

Diocese of Covington
RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual
Mystagogy

XIII. Mystagogy

This fourth step of the RCIA process, defined in paragraph nos. 244 through 251 of the ritual book, is that period following the Sacraments of Initiation where “The neophytes are, as the term "mystagogy" suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the Sacraments they have received. For they have truly been renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God’s Word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and grown to know the goodness of the Lord. Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.” (RCIA, no. 245)

A. Pastoral Aspect – “The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated. The aim of all Christian education, moreover, is to train the believer in an adult faith that can make him a "new creation", capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*). The primary mystagogues to the entire Church are her bishops and priests.

1. The RCIA ritual book says: “After mystagogy, the process for the neophytes should extend until the anniversary of Christian initiation, with at least monthly assemblies of the neophytes for their deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community.” (RCIA, no. 24 of Appendix III: National Statutes for the Catechumenate). The monthly follow-up meetings would not have to be the responsibility of the RCIA team. Perhaps the neophytes’ sponsors or others in the parish could take responsibility at this point. If one of the neophytes has been coming to the parish for a while, they may be able to coordinate these monthly meetings with some assistance and guidance from the RCIA leader.
 - a) The RCIA mystagogy period begins at Christian initiation and ends at Pentecost. **It lasts for the entire Easter Season.**
 - b) RCIA postbaptismal catechesis continues for the rest of the neophyte year and ends at the anniversary of their initiation.

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- c) Mystagogy never truly ends because all fully initiated Catholics are called to continue on a lifelong journey into the mystery by which they are being saved.
2. Form sponsors to understand the importance of their role to help the neophytes practice their faith by fully and authentically practicing their own.
3. Help neophytes identify their gifts and discern how the Spirit is calling them to live out their conversion to discipleship and gradually take on the life of being a Catholic Christian. Encourage the sponsors and them to pray faithfully together for discernment.
4. Remind sponsors to keep in contact with the neophytes during the Easter Season. Ask sponsors to let the pastor or RCIA leader know if weekly participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is not taking place or if other family matters are preoccupying the neophytes.
5. Provide opportunities for newly baptized to make their first and second Reconciliations.
6. Create an administrative process, assigned to someone who may or may not be on the RCIA team, that will make sure all former RCIA participants are aware of opportunities to become involved in parish life.
7. Plan a group service project. Ask a sponsor or the neophytes themselves to organize it and to complete it with guidance from the RCIA team. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington (covingtoncharities.org) has many volunteer and service opportunities available.
8. Social activities could include:
 - a) Invite previous year neophytes to host a celebration after Easter Vigil.
 - b) Host an appreciation dinner with the families, sponsors, team, etc.
 - c) Host a breakfast on Pentecost. Have the parish provide the main dish and ask the neophytes to bring food to honor the sponsors and RCIA team members.
 - d) Host a closing dinner at the end of mystagogy, including praying the Liturgy of the Hours for Vespers and/or talking about the Eucharist as a banquet.

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- e) Make contact with the neophytes during specific parish/diocesan events, inviting them to attend or to work together as a group at those events. Ask sponsors to coordinate.

B. Catechetical Aspect – The RCIA team should connect mystagogy to the rest of the process. The way the whole process is presented sets up a dynamic that affects whether the neophytes continue to participate in the RCIA process during mystagogy. If the desire to become Catholic has not deepened into an unfolding relationship with God, involving conversion within the community, there is not much reason to participate after Easter. Following are some suggestions for helping the RCIA participants see continuity in and between all periods of RCIA.

1. Communicate the intention and importance of mystagogy from the beginning of the process.
2. Give a church tour. Explain the traditional meaning and liturgical use of every part of the church (tabernacle, sanctuary, confessional, nave, vestibule, sacristy, baptismal font, Easter candle, statues, paintings, etc.). Although you may have done this at the beginning of RCIA, take the neophytes through again during the mystagogy period. They can understand more now. Relate to them what they just experienced at Easter Vigil, for example, at the baptismal font. And offer to take them through as the anniversary of their initiation draws near, too, because they can understand even better then.
3. Reacquaint them to the saints and to specific traditional prayers to the saints.
4. Provide opportunities for leaders of parish ministries to introduce themselves and their ministries. Ask the neophytes to identify any ministries they would like to learn more about or join. Welcome the neophytes to participate in liturgical ministries after they have completed their neophyte year.
5. Help them to experience God's presence in the Sacraments, so that they hunger to live sacramentally.
6. Help them to understand that it is through the Sacraments that they establish and grow in their relationship with God.

C. Liturgical Aspect – Mystagogy is liturgical. Help the neophytes connect their new status in full communion with the Church to becoming fully engaged participants in liturgy.

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1. During the Easter Season, break open the Word with the neophytes after Sunday Mass. Teach them to break open the Word, giving them specific suggestions of how to respond to the readings by prayer, study, and acts of charity.
2. During the mystagogy period, have the neophytes sit together and, if possible, have their presence acknowledged by the lector or the priest. (RCIA, no. 248)
3. Give opportunities for spiritual reflection within the three earlier periods of RCIA, so when they become neophytes they will be better prepared to continue their own faith journeys after their RCIA process ends.
4. Attend a spiritual retreat together. Include sponsors and, if practical, spouses.
5. Reacquaint them with the parts of the Mass to deepen their understanding and appreciation.
6. Suggestions for public worship:
 - a) Celebrate Pentecost vespers with special blessings for the neophytes.
 - b) Celebrate a renewal of their baptismal promises by having them relight their candles at Pentecost.
 - c) Have the neophytes publicly renew their baptismal commitment during the following Lent.
 - d) Encourage neophytes to celebrate the next Triduum together.
 - e) Celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours together.
7. Suggestions for private devotion, including a time for explanation, review or reflection:
 - a) Celebrate Divine Mercy devotions together.
 - b) Attend Eucharistic Adoration with the neophytes.
 - c) Pray the Rosary with the neophytes, reflecting on the life of Christ and Mary with Biblical references.
 - d) Pray the Stations of the Cross with the neophytes.
 - e) Pray traditional prayers such as novenas and litanies with the neophytes.
 - f) Pray with the saints. Help them get to know their patron saints.
 - g) Pray *lectio divina*.
 - h) Pray Ignatian prayer.