

Using the Apprentices in Faith Materials

Apprentices in Faith is a resource that is designed to assist the efforts of your parish and your initiation team as you guide and accompany catechumens and candidates through the various stages of the Christian initiation process. All of the materials needed to lead people through this process are contained within this site and can be accessed whenever you need them.

The unique online format of *Apprentices in Faith* allows you to utilize the resources in the way that is best for your particular process. Some leaders will choose to print all of the materials for participants and catechists as they are needed for the group. Others will allow the participants access to the site so that they can explore the materials on their own and bring their own session materials to a meeting. Yet others will use a combination of these approaches and may send materials to participants before or after each session through email or encourage people to download the materials to their own personal electronic reading devices (laptops, cell phones, e-readers, and so on).

Structure of Materials

There are six sections into which these materials have been divided for both catechists and participants. With the addition of introduction and additional resource materials, these sections mirror the natural flow of the initiation process. They are as follows:

- Introduction
- Inquiry
- Catechumenate
- Purification and Enlightenment
- Mystagogy
- Additional Resources

Introduction

This section is provided so that you can become familiar with the materials offered in *Apprentices in Faith*. In addition to this article that introduces the different components and how to use them, there is an article giving a general overview of the OCIA process as well as an article exploring the community's role within the initiation process. For the participants, the introductory section includes a letter of welcome that can be distributed to all of those starting the process.

Specific Sessions for Each Period in the OCIA Process

The various sessions offered for each of the periods throughout the initiation process (Inquiry, Catechumenate, Purification and Enlightenment, and Mystagogy) form the core of the *Apprentices in Faith* materials. These sessions are designed in two corresponding formats—a participant piece and a catechist piece. The layout of these materials reflects the unique type of formation envisioned by each of the four periods of the process as described in the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

At the beginning of the materials for each period in the OCIA process, you will find a general introductory article. This article is designed to be used with the initiation team, catechists, and parish staff members. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for the OCIA process and support a deep understanding of each of the four stages of Christian initiation.

Inquiry Sessions

The Inquiry sessions are designed to approach central Catholic themes in a broad manner. This is due to the fact that inquirers are at the beginning stage of the initiation process. At this point participants are gaining an initial sense of both

the Gospel and Catholic teaching and are likely just beginning to incorporate one or both of these areas into their lives in an intentional way. These sessions can be used in any order, according to the needs of the particular group.

The Inquiry sessions are designed by topic and can be used in any order, according to the needs of the particular group. They are structured in a way that first invites participants to begin reflecting on their own life experience. After exploring these personal events and experiences, the participants are led to discover what the Gospel says about a particular aspect of these experiences and how faith interacts and plays a part within each of these experiences. Staying focused on the same topic, the participants then explore biblical passages that help widen their discussion of Gospel values. And finally, the participants are challenged to identify a change they might make, in outlook or in action, that would help them conform more closely to the Gospel way of life.

The corresponding catechist version is designed to assist the catechist in leading the group through an exploration of various themes. The catechist is offered guidance in preparing for the session, gathering the group together, exploring and expanding the group's understanding of the theme through interactive sharing, and concluding each session with prayer.

Catechumenate Sessions

The Catechumenate session themes are based on the three-year cycle of the Sunday Lectionary and provide the participants with a focused look at the Scripture readings for that week, which is expanded by a related doctrinal theme. In addition to the doctrinal theme, which is explained in a concise narrative format, key vocabulary terms are defined and related quotes from a saint and a pope are offered, which help open up the theme. References are also given to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* and the *Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These additional references encourage participants to engage in further exploration of each theme.

The corresponding catechist version of the Catechumenate sessions contains guidance for leading both dismissal and extended catechetical sessions. The dismissal approach is best utilized during the Sunday liturgy while the extended approach can be used in relation to Sunday liturgy or at another gathering later in the week.

Additional Doctrinal Sessions

The Catechumenate period is a lengthy time of formation, so *Apprentices in Faith* also offers additional materials that can be incorporated into it. These additional materials consist of additional doctrinal sessions that are organized around the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Creed, sacraments, morality, and prayer. Each pillar is covered by ten sessions that explore the content of these major categories of faith. The sessions are designed in a unique way, focused first on Sacred Scripture and then on an actual life-experience scenario, which poses leading questions to prompt reflection and insight by the participants. An explanation of Church doctrine is then offered, which provides rich content for discussion and reflection.

The corresponding catechist material helps the catechist further open up Church teaching, clarifying the essentials and explaining why each teaching is important, thus making it accessible to the participants and assisting them to actively live the good news contained within the teaching.

The additional doctrinal sessions could be used as a systematic exploration of a particular pillar of the Church, each session progressively contributing to the next. On the other hand, a catechist may find it useful to combine one of these sessions with a related Lectionary-based session as a supplement for the extended Sunday catechesis session. These additional doctrinal materials can also be used in the period of Inquiry or in the period of Mystagogy as supplements.

Purification and Enlightenment Sessions

The Purification and Enlightenment sessions revolve around the six Lenten Sundays of Year A (from the First Sunday of Lent through Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion), since this is the year in the Lectionary cycle specifically meant for the elect. The participant materials have a different look and feel to them as compared to the preceding catechumenate participant materials even though they are designed to be used by the elect as they are sent forth from the Sunday Liturgy of the Word. This period represents the elect's proximate preparation for Christian initiation, and should have an intensity about it that resembles a retreat experience. The materials attempt to facilitate this type of gathering for the participants, calling for repentance and renewal fueled by a specific image of Christ.

The corresponding catechist material helps the catechist set the tone for the gathering and focuses the elect upon the kind of Purification and Enlightenment envisioned by the OCIA in this final period before initiation.

Mystagogy Sessions

The Mystagogy sessions for participants offer reflections around central symbols of the Scriptures proclaimed during the Easter Season and of the Risen Lord. These sessions are meant to provoke reflection, conversation, and celebration as the neophytes contemplate and savor the Paschal Mystery into which they have been fully initiated.

The corresponding catechist material enables the catechist to guide the neophytes in this important period of reflection and celebration. The catechist material is arranged so that the mystagogical gathering is more festive in nature. This encourages the neophytes to joyfully reflect on and celebrate the significance of these important symbols for their ongoing journey of faith.

Supplemental Resource Articles

The supplemental resource articles include additional information, such as the place of liturgy in the process of adult formation. There are articles that cover the meaning and celebration of the different rites of Christian initiation as well as articles that explore the process of discernment throughout the Christian initiation process. Additional resources for participants include the key teachings of the Catholic Church in an easy-to-use question and answer format.

More to Come!

Apprentices in Faith is designed as a dynamic resource that continually evolves and expands to meet the needs of your parish setting. As you return to this site again and again, you will notice new and exciting resources being added. In the meantime, take advantage of the rich resources now available that provide everything you need to develop the most effective OCIA process for your parish!