

## Quotes from the *General Directory for Catechesis*

Published by the Congregation for the Clergy (1997)

### **The situation of catechesis: its vitality and difficulties**

29. The missionary character of contemporary catechesis and its ability to secure adherence to the faith on the part of catechumens and those to be catechized in a world in which religious sense is obscured must also be underlined: in this dynamic there is an acute awareness that catechesis must have a catechumenal style, as of integral formation rather than mere information; it must act in reality as a means of arousing true conversion.

62. Only by starting with conversion, and therefore by making allowance for the interior disposition of "whoever believes", can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task of education in the faith.

### **Fundamental characteristics of initiatory catechesis**

67. Catechesis acquires certain characteristics in virtue of being an "essential moment" in the process of evangelization, in the service of Christian initiation. It is:

- a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith. The Synod of 1977 underscored the need for a "comprehensive and structured" catechesis, since catechesis is principally distinguished from other forms of presenting the word of God by its comprehensive and vital deepening of the mystery of Christ;
- this comprehensive formation includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a "complete Christian initiation", which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith...
- a basic and essential formation, centered on what constitutes the nucleus of Christian experience, the most fundamental certainties of the faith and the most essential evangelical values...

### **The object of catechesis: communion with Jesus Christ**

80. The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ. All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ. Starting with the initial conversion of a person to the Lord, moved by the Holy Spirit through the primary proclamation of the Gospel, catechesis seeks to solidify and mature this first adherence.

### **The baptismal catechumenate: structure and progression**

88. Faith, moved by divine grace and cultivated by the action of the Church, undergoes a process of maturation. Catechesis, which is at the service of this growth, is also a gradual activity. Good catechesis is always done in steps. In the baptismal catechumenate, formation is articulated in four stages: [pre-catechumenate, catechumenate, purification and illumination, mystagogy]

89. These stages, which reflect the wisdom of the great catechumenal tradition, also inspire the gradual nature of catechesis. In the patristic period properly, catechumenal formation was realized through biblical catechesis, based on recounting the history of salvation; immediate preparation for Baptism by doctrinal catechesis, explaining the Creed and the Our Father which had just been handed on, together with their moral implications; and through the phase following the sacraments of initiation, a period of mystagogical catechesis which help the newly baptized to interiorize these sacraments and incorporate themselves into the community. This patristic concept continues to illuminate the present catechumenate and initiatory catechesis itself. This latter, in so far as it accompanies the process of conversion, is essentially gradual and, in so far as it is at the service of one who has decided to follow Christ, it is eminently christocentric.

### **The baptismal catechumenate: inspiration for catechesis in the Church**

90. Given that the *missio ad gentes* is the paradigm of all the Church's missionary activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is joined to it, is the model of its catechizing activity...

## **A comprehensive and hierarchical message**

114. This message transmitted by catechetics has a comprehensive hierarchical character, which constitutes a coherent and vital synthesis of the faith. This is organized around the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, in a christocentric perspective, because this is the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. Starting with this point, the harmony of the overall message requires a hierarchy of truths, in so far as the connection between each one of these and the foundation of the faith differs. Nevertheless, this hierarchy does not mean that some truths pertain to Faith itself less than others, but rather that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority and are illumined by them.

## **Nature and purpose of the Catechism of the Catholic Church**

121. The Prologue to the Catechism of the Catholic Church states its purpose: "This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition". The Magisterium of the Church intends to render an ecclesial service for our times with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, recognizing that it is:

- a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion: it desires to promote the bond of unity in the faith by helping the disciples of Jesus Christ to make the profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
- a sure norm for teaching the faith: the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers a clear response to the legitimate right of all the baptized to know from the Church what she has received and what she believes; it is thus an obligatory point of reference for catechesis and for the other forms of the ministry of the word...

The nature or character proper to this document of the Magisterium consists in the fact that it is a comprehensive synthesis of the faith and thus it is of universal value.

## *Quotes from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*

42. The prerequisite for making this first step [Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens] is that the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates. Thus there must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization... there must also be evidence of the first stirrings of repentance, a start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer, a sense of the Church, and some experience of the company and spirit of Christians through contact with a priest or with members of the community.

75 § 1. A suitable catechesis is provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful, planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word [See RCIA #81-89]...

75 § 3. Celebrations of the word of God are arranged for their benefit [See RCIA #81-89], and at Mass they may also take part with the faithful in the liturgy of the word.

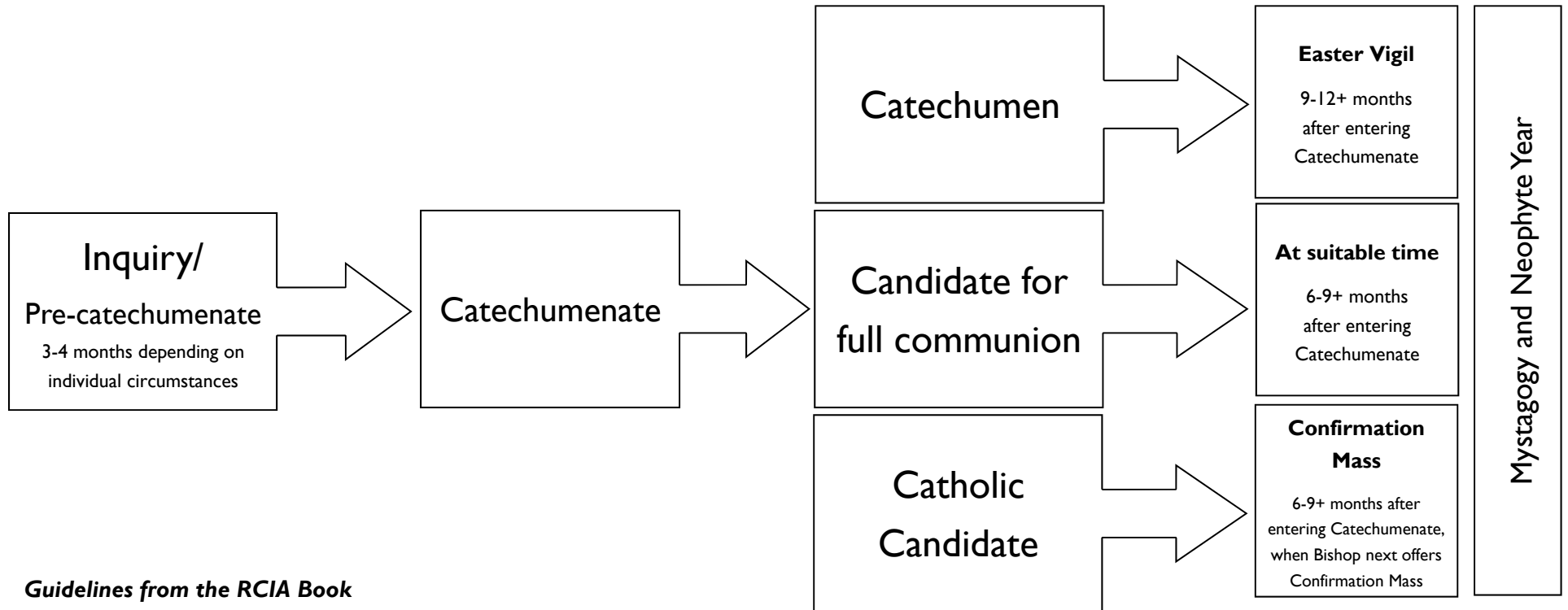
76. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough – several years if necessary – for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong...

78. The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.

Appendix III: National Statutes: 7. A thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life, aided by approved catechetical texts, is to be provided during the period of the catechumenate.

# How Long?

General guidelines of time required for adequate formation and delivery of the Deposit of Faith.



**Guidelines from the RCIA Book**

**Signs of conversion—readiness for the Rite of Acceptance (or Rite of Welcoming)**

**Unbaptized**—(n.42) “The prerequisite for making this first step is that the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates.”

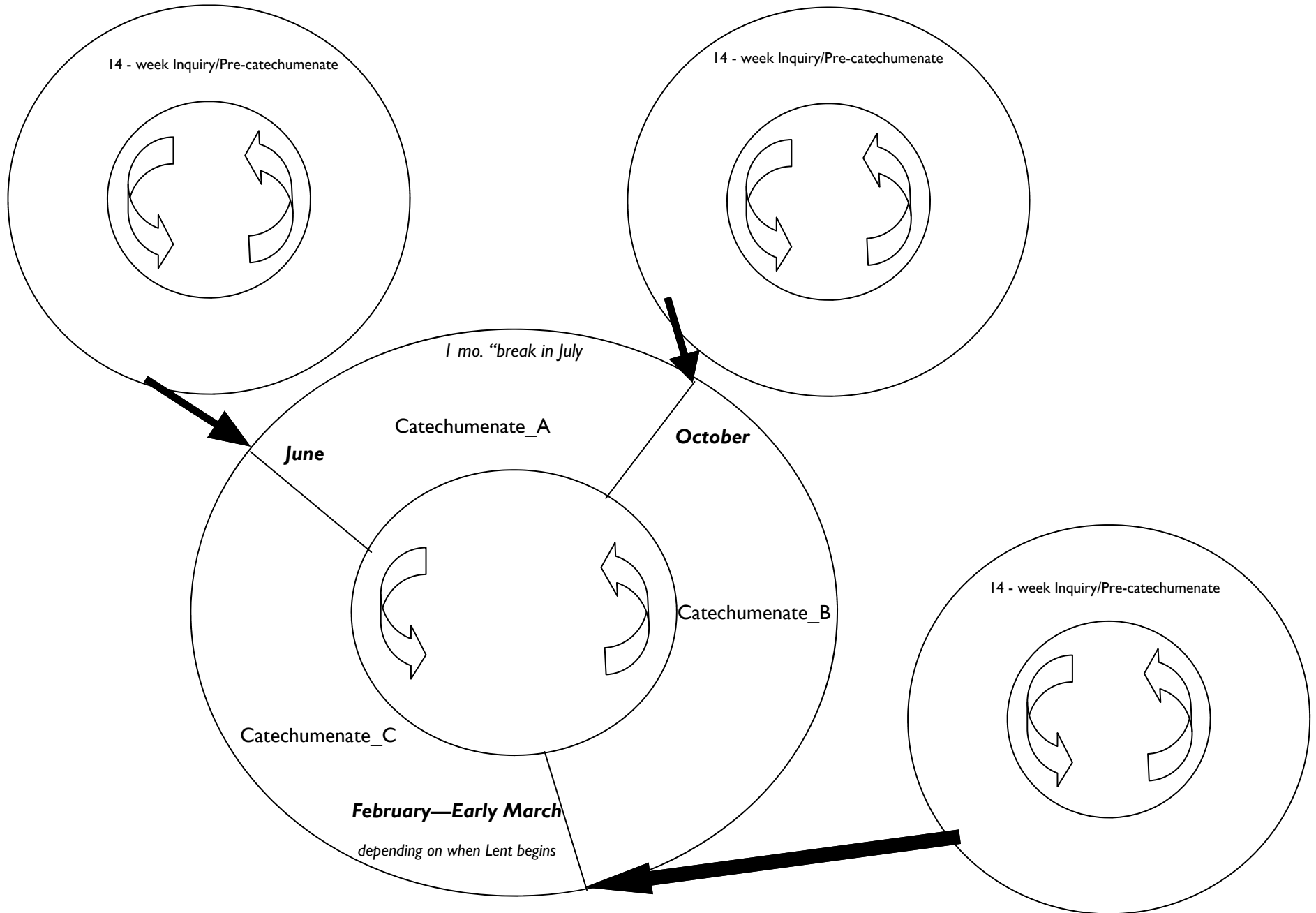
**Baptized, uncatechized**—(n.401) “A program of training, catechesis suited to their needs, contact with the community of the faithful, and participation in certain liturgical rites are needed in order to strengthen them in the Christian life.”

**Baptized, Catechized, not Catholic**—(n. 477) “The baptized Christian is to receive both doctrinal and spiritual preparation, adapted to the individual pastoral requirements, for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The candidate should learn to deepen an inner adherence to the Church, where he or she will find the fullness of his or her baptism.”

**Length of Catechumenate Period**

**Unbaptized**—(Ap. III, n.6) “The period of the catechumenate... should extend for at least one year of formation... from at least the Easter season of one year until the next; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year...” (n.76) “It may even last several years if necessary.”

# 3 cycle structure (14 weeks per cycle)



## 14 Week Inquiry Doctrine Cycle

	Doctrine	Compendium	CCC**	Additional point to Emphasize	Suggested Icon
1	Existence of God	Q 1-5	#27-43, 198-226, 239, 268-274	Plan of God, Man's Capacity for God	Sacred Heart
2	The Story	Q 6-9, 79-80	#53-67, 238, 388, 758-786, 831	God comes to meet man	Redemptoris Mater Chapel Wall
3	Blessed Trinity	Q 44-53	#42, 202, 232-239, 245-261	God is communion of life and love	Rublev, Hospitality of Abraham
4	Incarnation	Q 81-95	#422-478, 512, 606-607	Mary Mother of God and Immaculate Conc.	Annunciation*
5	The Church	Q 144-159	#85-86, 737-801, 871-933	Emphasis on person of the Holy Spirit	Washing of Peter's Feet
6	4 Marks	Q 161-176, 201	#75-79, 551-553, 750, 811-885	Relationship/Separated Brethren	BVM Queen of Martyrs
7	Communion of Saints	Q 194-197	#946-959, 1471-1479, 2635-2636	Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother	BVM / Saint of Choice*
8	Divine Rev/Sac. Scrip/ Trad	Q 6-24	#50-78, 101-106	Practical help with Bible and CCC	Christ the Teacher*
9	Original Sin & Mystery of Iniquity	Q 391-400, 79	#272-274, 309-314, 374-412, 1263-64	Original Sin, reverse of Gospel / Good News def. / Temptation def.	Temptation/Garden of Eden*
10	Sacramental Economy	Q 220-230	#1-2, 168-69, 257-60, 1076-1109	Very closely connected to "The Story"	Crucifixion / Baptism of Jesus
11	Dignity of the Human Person	Q 358-363, 466-472	#27, 355-379, 1701-1730	This serves as an introduction to the moral life, "Life in Christ"	Adoration of the Magi*
12	The Mass, "Mass 101"	Q 233-238, 271-294	#1085, 1104, 1140-44, 1322-1405	Real Presence/Passover from Egypt connected to "The Story"	Crucifixion*
13	Introduction to Prayer	Q 534-535, 541-546, 558-563	#2558-2619, 2625-79, 2697-2719	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Pentecost*
14	Church Tour	Q 235, 240, 244-246	#1159-1161, 1179-1199	Tabernacle/ Eucharistic Adoration	Crucifix (meaning/role)

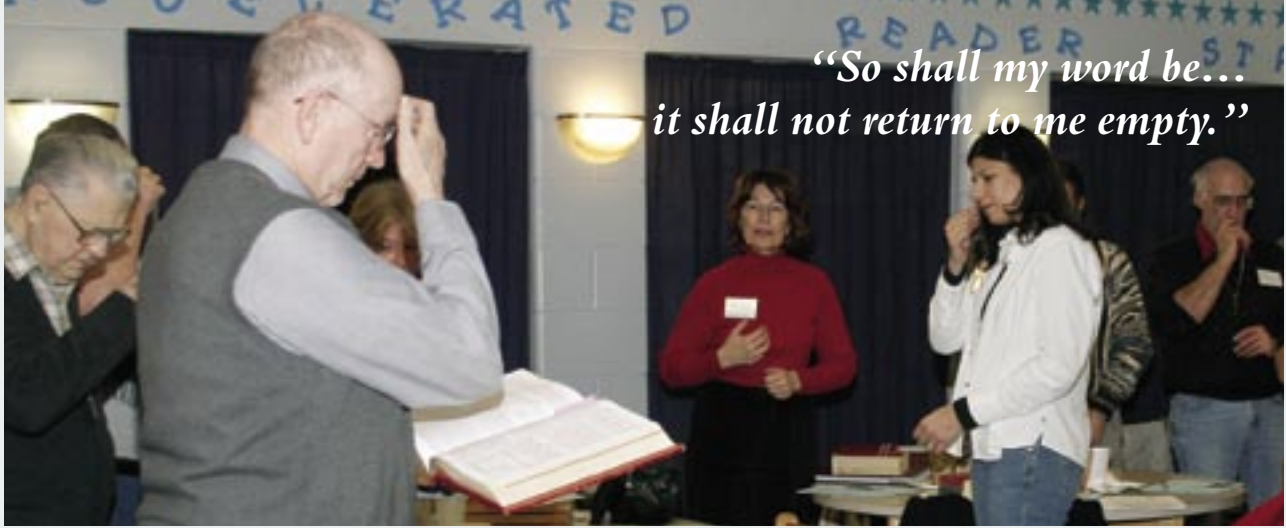
(Outline of Curriculum used at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Modesto, CA [www.stjmod.com](http://www.stjmod.com))

\*above in Suggested Icon section denotes art found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church or the Compendium to the Catechism

\*\*CCC is the abbreviation for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the above references are not necessarily exhaustive.

## 14-Week Catechumenate, 3-Part Repeating "Doctrine Cycle"

	Doctrine Cycle A	Doctrine Cycle B	Doctrine Cycle C
1	Introduction to the Creed	Holy Spirit	Creation
2	Creation	BVM	Sacred Scripture
3	God the Father	Providence	Mystical Body of Christ
4	The Son of God	Paschal Mystery (1)	The Story
5	The Kingdom of God	Baptism	The Second Coming
6	Four Last Things	Eucharist 1	Liturgical Prayer
7	Liturgy	Reconciliation	Eucharist 2
8	Sacraments of Initiation	Matrimony	Vocations: God's Call
9	Holy Orders/Anointing of Sick	Mercy and Justice	Mercy and Justice
10	Freedom in Christ	Salvation and Redemption	Virtue of Hope
11	Grace	Social Teachings	Cardinal Virtues +
12	Virtue of Faith	First Three Commandments	Two Great Commandments
13	Justification and Merit	Last Seven Commandments	The Battle of Prayer
14	Traditions of Prayer	Lord's Prayer	Adoration/ Rosary & Devotions



*“So shall my word be...  
it shall not return to me empty.”*

# Liturgy of the Word

## *Using a Celebration of the Word of God in a Catechetical Setting*

Celebrations of the Word can be held in connection with catechetical sessions so that lessons will occur in the context of liturgical prayer. (see RCIA 81-89) These liturgies have as their main purpose:

1. To implant in listeners' hearts the Scriptural underpinnings of the truths of the faith
2. To make use of the signs, celebrations, prayers, and seasons of the liturgy

Liturgies of the Word must reflect the liturgical life of the Church. They should preserve all the gestures, the language, and the holy feasts of the Church's liturgy as the "envelope" for delivering the faith. Do not "rush" or consider these celebrations of the Word as "extras." These are proclamations of sacred Scripture that prepare hearts and minds for the teaching.

*“So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (ISAIAH 55:11)*

The readers and musicians participating in the Liturgy of the Word must be properly prepared. The structure of a Liturgy of the Word should follow generally this pattern:

### **Opening Song** (stand)

Song should be appropriate to the doctrine taught.

### **First Reading** (sit)

This should be taken from any of sacred Scripture except the Gospels.

### **Responsorial Psalm** (sit)

This can be sung or recited, and should be done as a dialogue.

### **Gospel Reading** (stand)

An acclamation precedes the proclamation of the Gospel.

The deacon or priest is the proper reader of the Gospel.

If a cleric is not available, the catechist for that session should read the Gospel.

### **Catechetical Instruction**

The instruction must follow the proclamation of Scripture.

### **Concluding Prayer** (sit or stand)

This may consist of a psalm, litany, or other prayer, and perhaps a sung hymn.

Proper responses are:

**First Reading:** Opening: "A reading from the book of..."

Closing: "The Word of the Lord"

All: "Thanks be to God"

**Gospel Reading:** Opening: "A reading from the holy Gospel according to..."

Closing: "The Gospel of the Lord"

All: "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ"

This handout is provided courtesy of the Association for Catechumenal Ministry. It is taken from the "RCIA Leader's Manual", which is distributed by Liturgy Training Publications (LTP) (800) 933-1800