

*Diocese of Covington*  
*RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual*  
**Precatechumenate**

**VII. Precatechumenate (Period of Inquiry)**

- A. This period of evangelization, of unhurried reflection and discovery, focuses on introducing the inquirer to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church through the four Gospels. It is a time of getting acquainted, of building relationships. It has “no fixed duration or structure”. (RCIA, Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults, page 14) During this period, individuals are referred to as *inquirers*. (See Section III “Timing of the RCIA Process” for more information.)
- B. **Pastoral Aspect** – Inquirers are searching for life’s true meaning, for answers to the longings of their own hearts. They are seeking the face of Christ within a community of believers. This period guides the inquirers in finding these answers through developing a relationship with God through His Son in the Holy Spirit and with His Mystical Body, the Church.
1. Team members and sponsors should provide an environment of welcome and hospitality in the RCIA meetings.
  2. Team members and sponsors are called to share faith stories.
  3. The team members, sponsors, and parish faith community lead the inquirers to experience the Holy Spirit active in the Christian community through its outreach programs such as food kitchen, Eucharistic Adoration, St. Vincent De Paul Society, and its parish family gatherings such as donut Sunday, parish dinners, men’s/women’s society meetings.
  4. During this period, the inquirers should receive help and attention so that they may purify their intentions and clarify their desires to cooperate with God’s grace (RCIA, nos. 37, 38, 42).
  5. Before the rite of acceptance or rite of welcome is celebrated, there should be a time set aside to meet and evaluate and discern with the inquirers regarding their motives and dispositions. This time may be referred to as the discernment interview. (See “Discernment Interview Prior to the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming” in the Appendix for this section.) Prerequisites for the rite of acceptance / rite of welcome are:
    - a) Evidence of first faith that has taken place;
    - b) An initial conversion and intention to change their lives;
    - c) Desire to enter into a relationship with God in Christ;
    - d) Calling upon God in prayer;
    - e) A sense of the Church and some experience of community;

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f) Instructions and practice about this rite;

**C. Catechetical Aspect** – The inquirer, who has already experienced faith and initial conversion, needs to hear the mystery of Christ proclaimed so that he or she may consciously and freely enter more deeply into a relationship with Christ and His Church.

1. This period offers the opportunity to ask the burning questions that need to be answered in order for the inquirers to cooperate with God’s grace drawing them more deeply into the mystery of His love.
2. Catechesis should focus on the Person of Christ as revealed in the four Gospels.
3. Catechesis should include sessions on knowledge of God, creation, Divine Revelation, prayer, and the people of God.
4. Catechesis should direct inquirers to discover the similarities between their life story and the story of Jesus and His Church.

**D. Liturgical Aspect** – “During the precatechumenate period, parish priests (pastors) should help those taking part in it with prayers suited to them, for example, by celebrating for their spiritual well-being the prayers of exorcism and the blessings given in the ritual (nos. 94, 97).” (RCIA, no. 40).

1. A parish may have a preliminary manner of receiving inquirers into the precatechumenate. Without any ritual celebration, the Rite suggests a reception recognizing an expression of a “right intention” toward learning about the Christian faith. (RCIA, no. 39)
2. Team members and sponsors may begin and end meetings with Catholic prayers that reveal evidence of the spirit of Catholicism that the inquirers are striving to understand and experience. Prayer should always begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.
3. Prayer and reflection in this period provides the inquirers with opportunities for the “beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching” (RCIA, no. 42) to take root in them in preparation for the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens.
4. The period of inquiry culminates in the celebration of the rite of acceptance (rite of welcome for baptized candidates).