

DISCERNMENT IN THE PRECATECHUMENATE PERIOD

What the Order Says:

- #37 The aim of the precatechumenate is faith and an initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of divine love.
- #42 Signs of Readiness before celebrating the Rite of Acceptance are:
First faith and initial conversion, the desire to change their lives,
the beginnings of penitence, a habit of calling upon God in prayer,
a sense of the Church and experience of Christians.
- #43 Discern the outward signs of their spiritual dispositions.

How these qualities look in Inquirers:

1. Give some examples of how you have heard inquirers express feeling “called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of divine love.”
2. Give some examples or characteristics of inquirers when this has not happened.
3. What are some questions you might use to help inquirers name the signs of Readiness to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance named in #42?

Suggested Reading:

- “Discernment in Christian Initiation” by Donna Steffen, Liturgy Training Publications, 2018.
“Paying Attention to God: Discernment in Prayer.” by William Barry, Ave Maria Press, 1990.
“The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything” by James Martin, SJ, Harper 2010, p. 305 - 338.
“Discernment: A Path to Spiritual Awakening” by Rose Mary Dougherty. 2000.

DISCERNMENT IN THE CATECHUMENATE PERIOD

What the Order says:

#75 The aim of the catechumenate is training in the Christian life, through catechesis, becoming part of the community of the church, prayer and worship, apostolic service.

#75.2 Qualities developed include: praying more easily to God in, witnessing to the faith, keeping and expectation of Christ in all things, following inspiration from above in their works, and showing charity to the neighbor even to renunciation of themselves.
This involves a progressive change of outlook and morals.

#120 Qualifications before celebrating the Rite of Election are:
A conversion in mind and morals; a sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine;
Their sense of faith and charity; their suitability in the intention to receive the Sacraments, and the readiness to express this publicly.

The Rite of Election presumes the reality of conversion.

#118 After a long period of formation of heart and mind

#119 Testimony of Godparents

#120 Signs: Conversion of mind and morals, and sense of faith and charity

#121 Judgment by bishop, priests, deacons, catechists, godparents, community.

#122 The Rite of Election is not a mere formality.

There should be a deliberation involving the above and catechumens.

How these qualities look in Catechumens:

1. Give some examples of the “conversion in mind and morals” you have witnessed in words and behavior of catechumens.

2. Give some examples or characteristics of catechumens when this has not happened.

3. What are some steps in discernment your team can take:

A. Throughout the catechumenate:

B. A month or so before the Rite of Election:

C. To involve sponsors and perhaps other members of the parish in the discernment?

DISCERNMENT IN THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

What the Order says:

- #118, #133 Discernment about initiation is complete before the Rite of Election
- #139 The aim is to purify the hearts and minds of the elect, and to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior.
- #141 The scrutinies reveal what is weak, sick and sinful ..so it can be healed;
Reveals what is honorable, strong and holy, so it can be strengthened.
- #142 The elect progress in genuine self-knowledge.
- #143 The Three scrutinies teach the elect about the mystery of sin, and fill their spirit with
The sense of Christ... who is living water, light, and the resurrection and life.

How these experiences look in the Elect:

1. How have the scrutinies impacted the Elect you have known?

2. Give some examples of how you have seen the Elect embody this purification, self-knowledge, understanding of sin, and/or intimate knowledge of Christ.

3. What are some ways discernment in Purification and Enlightenment can be deepened:
 - A. As they bring their prayer for healing to be prayed in the Scrutiny?
 - B. In the dismissal gathering?
 - C. Individually with godparents or team members?
 - D. In prayer?
 - E. Through a personal interview?
 - F. Other ways?

DISCERNMENT IN THE PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGIA

What the Order says:

#244 The neophytes and the community make progress in their understanding and grasp of the Paschal Mystery and carrying it over into the practice of daily life.

#245 Neophytes understand the mysteries of faith more effectively through the Gospel and through their experience of the sacraments.
They have a new understanding of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.

How this newness looks in Neophytes:

1. What are some examples of how you have seen neophytes changed by their experience of initiation?

2. In what ways do they experience the Spirit as alive as described in the early church experience of the Acts of the Apostles?

3. What are some ways you have helped neophytes put words on their experience?

4. How can you assist neophytes in naming the particular gifts of the Spirit outpoured in them?

5. In what ways do godparents and team members participate in discernment with Neophytes?

DISCERNMENT WITH A BAPTIZED CANDIDATE - CATECHIZED OR UNCATECHIZED.

What the Order Says

1. Baptized Uncatechized II.5

#400 Conversion is based on baptism.

#401 Like catechumens... requires a considerable time... with 4 areas of formation in #75.

#402 Catechesis corresponds to that of catechumens

Norm 18 The term "convert" is only used for an unbaptized person.

2. Baptized Catechized II.6

#477 Anything that would equate candidates for reception with those who are catechumens is to be altogether avoided. (Also #565)

#478 Doctrinal and spiritual preparation as needed. Discernment regarding catechetical formation.

Rite of Reception (#478ff) is more about unity (what we have in common by baptism) than difference.

3. Not for returning Catholics or practicing Catholics who have never been confirmed.

Consider:

1. #75 Word - Catechesis accommodated to the Liturgical Year

Christian Community - living in the spirit of Christ as part of the Church community

Worship and Prayer - understanding of liturgy/ sacraments/ prayer

Apostolic Witness - on mission, to be of service to others.

What this looks like in Baptized Candidates - Catechized and Uncatechized

1. Note some baptized candidates who were in your process in past years.

Which of these elements of formation were present when they began?

Were there any baptized catechized candidates that could have been initiated without the entire process?

2. What kinds of questions would you use to discover their experience of the 4 areas of #75?

3. What do you/ your initiation ministers need to discern individually with the Baptized Candidate?