptismal status and unity, examples of which can be found in the General Intercessions from the Rite of Reception (RCIA, 496).

- ♦ *The diminished role of priests and deacons in the process of Christian initiation.* Occasionally, it seems that some parish priests and deacons are almost indifferent to the process of Christian initiation and appear only when they are needed to preside at one of the rites. Nametags are then needed for candidates and catechumens, and a member of the liturgy committee may have to gently guide the presider through the rite. Their attention to pastoral issues that face candidates for initiation can be lax: annulment paperwork may languish on some of their desks or appointments may be postponed. While this may seem a harsh indictment of some pastors and deacons, it must be admitted that more interest and involvement on their part would certainly contribute to a greater appreciation for the meaning and intention of the process of Christian initiation. It is true that in some parishes the pastor and deacons have themselves been through a certain kind of conversion related to the importance of Christian initiation and the spiritual health of the parish. These men understand that the process leading to the Baptism of adults is one of great interest and involvement on the part of ordinary parishioners, and they contribute to the process. Both priests and deacons are eager to participate in the anointings of catechumens. They get to know the inquirers, candidates, and catechumens and can greet them by name. They visit the catechetical sessions from time to time. They invite and are available for counselling or advice. They occasionally meet with the director

of initiation and the entire team and offer support and guidance. They are convinced of the importance of all the rites of initiation, no matter how long it takes at the 9 am Mass, and the pastor is completely familiar with those rites and is comfortable in his role as presider.

- ♦ *Misunderstanding Mystagogia, the fourth stage of Christian initiation.* Almost everyone would agree that in most parishes the Easter Vigil is the high point of all liturgical celebrations throughout the year. The newly baptized literally drip with joy, and those parishioners who brave the dark of night and lateness of the hour rejoice mightily with them. The long-awaited "*alleluias*" are sung with gusto and gladness. For some neophytes, though, this climactic night can appear to be a celebration of completion. The "*journey of faith*" is over; they are now full-fledged Catholics. They attended "classes" faithfully and learned what was taught. They participated in some rites along the way without quite understanding why. They did what was expected of them, and now they are finished with all of that and can get on with their lives. When Christian initiation is viewed as a series of obligations to be fulfilled and classes to attend rather than a process of conversion, the end justifies the means. There is, indeed, a beginning, middle, and end. But by wisely including Mystagogia; the fourth period in the process of initiation, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* insists that true conversion to God through Jesus Christ has no end point: conversion is a lifelong process that, for neophytes, continues well beyond the initiation rites. Mystagogia is designed with this in mind. For the newly baptized, it is a time of reflection and pondering the sacramental mysteries they now experience in Eucharist. In parishes that have focused on conversion rather than a course of studies, the period of Mystagogia is a deeper and more significant exploration into what has been happening all along. When neophytes spend time together in giving voice to how they are growing in the "*deepening of their grasp of the paschal mystery*" (RCIA, 244), their newfound identity as Catholics is strengthened. When they share in the Eucharist and do the "*works of charity*" along with fellow parishioners, they live out their faith in new ways. Thus, the post baptismal catechesis that begins with Mystagogia endures for a lifetime.

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These seven pitfalls lie in wait for parish leadership who are tempted to skip over, ignore, modify, or disregard a significant portion of the wisdom and pastoral guidance offered by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is hoped that by avoiding these pitfalls a richer, fuller, and more authentic response to God's call to conversion will be experienced by all those who seek Christian initiation. And scenarios such as the ones described earlier will no longer be discussed when some of us begin talking to each other about what we've been told. Instead, our stories will be ones of optimism, inspiration, and joyful hope as we continue our journeys through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

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## NSW/ACT Conference

Recently, Helen Green, Sr Ellen Shanahan and I chose to attend the RCIA State Conference in Newcastle, and what a good choice it was!

The theme of the Conference was "**To Know Jesus and To Make Him Known**". This theme permeated the three day conference. We were blessed in having three skilful, but decidedly different, keynote speakers:

**Rev. Dr Elio Capra** <sup>SBD</sup>, lecturer in liturgy and sacramental theology at the Catholic Theological College in Melbourne, **Sister Louise Gannon** <sup>RSJ</sup> who is currently working as the Co-ordinator of the Year of Grace for Maitland-Newcastle Diocese, and **Helene O'Neill**, a Diocesan Parish-Liaison Officer who has had many and varied roles in Newcastle in both civic and church communities.

**Elio Capra** focused on the importance of the Word of God in the gospels, in our lives and in the Church. This dynamic Italio/Aussie brought the scriptures to life with much relevance to our everyday lives coupled with humour and verbal colour. He showed us how these ancient stories can be the "strength of our faith, food for our soul and a pure and lasting source of our spiritual life". Elio's enthusiasm, knowledge and ease of communication are special - unique even. Beneath his jovial demeanour lies a sincerity and reverence one could only wish to emulate.

**Sr Louise's** keynote speech was based on "**knowing about** someone" and "**knowing** someone", leading on to "**knowing about** Jesus" and really "**knowing** Jesus". Louise used a personal relationship to demonstrate this as an example of **knowing about** and **knowing** a friend. Louise was brave, trusting, honest and humble presenting to us such a real and personal example to demonstrate her topic. For me, this was the highlight of the conference.

I empathised with her sincerity, I could relate so well to her story (as others probably did too) and I thank her for trusting us with her poignant story and for her generosity of "self".

**Helene O'Neill** is both a fitness fanatic and sports' tragic, so there's no surprise that the young people with whom she often works are fully engaged and enjoy their time with her! Helene belongs to the Blackbutt South Parish where she is chairperson of the Parish Council. She shared her own faith story with us and told of her health issues which subsequently led her to faith struggles and how, eventually, she overcame these struggles. Into the bargain her public speaking ticked all the boxes. This was another inspirational, personal story - what a woman of faith! Helene is an asset to the diocese and Newcastle people are privileged that she "belongs" to them!

As well as having the opportunity to be inspired by Elio, Louise and Helene, we were given the opportunity to participate in two of four workshops delivered by a further four interesting and knowledgeable presenters:

**Sr Patricia Boland** <sup>RSJ</sup> led us in reflecting on how helpful Matthew's Gospel can be in forming us as Christians. In lectionary-based catechesis (scripture-based teaching) we allow the gospel of the year to be our spiritual guide and springboard for catechesis, making the "old" stories relevant in our modern lives.

**Darren McDowell** from the Wollongong Diocese focused on introducing those unfamiliar with the RCIA process to how community and team can be entwined. It was here where some who were once catechumens or candidates themselves and are now team leaders or sponsors in their parishes told their "journey stories" and spoke about what the RCIA meant

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to them as individuals and how the processes were followed in their parishes.

**Carmel Moore** <sup>RSJ</sup> led a workshop on guided meditation helping us to reduce our “inner noise” and come to a calm mindfulness so that we can then lead others to do the same. We spent time listening, reading, discussing and reflecting on some of the Easter stories, resulting in our being shrouded in a relaxed freshness in our meditative space.

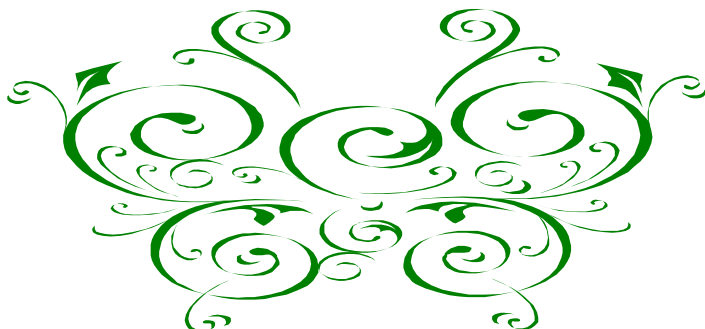
One could be forgiven for thinking that all we did for three days was listen to stories! Well, not quite, but nearly. But, you know, there’s nothing like a good story to help absorb the content ... no wonder the bible has been so successful!

Being a novice regarding the RCIA process, I was humbled by the many shared stories, by the warmth and honesty of so many new Catholics who shared how and why they chose their journeys, many of them passionate enough to become members of RCIA teams in their parishes. Many (to use the old-fashioned term) “converts” are now walking with others on their faith journeys.

In conclusion, I’ve pondered considerably on this thought: in these days of feeling duped by people in whom we’ve placed our trust, in these days of disillusion, dismay, disdain and disappointment, in these days of hearing and seeing mostly negativity about the institutional Church due to the misdeeds and carelessness of some of our so-called “shepherds”, why would others want to be part of such a shattered “flock”? But, believe me, there are many in our diocese, and indeed in our own parish, wanting to be part of an RCIA process. So there must still be something solid and warm beneath what is currently a rather murky surface.

If you get the opportunity to participate in the RCIA in any capacity, I urge you to seize it ... you won’t be disappointed!

*Merri Rumble* Taree Parish, Maitland-Newcastle Diocese



## Lumen Fidei

### Encyclical Letter on Faith by Pope Francis Promulgated in Rome 29 June 2013

Some quotes for your reflection, prayer and sharing:

From a dialogue between the Roman prefect Rusticus and a Christian named Hierax: “Where are your parents?” the judge asked the martyr. He replied: “*Our true father is Christ, and our mother is faith in him*”. (from the *Acta Sanctorum, Junii, I, 21*). For those early Christians, faith, as an encounter with the living God revealed in Christ, was indeed a “mother”, for it had brought them to the light and given birth within them to divine life, a new experience and a luminous vision of existence for which they were prepared to bear public witness to the end. (5)

The Church, like every family, passes on to her children the whole store of her memories. (40)

In this way the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes. (40) (quoting *Dei Verbum* 8)

There is a special means for passing down this fullness, a means capable of engaging the entire person, body and spirit, interior life and relationships with others. It is the sacraments, celebrated in the Church’s liturgy. (40)

The sacraments communicate an incarnate memory, linked to the times and places of our lives, linked to all our senses; in them the whole person is engaged as a member of a living subject and part of a network of communitarian relationships. (40)

Those who are baptised are set in a new context, entrusted to a new environment, a new and shared way of acting, in the Church. (41)

In this way, through immersion in water, baptism speaks to us of the incarnational structure of faith. Christ’s work penetrates the depths of our being and transforms us radically, making us adopted children of God and sharers in the divine nature. It thus modifies all our relationships, our place in this world and in the universe and opens them to God’s own life of communion. This change which takes place in baptism helps us to appreciate the singular importance of the catechumenate. (42)

The waters of death were thus transformed into waters of life. ... The waters of baptism are indeed faithful and trustworthy, for they flow with the power of Christ’s love, the source of our assurance in the journey of life. (42)

The Eucharist is a precious nourishment of faith: an encounter with Christ truly present in the supreme act of his love, the life-giving gift of himself. (44)

We can say that in the creed believers are invited to enter into the mystery which they profess and to be transformed by it. ... all the truths in which we believe point to the mystery of the new life of faith as a journey of communion with the living God. (45)

Fr. Elio Capra <sup>SDB</sup>

## **DATES for your Diary**

*What is happening in your Diocese/Parish  
for RCIA*

***Please let us know***

**For more detailed information on what is happening  
check out the ACN web site**

<http://www.ozcatechumenate.org>

### **South Australian Biennial State Conference**

**Penola**

**11 – 13 October 2013**

Office for Worship: Phone: 8416 8477

Email: [worship@ow.adelaide.catholic.org.au](mailto:worship@ow.adelaide.catholic.org.au)

### **Diocese of Parramatta**

**Annual Mass for Sacramental Teams**

**Thursday 24th October 2013**

**St Patrick's Cathedral Parramatta**

**7:30pm**

**UPDATE**

## **"Lift Up Your Hearts"**

### **National Liturgy Conference**

### **Wollongong NSW**

**Wednesday 15 January – Saturday 18 January 2014**

The National Liturgy Conference marking 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is to be held in Wollongong NSW in January 2014. Entitled "**Lift Up Your Hearts**", the conference seeks to provide many learning opportunities and uplifting experiences of liturgies and music, along with showcases and exhibits.

The keynote speakers are **Fr. Michael Joncas**, Associate Professor of Catholic Studies and Theology at St Timothy's University, Minnesota, **Ms Louise Campbell**, Director of New Zealand's National Liturgy Office, **Dr Clare V. Johnson**, Senior Lecturer in Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology at Australian Catholic University, Strathfield, and **Archbishop Mark Coleridge**, Archbishop of Brisbane and Chair of the Bishops Commission for Liturgy.

Three breakout sessions on the RCIA are included in the program:

#### **Saturday 11:15 AM**

**Darren McDowell** - Coming to Grips with Discernment in Initiation

**Elizabeth Harrington** - The New Evangelisation: What's the RCIA Got to Do With It?

#### **Saturday 2:00 PM**

**Darren McDowell** - Becoming an Initiating Community

For further information and to register visit the conference website [liftupyourhearts.com.au](http://liftupyourhearts.com.au).

## **National Conference – Townsville Queensland ,**

**7-10 August 2014**

### **Keynote: Paul Turner**

Fr Paul Turner a priest from the Diocese of Kansas City, Missouri who holds a doctorate in sacred theology from Sant' Anselmo in Rome will be the Keynote Speaker at the National Conference in 2014. Fr Turner is the author of numerous books on Liturgy and the Sacraments of Christian Initiation and these include, 'Celebrating Initiation: A Guide for Priests,' 'When other Christians Become Catholic' and several others.

Bishop Peter Comensoli a member of the ACBC's Commission for Mission and Faith Formation and the liaison bishop to the ACN, will attend this conference.

### **The venue for the Conference is:**

**Chifley Plaza Townsville** (Formerly The Plaza Hotel)

Cnr. Stanley and Flinders Street

Townsville Queensland 4810

### **Cheryl Rens**

RCIA Co-ordinator

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## NN Help Desk

**Q.** A 12-year-old boy at my parish, where I coordinate the RCIA, is interested in becoming a Catholic. His parents are Uniting and Anglican. They did not have him baptised and waited for him to make his own choice. He has been attending Catholic after-school RE at the State School, so chose Catholic. Is he allowed to become a Catholic at this age without a parent also becoming one?

Cathy

**A1.**

*I would ask the child what he thinks being a Catholic means and then ask if the parents would be prepared to support him until he is 18 with weekly Mass and active participation in the community.*

*Without knowing the child or parents, I have doubts about his maturity to discern such an important step.*

*Having said that, I had a similar case in a parish a couple of years ago. After spending time with child and parents the parish priest said he was convinced he should not stand in the way of the Holy Spirit and the child was initiated.*

*The whole process of discernment - letting the Holy Spirit guide all in decisions - is critical.*

Trish

**A2.**

*The **first** thing that needs to be identified is if this is about enrolment in a Catholic secondary school.*

***Secondly**, check with parents to see if one or both are interested in being received into the Catholic Church. Does one or both practise in their own tradition?*

***Thirdly**, if they have no intention of being received into the Catholic Church, establish how they will support their son's practice of faith. Would they be willing to bring him to Mass, for example?*

*Is there any Catholicism in the family anywhere - grandparents, aunts, uncles?*

*At age 12, the boy is probably old enough to understand the choice he is making.*

*If it is something more than school enrolment, I would be inclined to go ahead - but the parents would need show signs of being supportive and making efforts to bring the boy to Mass.*

Fr. Anthony

**A3.**

*Does your parish have the people resources to have a family be 'sponsor' for this child and therefore connect with and support both the child and his parents, especially post-initiation?*

*Here are some additional things that would be worth addressing in your initial contact with the parents:*

*How are they going to support their son in his faith journey?*

*Are they practising members in their own faith communities? (If so, they would have an appreciation of the need for the community's support in the faith journey.)*

*Would they be willing to be involved in a discussion group to assist their understanding of the Catholic Church in order to support their son?*

*How do they envisage supporting their son during the teenage years, when he may resist the Catholic obligation of attending Sunday Mass?*

*Are there Catholic adults who will support them and their son in his lifelong faith journey within the Catholic community of faith?*

*We are not yet in communion with the Uniting Church and Anglican Communion. How will the family live out ecumenically this current situation?*

Sue

**A4.**

*I would suggest that one or both parents bring him to church each week for a couple of months to help him decide whether it's really what he wants and help him be aware of what a major part of "being a Catholic" entails.*

*Something like this will help the parish discern whether this is a whim or some deeper calling and it could have a spin-off on one or both parents.*

*It would be also very important to continually reassure him that he can change his mind at anytime during this journey.*

Fr. Denis



### New Question

In my parish we have a young Korean lady in the RCIA who has very little English. I would be grateful for any information about resources in Korean that we might be able to tap into to assist her in the catechetical aspect of her faith journey.

Mary

# Resources

## 'Foundations in Faith' and 'At Home with God's People' – Complementary Resources for Catechesis

Over the last few issues of *Network News* we have highlighted various resources for the catechesis and formation of catechumens and candidates. In March we highlighted the ***Become One Body One Spirit in Christ DVD*** and in June we outlined the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***. In this edition I offer two resources that complement each other and the above works in providing catechetical formation for those with whom we journey.

What makes a good resource for catechesis? Certainly of high importance are flexibility, adaptability, the weaving together of both scripture and Church teaching, and guiding catechists in how to present material in a variety of ways. These elements are contained in both the ***Foundations in Faith*** and ***At Home with God's People*** resources.

### ***Foundations in Faith***



The *Foundations in Faith* resource incorporates all of these elements. The package of materials is structured around each period of the RCIA process and the Lectionary. It provides a holistic and complete resource for RCIA parishes assisting those involved in the process to make connections between the word, celebration of the Mass, Church teaching and the needs of individuals.

The *Foundations in Faith* package is primarily made up of

Catechist Manuals for Years A, B & C

Participant Manuals for Years A, B, & C

Resource Books for the:

Period of Enquiry

Period of Purification & Enlightenment

Period of Mystagogy

Handbooks for:

Sponsors

Catechists

Inquirers

Neophytes

Prayer

The heart of this resource is the Catechist Manuals for the Catechumenate for Years A, B and C. The manuals are arranged according to the Sundays of the Year, the Solemnities of the Lord and Major Feasts of each Liturgical Year. For each Sunday or celebration the manual provides background information for catechists on the elements of Church teaching arising out of the readings. This background material assists catechists prepare for the sessions they will have with the catechumens or candidates. Following this background material is a catechetical structure for both Dismissal and extended catechesis. This structure for catechesis sessions provides introductory comments, reflection questions and points for discussion.

For flexibility and adaptability each manual contains a topical index enabling catechists to find scriptural references to the various topics that need covering on the formational journey.

The *Foundations in Faith* package also includes resource manuals on the other periods within the RCIA process, each one covering Years A, B, and C. These manuals contain much valuable material. For instance, the Resource book for Purification and Enlightenment contains retreat day / session ideas, prayers, the ritual celebrations, reflections on each part of the Triduum and handouts for catechumens. The Resource book for Mystagogy provides reflection material and handouts for each Sunday of Easter, background material on this period, preparation material and much more. *continued*

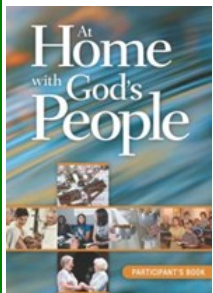
The handbooks for Sponsors, Catechists, Inquirers, Neophytes and on Prayer also provide useful information. Sponsors, for example, are given reflection material on being a good listener, sharing faith and life, introducing ministry and much more. The handbook on Prayer introduces the concept of prayer, journal writing, setting up a sacred space, and much more.

The *Foundations in Faith* material can be viewed at [www.rclbenziger.com](http://www.rclbenziger.com). Click on the *Foundations in Faith* item in the Browse products list or under Adult Formation / RCIA.

Unfortunately, international customers cannot order through the website. You will need to contact Donna Glasser, [dglaser@rclbenziger.com](mailto:dglaser@rclbenziger.com), 0011 614 607 2617.

Because the resources are quite expensive, a suggestion would be to simply buy the resources for each liturgical year as it comes around.

## At Home with God's People



*At Home with God's People* complements *Foundations in Faith* very well by providing more in-depth formation and reflection on a complete range of topics. Beginning with 'In Search of God', the resource moves through 25 topics including: Prayer, The Bible, Revelation, The Church, Mary, Sacraments, Ministry, Morality, Justice & Ecology and the Last Things. In this way, and in accordance with paragraph 75 of the Rite, a full and complete catechesis is provided.

Each chapter is divided into three sections. The **first section** outlines how both catechists and catechumens can prepare for the meeting. Participants are invited to spend some time in personal reflection on the topic and how it relates to their life. The invitation is then given to explore how God speaks to us through scripture in connection with the topic being explored. Finally the preparation section concludes with an invitation to experience the topic 'at Mass this week' and in prayer.

The **second section**, around 4-6 pages per topic, provides the in-depth catechetical material for participants and leaders to work through. Written in clear and understandable language, this material is well suited to those who are beginning the journey of exploring the various aspects of Catholic belief. The material is well laid out, divided into sub-headings and contains real-life practical examples to illustrate the points being addressed.

The **third and final section** is devoted to 'Deepening the Reflection'. In this section participants are invited to reflect upon the following Sunday's gospel, listening for how it speaks to them, especially in connection with the topic just covered. This invitation is followed by some small group discussion questions and a prayer connected with the topic. References to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are also provided.

The comprehensive *At Home with God's People* website, <http://www.ahwgp.com>, provides extensive information and resources for individuals and groups using *At Home with God's People*. The 'Sample' tab gives access to a chapter from the book. The 'Leaders' tab allows you to print a copy of The Catechist Handbook. Links and reference material for any of the topics in *At Home with God's People* are accessed via the 'Resources' tab.

*At Home with God's People* can be ordered from the website, by emailing Faith & Life at the Archdiocese of Brisbane at [afe.fl@bne.catholic.net.au](mailto:afe.fl@bne.catholic.net.au), or by phoning 07 3336 9163.

## Conclusion

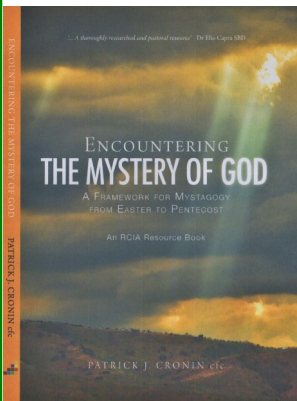
It would be easy to utilise these two resources in tandem. Beginning with the *Foundations in Faith* resource which provides the connection with each Sunday reading, the catechist could then invite people to delve deeper through using the *At Home with God's People* resource. In this way, catechesis holds firm to both sound understanding of the whole of faith whilst also being true to providing connection with scripture and the liturgical year.

As a starting point I recommend purchasing the *Foundation in Faith Catechist Manual* for the upcoming liturgical year, the manuals for the other periods of the Rite and the topical handbooks as well as copies of *At Home with God's People*. In this way the core of the RCIA process and supporting material is covered whilst keeping costs to a minimum. Further catechetical material could then be sourced through the *Catechism* and *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ*.



## Encountering the Mystery of God by Patrick Cronin

**"Encountering the Mystery of God"** is a practical plan for the seven weeks of Mystagogy within the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). It covers the period from the second week of Easter to Pentecost Sunday, detailing practical and realistic ways of including those involved in the process: priest, parish RCIA team, parish community and the newly-received.



However, the book reaches beyond RCIA. It shows how Christians generally can celebrate the Season of Easter according to the unfolding drama of the liturgy in these seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost. It follows the example of the Risen Christ himself who was the first to institute this formation period for his apostles between Resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The book traces a gradual journey of exploration into the spiritual life for us all as we journey from Easter to Pentecost. We reflect with Thomas on faith in the Risen Christ; then we accompany the disciples to Emmaus; after the Good Shepherd and the gate of the sheepfold, we come to know Jesus as the Way, Truth and Life. We see that conversion means to be part of the mission to all the world at the Ascension. We wait to be filled with

the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual journey is largely based on the Gospel of John as the liturgy requires and makes links with parish involvement on a week-by-week basis according to the Gospel themes.

Based on empirical research that celebrates the quality of the Mystagogy period offered in parishes, the book emphasises the significance of the sacramental practice of the neophytes and newly-received in their lives. Mystagogy, of course, continues for one's whole life, but the fourth period of RCIA is requires us to 'nurture the vine' for seven weeks after Easter.

**"Encountering the Mystery of God"** is a recommended resource for all parishes and for people who wish to follow their spiritual journey through these seven weeks of liturgy.

The author is a Christian Brother who coordinates the Adult Catechumenate in the Archdiocese of Adelaide.

### Endorsements for Encountering the Mystery of God

*This resource will set your hearts on fire through the Word and then, like the Emmaus disciples, it will help you to recognise Him in the breaking of the bread. But the journey is not yet finished. The nurtured vine must produce abundant fruit. Once we recognise the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread, we are then ready to receive the promised Holy Spirit sending us out to be Jesus' witnesses and missionaries to the world.*

Rev. Dr Elio Capra SDB.

**"Encountering the Mystery of God"** provides much-needed resources, both practical and theoretical, for the final stage of the adult journey into the Catholic Church. Parish RCIA teams and their leaders, especially, will find it valuable. Initial chapters explore the nature of conversion and the role of the Sunday scripture readings in the Mystagogy, the final stage of the RCIA process. Yet the book has a practical heart, with eight chapters devoted to the Sundays between Easter and Pentecost - recommending scriptural perspectives, offering reflections on the Eucharist, and making practical suggestions for each week's meeting. Patrick Cronin's strong background in leading RCIA teams, at both parish and diocesan levels, makes this book a must for the RCIA.

Rev Dr James McEvoy, President, Australian Catholic Theological Association.

## Facebook for the ACN?

Whether we like it or not, social media has become part of our everyday life. With this in mind, the Australian Catechumenate Network is considering a move into social media, such as Facebook. In doing so, we are seeking your feedback and are asking, **"Should the ACN embrace social media, like Facebook?"**

Things to consider in bringing ACN to Facebook are:

1. How the ACN should look on Facebook;
2. Who would have access;
3. Who would respond to the posts placed on Facebook;
4. Whether we need or want this exposure for the ACN on Facebook, when TeamRCIA already exists;
5. Whether there any costs involved; OR
6. Whether we prefer to stay as we are and have just a website.

Please send your responses to the questions above, and any other comments you would like to offer on this issue, to John Rens at [cjrens@gmail.com](mailto:cjrens@gmail.com).

A report will be developed and presented to the ACN committee detailing responses to each question or point / concern raised.

John Rens. Website Development Team.



# NETWORK NEWS

*Network News* is the quarterly bulletin of the Australian Catechumenate Network. The Australian Catechumenate Network (ACN) is a support network of those who share the vision of the catechumenate. Its purpose is to promote the practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) through sharing ideas and challenges. ACN Membership is open to all Australians who have a commitment to and/or work with the RCIA in Australia.

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of *Network News*.

## Feedback

To send feedback or get further information about items in *Network News*, contact the editor, Elizabeth Harrington, Liturgy Brisbane, GPO Box 282, Brisbane 4001, fax 07 3221 1705, [harrington@liturgybrisbane.net.au](mailto:harrington@liturgybrisbane.net.au).

## Your Contributions Invited

The next issue will be circulated in early **December 2013**. Please send stories to share, news or events to publicise, articles to contribute or resources to recommend by **25th November 2013** to the editor, Elizabeth Harrington, (contact details above).

*Please send flyers/advertising material as 'jpeg' files.*

Australian Catechumenate Network  
The Australian Catechumenate Network (A.C.N) seeks to support all those who share the vision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)