

Glossary to Welcome the New Catholic

Baptismal font. A large vessel that holds the water used in the baptism of infants and adults, either by immersion or infusion (pouring). The baptismal font usually is in a place that allows for full congregational participation.

Candidate. Generally, anyone preparing to become a Catholic, but the term often is used to denote a person baptized in another Christian tradition who is preparing for reception into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church.

Canon law. The body of law that governs church practice and protects the rights and privileges of individuals and of the community.

Catechesis. The instruction and spiritual formation of catechumens, neophytes and those persons who seek full communion with the Catholic Church.

Catechumen. An unbaptized person who is seeking initiation into the church and who has been accepted into the order of catechumens.

Chrism. A combination of oil and sweet balsam or perfume that is mixed and consecrated by the bishop, and used to anoint newly baptized people and newly ordained priests and bishops. Chrism also is used in the consecration of churches and altars.

Doctrine. The formal teachings of the church.

Elect. A catechumen who has been found ready by the community of faith to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation.

Election. The process of selecting those catechumens who are considered ready to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation; the celebration ordinarily takes place on the First Sunday of Lent, wherein the bishop or his delegate declares in the name of the church that catechumens are ready and chosen for the sacraments at Easter. During this celebration, the names of the elect are written in the Book of the Elect.

Enlightenment. The period of Lent during which the elect are involved in the final stage of preparation for celebrating the rites of initiation. *Synonyms:* illumination, purification.

Enrollment. The rite of inscribing into the Book of the Elect the names of those catechumens elected to take part in the next celebration of the sacraments of initiation. *See* election.

Ephphetha. An optional rite in which the presider touches the ears and the mouth of the elect and prays that they be open to hear and proclaim the word of God in faith. It may be celebrated as part of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

Evangelization. The activity by which the church proclaims the gospel in word or in deed.

Exorcisms. Prayers for the deliverance from the powers of evil and falsehood, and for the reception of the gifts of the Lord, especially the Spirit. Exorcisms are part of the rites of scrutiny.

Fasting. A form of sacrifice by which faithful Christians join themselves with the suffering and death of Jesus by forgoing food for a specific period. On Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday, Catholics who are in good health and between the ages of 18-59 (inclusive) are obliged to fast in a modified way: One full meal and two other small meals may be eaten, and no food is eaten between meals. Catholics are encouraged to keep a paschal fast from Holy Thursday evening until after the Easter vigil in anticipation of the celebration of the Lord's resurrection.

Godparent. The person who accompanies the catechumen during the rites and periods of election, initiation and mystagogy. This person (or persons) is selected by the catechumen with the approval of the pastor and, if possible, of the local parish.

Illumination. *See* enlightenment.

Immersion. A way of baptizing in which the person is partially or entirely submerged in the baptismal water.

Infusion. A way of baptizing in which water is poured over the head of the person.

Initiation. The process by which a person enters the faith life of the church. The process extends from the person's first inquiry through the completion of mystagogy.

Inquirers. Persons who sincerely seek to learn about the faith of the church.

Lectionary. A book containing the assigned scripture reading for the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

Lectionary-based catechesis. A catechetical method for learning the foundation of faith and doctrine by study of and reflection on the scriptures as they are arranged for the liturgy over a three-year cycle.

Liturgy of the hours. A form of prayer consisting of scriptural prayers, songs and readings for morning, daytime, evening and nighttime of each feast, season, Sunday and weekday.

Magisterium. The official teaching office of the church as it is exercised by the pope in communion with all the bishops of the church.

Mystagogy. The period following initiation, usually the Easter Season, which centers on catechesis in the meaning and experience of the mysteries of baptismal faith.

Neophyte. A newly baptized person who is in the final period of Christian initiation, mystagogy.

Oil of catechumens. The blessed oil used in anointing catechumens as a sign of their need for and God's offer strength in overcoming all opposition to the faith they will profess throughout their life.

Order of Christian initiation. The progression of catechesis and rituals that make up the process of bringing a person to faith in Christ and membership in the church. The term sometimes refers to the text used for initiation, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Paschal candle. The large candle lighted each year from the new fire ignited and blessed at the Easter Vigil. From this light, representing the risen Lord who destroys the darkness of sin, the newly baptized light their candles.

Paschal Triduum. The three days from Holy Thursday evening through Easter Sunday that celebrate the Passover of Israel from slavery to freedom, the Passover of Jesus Christ from death to life, our own Passover from sin to grace and the world's Passover from darkness to light.

Periods. Times of growth in the Christian initiation process: 1) inquiry, or precatechumenate; 2) Catechumenate; 3) purification and enlightenment; 4) mystagogy.

Post baptismal. After baptism.

Precatechumenate. The period of inquiry prior to acceptance into the order of catechumens; the time of initial evangelization.

Presentations. The rites during the period of purification and enlightenment through which the church passes on to the elect the Creed and the Lord's prayer, the most cherished documents of the church, and the traditions they represent: the way Christians believe and the way Christians pray.

Purification. *See* enlightenment.

Reconciliation room. A place for the celebration of the sacrament of penance. A reconciliation room is set up so that penitents may either meet face-to-face with the priest or confess anonymously from behind a screen. These rooms are sometimes called reconciliation chapels or confessionals.

Sacramentary. The book that contains the prayers spoken or sung by the presider at the Eucharistic celebration.

Scrutinies. Rites celebrated with the elect, usually at the Sunday liturgy on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, petitioning for the spirit of repentance, an understanding of sin and the experience of the true freedom of the children of God.

Sponsors. Those persons who accompany the inquirers when they seek acceptance into the order of catechumens and who remain with them as companions during the catechumenate until the Rite of Election.

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