This year at the Easter Vigil, 178 new Catholics will be initiated into the Church at all of our parishes in our diocese. The celebration marks the final step in the process of the RCIA, a journey that for some has taken many years.
The Second Vatican Council stated in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

“The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be taken into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this means, the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.”

This quote was the result of a vote on whether to reinstate the catechumenate. There were 2,165 votes “yes”, 9 votes “no”, and 1 vote “null” at the Second Vatican Council. In 1966, a provisional ritual was distributed. In 1969, a second draft was produced. In 1972, Pope Paul VI promulgated the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

In 1986, the US Bishops approved US additions and adaptations to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the National Statutes, and a national plan of implementation. In September 1988, the RCIA became mandatory throughout the USA.

**For whom is the Process Meant?**

This process is meant for those who have not been baptized, but there are some adaptations for either those who were baptized in the Catholic tradition or those who were baptized in another Christian church, as long as the Trinitarian formula was used during the Baptism, and these people are perhaps unevangelized and are at least uncatechized.

In a greater sense, the process is meant for all of us. *The General Directory of Catechesis* states: “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.” – *GDC*, 90

Therefore, all catechetical activity is inspired by the catechumenate and its stages.

**What are the Stages and Rites of the RCIA?**

**Precatechumenate or Inquiry**
This is the beginning stage of the process for those considering becoming Catholic. At this stage, there are no commitments. They come to ask questions about the faith. It is also an opportunity for catechists to proclaim the Gospel message to these inquirers and share about the Catholic faith. The meetings are meant to be very informal.

**Rite of Acceptance / Rite of Welcoming**
These rites occur right after the Precatechumenate. When a person is formally ready to prepare to become a member of the Church, they go through these rites. If a person has not been baptized, they go through the Rite of Acceptance, and they are then called a catechumen. If a person was baptized using the Trinitarian formula, then this person goes through the Rite of Welcoming and is called a candidate.

**Rite of Sending**
After the period of the catechumenate is complete, the parish can have a rite of sending their catechumens and candidates to the place where the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion will take place, which is the Cathedral Basilica of St. Anthony in Beaumont.

**Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion**
Typically, the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion occurs at the diocesan cathedral. It is presided by the bishop. It is at this point that the catechumen is enrolled in the Book of the Elect and becomes an elect until they receive the Sacraments of...
Initiation. The candidate during this rite does not become an elect, but rather this is a call to continuing conversion as they enter the period of purification and enlightenment.

**Purification and Enlightenment**
During this period, the elect and candidates have a more intense period of preparation as they journey toward the Sacraments of Initiation. This period falls during Lent. The focus is prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. During this time, further formation and instruction may be given.

**Scrutinies**
Scrutinies are rites done during the Sundays of Lent. They are rites for self-searching and repentance. Included with these rites are some minor exorcisms. These are just for the elect.

**The Creed**
A presentation of the Creed to the elect happens at a weekday Mass during the Third Week of Lent.

**The Our Father**
A presentation of the Lord’s Prayer to the elect happens at a weekday Mass during the Fifth Week of Lent.

**Immediate Preparation**
Immediate Preparation, otherwise known as Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday, is needed for the elect. It should be a day of fasting, prayer, and preparation for the Easter Vigil itself. Candidates can join the elect as they prepare to be welcomed into full communion with the Church.

**The Easter Vigil – Sacraments of Initiation**
The elect and candidates join the faithful and the priest or priests during this joyous celebration of salvation. The readings for this Mass unfold the history of salvation from the beginning of creation up to the resurrection of Jesus. During this Easter Vigil, the elect are baptized, confirmed, and receive their first Eucharist. The candidates make a profession of faith and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The initiation culminates in the reception of Holy Communion.

**Mystagogy**
The newly initiated, formerly called catechumens, and then the elect, are now called neophytes. Those received into the Church, formerly called candidates, are now new members of the Church. During this period of Mystagogy, the mysteries of the sacraments are unfolded as they learn more in depth about these. It is also a period where they become more involved with ministries and the life of the Church as Catholic members.

**Should we have a team of people helping with the RCIA?**
Yes! The pastor or a parish priest should be involved, but it is good to have a parish team comprised of religious and laity, who are trained catechists, involved with the process because the laity can best exemplify how to live the faith in the world. In addition, they can help introduce the catechumen and/or the candidate to the rest of the parish.

In the Introduction of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (the RCIA document), it states, “With the help of deacons and catechists, they [priests] are to provide instruction for the catechumens.” (*RCIA*, 13)
In addition, it states, “When they are teaching, catechists should see that their instruction is filled with the spirit of the Gospel. Adapted to the liturgical signs and the cycle of the Church’s year, suited to the needs of the catechumens, and as far as possible enriched by local traditions.” (*RCIA*, 16)

It also states that the entire community lends their help and support throughout the process of initiation getting to know the catechumens and candidates and making catechumens and candidates feel welcome and at home in the Church (see *RCIA*, 9).

It is our hope that many of you, your RCIA coordinator, and your RCIA team can join us in the RCIA Institute this month. It is not too late to register for this important institute, which is free to all who reside in the Diocese of Beaumont.

**Upcoming Opportunities**

**PCL Gatherings**

Your love for children and willingness to share your time and effort will have an eternal impact.

Thank you!

Thur, April 19	Curriculum Day—sponsored by the diocese - Diocesan Pastoral Center, Beaumont:
10:00 gather; 10:30 am – 12 pm – Meeting; 12 pm – Lunch; 1 pm – 5 pm – Curriculum Stations: Pre-School, Basal Elementary, Middle School, High School, Adults, Evangelization Processes, Bilingual, Sacramental Prep, VBS, and RCIA

Thur, May 12

sponsored by Loyola Press at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, Bmt:
9:00 gather; 9:30 am – 2 pm

Parish Visits

Bryan has been on the road starting in July for some parish visits. He can visit on the day of your Faith Formation. Or he can also do visits with pastors and catechetical leaders. Please arrange a time that you can invite him to your parish by contacting him via email: breising@dioceseofbmt.org or calling his office at 409-924-4323. He will not get to all places during the catechetical year, but he would like to get to all regions of the diocese.

What will happen with these visits? The following are some possibilities: an observation of your faith formation during the time of instruction, perhaps an in-service with your catechists, or even a catechetical presentation – guest catechist for adults, youth, or children.

CEMI Courses and Confirmation Preparation for Adults

Upcoming courses offerings are found at https://www.eventbrite.com/o/diocese-of-beaumont-evangelizationcatechesis-7578878365

RCIA in the Diocese of Beaumont

TeamRCIA rescheduled their Making Disciples Institute for Friday, April 13, 2018 and Saturday, April 14, 2018 at the Church of St. Jude Thaddeus in Beaumont. This training is free! Additionally, we hope you will invite your pastors and deacons to the Clergy Day for the RCIA, which will be held from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm on Friday, April 13, 2018. Of course, your pastor, priests, and deacons are welcome to attend the extended training as well.

For further information and to sign up: https://www.dobgifts.org/events/making-disciples/

University of Dayton’s Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)

Cycle 3: April 8 - May 12, 2018 (Registration: Opens Mar 7; Closes Apr 4)

- Bible Basics
- Catholic Beliefs
- Church History 2
- Conscience
- Ecclesiology: Beginnings of the Church
- Ecclesiology: Pilgrim Church
- Faith and Human Development
- Faith Formation for Adults with Special Needs (SN 5)
- Fundamentals in Deaf Faith Formation Methodologies (SN 2)
- Galatians
- History of Catholic Social Action
- Images of Jesus
- Introduction to Catechesis
- Introduction to Pastoral Care
- Introduction to Practical Morality
Adult Faith Formation

And check out the new resource of Word on Fire during Lent:
https://engage.wordonfire.org/about

Formed.org is a subscription service by parish that includes adult faith formation offerings, movies, and podcasts, and ebooks:
https://formed.org/

To find out about upcoming ACTS Retreat and Activities: https://beaumontacts.org/

Religious Education Safe Environment Compliance Reminders
Any DRE, youth minister, catechist, adult(s) helping with youth ministry, or anyone who may be in a ministry where minors are present is required to be in total compliance with safe environment protocol.
To be in compliance, one must have attended in person a Protecting God's Children (PGC) session. After 5 years from the initial training participation, a rectification is required. This can be done either through the diocesan website online module, or by attending another in person PGC session.

If you have any questions regarding Safe Environment Training, you may contact the diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator through the following information:

Paul J Thomas
pthomas@dioceseofbmt.org
409-924-4315

Remember to abide by all the deadlines for Safe Environment. Thank you!

PGC Trainings
Protecting God’s Children for Adults

Saturday April 14, 2018 @ 9:30am
Location: Our Mother of Mercy Library, Beaumont
Facilitator: Margaret Denson
Registration Contact: Margaret
409-454-7127

Interested in a Bachelors or Masters in Theology

St. Thomas University in Houston:
https://www.stthom.edu/Academics/School-of-Arts-and-
National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Membership

All PCLs are now members of NCCL! Check out the Web site: www.nccl.org. Contact our office to learn how you can be a member of NCCL compliments of the Diocese of Beaumont if you are not a member yet! For information on the national conference (Chicago: May 30-June 2, 2018), go to www.nccl.us.

Recruiting Volunteers

By: Twyla Satterthwaite

One of the biggest responsibilities a Parish Catechetical Leader has is recruiting volunteers, but many of us sometimes feel uncomfortable in that situation. Here are some ideas I have discovered over the years to help it become second nature to you.

The first thing to know is that recruiting is a year-round activity. Like the song, “It is always on your mind.” We recruit all the time but we are not looking for someone, or just anyone, to fill a spot in August. We are looking for gifted people to build up our parish and the Kingdom. Always begin by seeking the gifts you most want. Each person has a gift to be used for the Kingdom. You are the one to enable that to happen. Our recruiting goal then is to empower people to serve God. We will identify their gifts, train them to be successful, and celebrate with them.

At this point it is good to take some time and check your attitude toward recruiting. How do you feel about asking people to volunteer? Are you begging them to help? Do you feel guilty asking people to volunteer? Are you just looking for warm bodies? Asking people to volunteer is helping them to fulfill their Baptismal call. You are sharing the joy of evangelization. Pope Francis has said, “Evangelization... is a joyful response to God’s love.” We want to share what our eyes have seen, what our hearts know to be true: THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS. We have the power to change the world with the message of Jesus. Who wouldn’t want to be involved?

Our responsibility as leaders is to invite people. We are here to help them to know the joy of sharing Jesus. We are to call them forth and to awaken them so they can experience the great fulfillment and joy that comes from ministry. When you are talking to people, know you are inviting them to experience a fulfillment that only service to others can bring. We need to expect to find the best candidates and then go looking for them. Ask the most capable and skilled people, and make it clear why you are approaching them. Acknowledge their gifts and ask them to share those gifts with others.

Next, we need to ask what motivates people to volunteer. Why do they say yes? Each person’s response is unique but there are some common reasons. Some people have a sense of the mission of Jesus Christ. Some just want to help, some want more meaning in their lives, or they want to belong to something greater than themselves. All these reasons are valid and you can build on them to help people be successful in volunteering.
Keep in mind that volunteering is a recreational activity. You are asking people to share their discretionary time. Mention that they will meet great people, feel good about themselves, and learn new things. Suggest they volunteer with a friend or relative and enjoy time together while helping others.

The next thing to know is that team building is a team effort. Recruiting is not the sole responsibility of just one person, the PCL. Recruiting is not just a call to fill empty slots at the beginning of the program year. Happy and plentiful volunteers benefit the whole parish and need to be a priority of the whole parish. The Pastoral Team has a duty to develop a plan for recruiting volunteers. It should be a sustained effort to identify the gifts that people exhibit and help them to activate those gifts. Everyone should be constantly recruiting.

Another key point is that recruiting is an interpersonal activity. You have to ask someone personally to be a volunteer. You have to look into a person’s eyes, shake their hand, and extend a personal invitation. When most people hear a pulpit announcement asking for volunteers they assume that announcement is for someone else. The same thing goes for email blasts and bulletin ads. You do need to advertise that you are looking for volunteers as this gives you a place to start the interpersonal conversation.

In order to recruit, we have to invest in a relationship first. You should know something about the person you are asking to help. This relationship positions us share the vision of service. We are then able to connect the person’s personality, passions, and gifts to the requirements of the position. You can ask confidently because you know the person will be a great fit.

Never use guilt to recruit. People who volunteer out of guilt usually quit in the middle of the year and sometimes even change their church. When you invite someone to volunteer, give them time to answer. Let them pray through it. Give them space to hear from God. Sometimes we say no for them while we are asking. We say things like, “I know you’re too busy, but could you be a teacher?” Or, “I know you have 10 kids at home but can you teach?” Do not do this. Instead, affirm their gifts, ask them to help, and let God do the rest.

Remember you have to be specific. When advertising, be sure to explain in reader-friendly language what your organization does and whom it benefits. Tell about all the volunteer opportunities that exist. Emphasize the difference a volunteer can make to the people who they serve and what the volunteer can expect to gain from working with you. Be sure to include how prospective volunteers can find out more. Give them a person to contact. Your name is usually the best because you know all the details. A name makes it personal and starts the relationship. Have more information available online because people will go online to check you out.

When you are asking people in person, give specific information. Have a clear job description with a beginning and ending date. People do not want to commit to an open-ended job. Explain the task truthfully. Do not lie about the commitment or work needed. The Peace Corps in the 1980s described the experience as “the toughest job you’ll ever love.” Be specific about training provided and that the training is provided to help them be successful.
You can also answer possible questions before asked. For example, someone might be worried about safety if serving in the evening. (We have security personnel). Might they be interested but not sure if they are qualified? (We provide training, resources, and supplies).

Be clear that there is an application process. A few simple words such as “to apply...,” “to learn if this position is right for you...,” “we are currently seeking applicants for...,” or “to learn more...,” shows that you plan to pick qualified people. Be up front that we do background checks and a Protecting God’s Children class is required.

As always, be careful. CHECK EVERYONE! Have them fill out an application. Do the background checks. Call their references. Talk with other parishioners. Know whom you are working with. Take some time and talk with them about the ministry. Deliberately listen to what they are saying while asking yourself, “Is this person going to be a good fit?”

Keeping your volunteers is important too. This is best accomplished through training, team building, and recognition. Always lift up your volunteers, brag about them. Leaders should find ways, even if it is a simple phone call, email, or letter to honor volunteers often. Share with others something great the catechist is doing. You should recognize people for the work they give. Remember too that titles matter. People sometimes use volunteer experience on their resumes. Avoid using the words volunteer, assistant, or aid, unless it is necessary. Use the titles project manager or director – if that is what is required in the position.

Celebrations are important too. We should celebrate that the Good News is being shared, and we should honor those who give their time to their parish. The parish should say thank you with a gift, a dinner, or some type of recognition. Write it up in the bulletin when you reach a milestone. Some examples: “This year, because of our sacramental catechists, 50 children received First Holy Communion.” or, “Over 120 children heard the Good News and learned about their faith in religious education this year. We thank our catechists for their hard work and a job well done.”

I hope that these few ideas will help you to become a master recruiter. Remember: Do not be shy, be bold in the Holy Spirit! Be the first one to speak, extend your hand first, and make eye contact, smile and recruit!

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During this time of year when we celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, I always find myself contemplating what this means for us today. Historically, we commemorate specific events regarding Jesus and we acknowledge that the Paschal Mystery continues in every celebration of Eucharist. However, what about the significance in our own personal life; is the Paschal Mystery only a liturgical event resigned to the confines of ecclesial circles? Everyday life happens to each of us. I think you will agree that each day’s story is a mixture of both joys and challenges. None of us is exempt from the uncertainties of what any given moment can manifest. We do our best to control and maintain some kind of reasonable flow in our daily routines. However, between work, family, school, and even parish involvement, we can never be sure what curveball may come our way.

The Old Testament in particular is full of stories involving curveballs heading towards the people of God. St. Paul too in his pastoral letters cites the many challenges confronting a very young community of The Way. Like us, these ancestors in our faith history come face to face with the big question…”Why me God?”

To give us some direction in finding an answer, we can look to the Book of Job. This entire book grapples with that exact question. We see a holy man, completely committed to a life in God, undergoing horrendous loss and affliction. After lengthy and repetitive theological discussion, Job finally realizes at the end of the story that it is not about an answer…it is about trust.

When we look at the journey of Jesus, the most profound take away is the trust he had in his Abba. We do not really see Jesus in the gospels looking for answers at all. What we do see is Jesus constantly acting through a love and mercy confidently based in his trust of God. He exhibited the culmination of this sacred trust in God during his final days and hours, when it was all he had to hold on to.

So what did the Paschal Mystery teach me this year? Rather than spending so much time on questions I cannot find answers to, deepening my trust in an unconditionally loving God is a better use of that time. When life has me down in a rut, my trust in God gives me hope that, like a labyrinth, it may look like I’m coming to a dead end, but it’s just another turn. The cycles that I experience will come and go, but with patience and trust in God who is with us, my “down” will eventually turn back “up” again; and that is what resurrection is all about.

Parish Catechesis Question
Does your parish have a year-round RCIA process? Do you have RCIA available to children (of catechetical age) and youth? We hope that we will see your parish represented at the RCIA Institute the evening of April 13 and during the day of April 14!