



# NEWS

July 2014



## WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Our biennial conference is fast approaching and preparations are in their final stages. In this message I thought it might be worthwhile reflecting on some of the questions that Fr Paul Turner will be assisting us to consider at the conference.

Friday will focus on the central role of the liturgy. We can often forget that the RCIA is primarily a book of liturgical rites. At least half of the material contained within its pages is dedicated to the liturgical celebration of the process of initiation within the community.

Therefore in approaching the rite we need a 'liturgical mindset'. However, and this builds on work covered by Fr Elich at our 2012 conference in Brisbane, what might such a mindset mean and look like in our modern age? Or another way of putting the question: Given the liturgy's grounding in 'deep memory' and 'transformation', something of an anathema perhaps in today's fast paced, constantly changing world, is the 21<sup>st</sup> century person capable of true liturgical participation?

Saturday will focus upon our understanding of ministry. Some of the questions we will break open include: What distinguishes ministry from volunteering and how might we engender a 'ministerial' understanding amongst the community rather than a 'volunteering' mentality? How might we discern for ministries and what might be some principles from which to work?

The final day of the conference will focus on mission. We are a missionary Church and thus are called to develop ways to engender this appreciation amongst both catechumens and the whole community throughout the entire initiation process, not just leaving it for Mystagogy. We will tease out RCIA paragraph 75.4 *since the Church's life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively to spread the gospel and build up the Church.*

I look forward to seeing many of you at the conference and exploring these issues which will be of benefit to us as we continue implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in our communities.

Darren McDowell

Chair – ACN executive

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# Adapt the Rite? Of Course! But ....

BY PAUL TURNER

*The following article which first appeared in Pastoral Music 26:4 is by Fr Paul Turner, keynote speaker at the ACN conference in Townsville next month. It will whet the appetites of those who are coming to the conference and those who will attend his sessions being presented in many parts of Australia following the conference.*

Adaptations are integral to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Some of these were foreseen and implemented by episcopal conferences. Other changes happen in parishes, subtly and effortlessly, or creatively and complexly. Some of these surface in *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States* (for example, p. 18). Which adaptations have succeeded? What still needs to be done? Here are a few ideas.

## Scrutinies

*Journey to the Fullness of Life* says parish adaptations include “accommodating the use of B and C cycle readings in Lent” and “adapting the scrutinies to cultural or personal contexts.” The meaning of that first phrase is not clear, but it seems to refer to the adaptation of the litanies and exorcisms of the scrutinies to the scripture readings in Years B and C of the three-year cycle.

Go to any three parishes during weeks three, four and five of Lent and you will probably see scrutinies celebrated in three different ways. Texts, postures and gestures vary considerably. That may not be all bad, but it makes one wonder how well the ritual text conveys the meaning of the scrutiny and how well catechumenate teams understand it.

First, consider the scriptures. During Years B and C of the three-year cycle, parishes may read the Year A scriptures on Sundays three, four and five of Lent. This may happen any year, any mass, whether or not there are elect. But this permission certainly has scrutinies in mind. It allows each year’s elect to hear the gospels of the woman at the well, the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus.

Although this permission was meant to be helpful, not everyone has welcomed it. Homilists have balked at preparing different talks for the same weekend. Liturgy planners have bewailed the loss of a few Year B and C readings. (The most common and erroneous complaint is, “People would never hear the story of the Prodigal Son on Sunday.” Yes, they will. That gospel appears twice during Year C: the Fourth Sunday of Lent and the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.)

This reticence to let go of the B and C readings has spawned the rewriting of some parish scrutiny prayers. The intercessions and exorcisms already come with two versions, but one of them draws on imagery from each week’s Year A gospel. This has inspired some people to compose scrutiny texts that blend with the readings for years B and C. But the B and C readings fulfil Lent’s second purpose, the renewal of the entire Christian community. The best readings for the scrutinies are always those for Year A.

*Journey to the Fullness of Life* mentions other adaptations for the scrutinies, more necessary ones made for “cultural or personal contexts.” The intercessions especially should meet the personal needs of the elect. In some cases, though, adaptations have overemphasized the negative purpose of scrutinies at the expense of the positive one. They stress the sin and ignore the grace redeeming it.

Cultural adaptations may alter the posture and gesture of the elect, the arrangement of the elect and sponsors in the sanctuary and nave, the music to be sung and the ministers to be involved.

It is popular to adapt the scrutinies. Good adaptations are made with one eye on the tradition and meaning of the rite, and the other eye on the cultural and personal needs of the elect.

## Inclusive language

Many parishes change liturgical texts for more gender-inclusive language. Normally this pertains to the horizontal language about the community but sometimes to the vertical language of references to the Deity. Although examples of gender-neutral Deity language can easily be found in the missal’s prayers (“Almighty God,” for example), Roman liturgical texts consistently use the masculine pronoun to refer to God.

Regarding gender-inclusive terms for the community, though, the liturgical documents are uneven. One of the sources most benign to these terms is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Expressions like “brothers and sisters” and “friends” can be found where formerly one would have seen “brothers”.

It is not clear from *Journey to the Fullness of Life* where parishes are making the inclusive language adaptations. They probably happen more in texts from the lectionary and missal, which followed other principles of translation.

## Multiculturalism

Another broad category of adaptation reported by the bishop's document is multiculturalism. Communities in the United States find in their midst an increasing diversity of cultures. The differences, once a source of fear and division, are becoming more a source of strength and celebration.

Take languages, for example. At a typical diocesan rite of election one can expect to hear readings and intercessions in more than one language. Often a printed program gives English translations for the assembly, but complete programs in other languages are rare.

Americans are widely ignorant of foreign languages. We may have had a year or two in high school, but our ears are not trained to hear them nor our eyes to read them. We may be able to say, "I have a pen," or "There is the window." But liturgical texts require more complex grammar. The most loving action an American can do to promote multiculturalism is to learn a foreign language well.

Music is universal in its appeal. Americans enjoy music from other countries almost as much as we enjoy ethnic food. Some Hispanic liturgical music, for example, is crossing over into predominantly Anglo assemblies. Music's universal appeal can bind a diverse community.

The world of multicultural symbols could be further developed. As one example in the United States, the Rite of Acceptance envisions that the catechumens receive a cross. But dioceses may decide on some other symbol. Creative discussion at the local level may generate ideas for one.

Dress also deserves some discussion. The traditional Catholic baptism calls for clothing the newly baptized in a white garment. Today the colour may conform to local custom, or the rite may be omitted altogether (227). A white garment has special significance in many scripture texts as the uniform of those who inhabit the reign of God. But in some cultures another colour might better signify new life and community. The rite permits options, to the benefit of multiculturalism, but to the loss of scriptural allusions.

## Other adaptations

Other adaptations need consideration for the future development of the initiation rites. Not all of these appear in *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, but they merit concern.

**The catechetical group.** The group parishes call the "catechumenate" may have few or no true catechumens at all. Many groups welcome people baptized in other Christian faiths and baptized Catholics seeking more formation. A simpler process might accompany more of the baptized.

**The length of time for preparation.** Many parishes run catechumens and candidates through the same nine-month program. They start in fall and conclude with Easter. But the time may vary for each person, and candidates may be received at any time of year.

**Catechetical method.** In the United States, a skilled catechist is part teacher and part facilitator. In some other cultures, participants come expecting only to listen. Even Jesus did not begin the Sermon on the Mount by dividing the crowd into small groups to reflect on their experience of poverty. But we do this now. People do not all learn the same way. The catechist needs a bagful of tools to help everyone.

**Participation of the assembly.** Parish leaders wish there was more for the assembly to do in the catechumenate rites. Local innovations include acclamations and gestures.

**Combined rites.** The framers of the catechumenate in the United States included a series of rituals for baptized candidates parallel to those for catechumens. The combined rites adapt the adaptations, and they blur the distinction between the baptized and the unbaptized. Reforming the adaptations might make these distinctions more clear.

**Music.** Composers are still publishing new music to accompany the rites. We have the interesting but time-consuming task of sorting through the available music, deciding what to sing and waiting to see what works.

**Vocabulary.** Those who restored the catechumenate retained the ancient titles for the rituals. But everyone keeps wondering, haven't we got better words? "Scrutiny" is so offensive that some ministers skip the ritual altogether. Calling it an exorcism won't help. The word "candidate" has multiples meanings. Published texts cannot agree on the proper spelling of mystagog (-ia?). How can parishes implement the catechumenate when the vocabulary is so obscure? The flat acronym "RCIA" has more sticking power than tar, but is a consummately inexpressive title for the mysteries of initiation. The Methodist Church down the street from my last parish used to advertise something they called "New Members." I'm not a Methodist, but I know what that means.

The work of adaptation must go on. The revised rites of initiation are still so new that we are figuring out what works, what doesn't and what will benefit from adaptation. Parishes have a good ritual. If they have serious spiritual searchers, an assembly that cares about newcomers and a creative imagination rooted in the church's tradition yet open to society's symbols, good adaptations will happen.



## ACN Turns Twenty

This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Australian Catechumenate Network which was established in early 1994. The first ACN conference I attended was at Feathertop Chalet in Harrietville, Victoria in August 1996, a memorable gathering but a chilly one for those of us from warmer climes and the first experience of snow for one Queensland delegate! A conference had been held in Adelaide in October the previous year. "Network News" was launched in March 1994 with Teresa Pirola the founding editor and Julie Kelly and Jill Shirvington OP co-editors.

Were you a founding member of the ACN? Do you have memories and photos from the early years? If so bring them to the Townsville conference if you are coming or send them in (details on back page) and we'll share them with "Network News" readers in future editions.

Elizabeth Harrington

## Research into conversion

Researchers at Flinders University, Adelaide are investigating why individuals in 21st century Australia convert to Christianity. The project is supported by the university's theology department and has been approved by its ethics committee.

The researchers are looking for people aged 18 years and over, from an English-speaking background, who have begun considering themselves as "Christian" in the past two years. Participation is voluntary and involves granting a one-hour interview which covers certain aspects of the topic.

For more information, contact Lynne Taylor on 0488 497 881 or email [tayl0548@flinders.edu](mailto:tayl0548@flinders.edu).

## US Survey on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

In a joint project, the Secretariat of Divine Worship and Secretariat of Evangelisation and Catechesis and the US Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions have commissioned Georgetown University's Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate to conduct a major survey on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

The goal of the survey is to gauge the use and implementation of the RCIA based on the actual practice in a typical year in a parish. The survey has been designed to determine which of the rites are used in parish and diocesan settings, when the rites are celebrated, and who presides at them. The survey will also give responders the opportunity to report the length and content of their various catechetical programs associated with the RCIA.

The survey has been distributed to 10,000 recipients via e-mail. The sampling includes parishes from all across the United States – urban and rural, large and small. The survey's format is multiple-choice, except for a few open-ended final questions.

This comprehensive survey is the first of its kind. The findings will be reported at the National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in Lombard, Illinois in October 2014. Responses will inform the Bishops of the United States as they go through the process of the re-translation of the RCIA using the new translation guidelines from Liturgiam Authenticam and undertake a review of the National Statutes for the Catechumenate which have been in place since 1986.

## DATES for your Diary

*What is happening in your Diocese/  
Parish for RCIA*

**Please let us know**

**For more detailed information on what is  
happening check out the ACN web site**  
<http://www.ozcatechumenate.org>



## Called to service in the Church

The photos below were taken at the First Profession of Matthew Tonini as a member of the Carmelite Order on 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

The Tonini family are parishioners at Dapto in the diocese of Wollongong. Matthew and his mother Alison were RCIA sponsors for catechumens in the cathedral parish.

Matthew also spent time on the RCIA cathedral team and then established an RCIA team at Dapto.

This special occasion demonstrates the various expressions of mission to which we are called in service of the Church. It could be seen as an extension of Mystagogia as for some this might involve a call to ordained or religious life.

No doubt Matthew's past involvement in the RCIA will be useful in linking the stages in the process with this step that he has taken.



Prayer for God's Grace



Receiving the Carmelite Rule

## Personal Reflection on Rite of Sending and Rite of Election Experience

My involvement in the Rite of Sending and the Rite of Election as an RCIA candidate was a highlight, symbolising a significant transition in my journey towards Easter. Thorough preparations at Wednesday night RCIA meetings and in-depth discussions with my sponsor prepared me in part for these rites, but there were a few aspects of the experience which struck me deeply.

Beginning the day with the Rite of Sending at St Joseph's Warragul, I felt affirmed by the Church community and my sponsor that I was ready to take the next step towards being initiated into the Church at Easter. Even though we catechumens faced the altar, I could sense the physical presence of the whole congregation standing up to assure their support, along with my sponsor's hand placed gently on my shoulder. As one by one we signed our names in the parish Book of the Elect, I felt we were publicly making a choice and committing ourselves to the next stage of our journey to God. I was humbled and delighted when a few parishioners stopped to talk to me after Mass to wish me well for that afternoon's Rite of Election in the Diocesan Cathedral in Sale. The symbolism of sending us off, not on our own but with our sponsors by our sides, to meet with the Diocesan Administrator Fr Peter Slater - who was to receive us later that day - was quite moving.

Heading off towards St Mary's Cathedral in Sale, we were once again physically taking another step in our

journey (besides the hour plus road trip it took to get there) to join other Catechumens and Candidates from across the Diocese at the Rite of Election. On arrival we were warmly greeted and had the opportunity to briefly talk with Fr Peter Slater about why we personally wanted to become a Catholic and what it meant to us at this stage. That in itself was an opportunity for another level of personal reflection when you have to articulate your thinking and to consider how it has perhaps changed since first joining the RCIA group.

A few aspects of the Rite of Election really impacted upon me. Firstly St Mary's Cathedral, the heart of the church, the mother church, felt a fitting place to have such an important celebration take place. The Cathedral icons, symbols and features, the hymns and beautiful angelic voices of the choir created a physical environment that was welcoming us into this new life as a Catholic, expressed so beautifully in a rich and meaningful Rite of Election.

As the parish Book of the Elect was presented to the Bishop as a pledge of our commitment and then our names were called out individually, I was struck by the importance of being called by name and what it means to be elected by God. It was affirming to have our sponsors again acknowledge that they believed that we are ready to move into our final preparation period.

Tamina Taylor, St Joseph's Parish, Warragul, Victoria

## St Nicholas of Myra Parish, Penrith 175 Year Jubilee recognises RCIA

St Nicholas of Myra Parish, Penrith, in the Diocese of Parramatta, NSW, this year celebrates 175 years since the foundation of the Parish. On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May, as part of the Jubilee celebrations we welcomed many of those adults who received the Sacraments of Initiation through the RCIA. We also welcomed their families, sponsors and team members. Some participants who have moved to other parishes or inter-state travelled some distance to be part of the celebration.

The Mass was concelebrated by Parish Priest Fr. Mathew Antony MS, Assistant Priest Fr. Jose Manjaly MS and Fr. Jolly Chacko MS.

RCIA has played a significant part in our parish history and continues to be a vibrant part of our parish life. By its nature RCIA involves the larger Church community through welcoming, instructing, supporting, nurturing and praying for those seeking initiation; indeed the prayerful support of the entire parish community has been essential to its success.

The current Rite was established at St Nicholas in 1986, with the first group of 22 participants initiated into the Catholic tradition. During the subsequent Easter Vigils the parish community has received 319 new Christians; a compelling witness to the message of Jesus Christ to reach out and to love others. This number also includes children 'of age' who have elected to become Catholic and have been received into the Church through a shorter 'age appropriate' process adapted for children of catechetical age. The many blessings we as a welcoming community have received through our prayerful support of those called to the faith continue to be a sign of God's love, and tender care.

The St Nicholas parish community has also been responsible for welcoming into the Catholic Church inquirers from the parishes of Cranebrook, Glenmore Park and Emu Plains. This came about because those parishes were either in the early stages of forming a new parish in the local area, or did not have an established RCIA process to accommodate inquirers. We still have inquirers from around the district who consider St Nicholas to be 'their parish' – they say because they find it a 'welcoming' community to which they want to belong.

As an indication of Christ's witness in the lives of those initiated through the RCIA process, Julie Wharerau, who was received into the Church in 2011, spoke about the positive aspects the twelve months she participated in the RCIA process has had both in her personal faith journey and in her position as Coordinator of Family Services with Anglicare.

Working together as a welcoming and caring community indeed makes the RCIA process a spiritually enriching journey involving the whole parish. It is an invaluable opportunity for inward reflection and discernment and enables both enquirers and parishioners to become aware of God's presence, and love, in our lives.

Ina Heffernan  
RCIA Coordinator



## IT'S NOT TOO LATE.....

.... to register for and come along to ....

.... the Australian Catechumenate Network (ACN)

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Date: 7 to 10 August 2014

Venue: Chifley Plaza, Townsville

Keynote speaker:

Well-known US writer and liturgist Fr Paul Turner

Details: Australian Catechumenate Network website

[www.ozcatechumenate.org](http://www.ozcatechumenate.org)

**Celebrating Initiation**  
RCIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Australian Catechumenate Network  
2014 NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
7-10 August, 2014  
(THURSDAY 7PM - SUNDAY 3PM)  
Chifley Plaza Townsville (Formerly The Plaza Hotel)  
Car Stackery & Filders Sts, Townsville QLD 4810

Keynote Speaker:  
**Father Paul Turner**  
Well known writer and liturgist, a pastor of St Anthony Parish in Kansas City, Missouri. He is a former President of the North American Academy of Liturgy, a member of Societas Liturgica and the Catholic Academy of Liturgy.

For Conference updates, visit the ACN website  
[www.ozcatechumenate.org](http://www.ozcatechumenate.org)  
Liturgy • Ministry • Mission





## NN Help Desk

### Question from last issue: A Curly one

A 12 year old girl in the parish wants to become Catholic like her brothers. Her mother is Raatna Christian (not baptised with water) and her step father and step brothers (5 and 3 years) are Roman Catholic.

Her brother who is 7 years old was baptised at the same time as her step brothers. The mother and step father have full custody of the children. The biological father is agreeable to daughter being baptised. He lives interstate and has regular contact.

As the child is under the age of consent, is it enough that the mother has full custody, the step father is Roman Catholic and that they attend Mass every now and then to accept the child to be prepared for baptism?

#### Answer 1:

Are you asking from a civil law precautionary angle or from faith angle?

The civil law response depends on whether the full custody is a written legal position or word of mouth. I think the advice with regards to the latter is some signed statement from both natural parents.

Faith wise I don't see any problems if the 12 year old enters a formal journey with the appropriate support asked of one or both of the 'in house' parents.

*Denis*

#### Answer 2:

I had a similar situation and after much discernment with the child, parent, priests and myself, we started the Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age journey and he was baptised at the end of last year with all parties present, including birth dad and step dad. This child and a small group of Catholic friends really engaged in the whole journey, making it a very special experience. In the beginning I had reservations but the Spirit won in the end.

*Trish*

### New Question:

I am a relatively new PP.

I was just re-reading the Rite of "Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens" in the RCIA Rite and I notice in para 46 that we are supposed to have "duly inscribed in the register of catechumens" the various details of the Catechumens, Sponsors, etc.

I went looking for such a register here at the parish and the only thing I was shown was the Book of the Elect and there is no facility for a "register of catechumens" in the parish data base.

My understanding is that this means that parishes should have a Book of the Elect, a Register of Catechumens and a Baptismal Register.

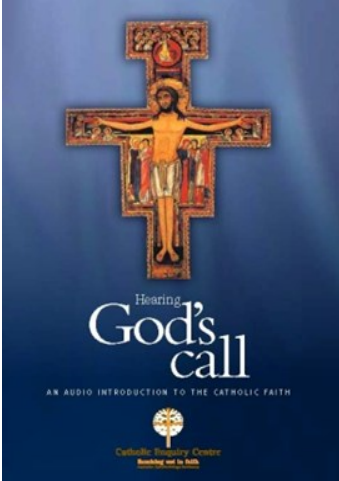
Do parishes generally observe this practice?

I will be grateful for any enlightenment you can offer.

# Resources

## Two Resources from the Catholic Enquiry Centre (CEC)

### *Hearing God's Call: an audio introduction to the Catholic Faith*

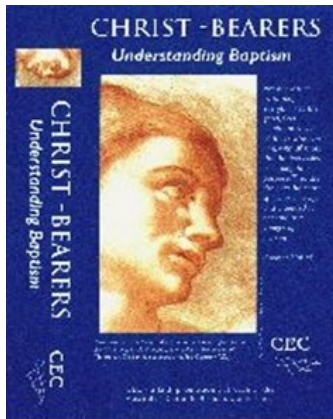


*Hearing God's Call* is an audio program of 30 ten-minute sessions, introducing a broad range of subjects on Catholic faith and practice. It comes on 4 CDs and is designed for easy listening with simple language. While it was initially created for use by Catholic Prison Chaplains, other audiences might include hospital patients, people with an intellectual disability, the visually impaired or nursing home residents.

Each informative and inspiring session includes stories, Catholic teaching, an opportunity for reflection, a DVD which explores the theme presented, and prayer. It can be used individually or in a small group format.

You can listen to a sample of the content on the CEC website (see below).

### *Christ Bearers - Understanding Baptism*



Baptism is the first sacrament of the Catholic Church. Its purpose is to free us from original sin and be reborn as sons and daughters of God. Through Baptism we are welcomed into God's family, the Church, and participate in its life and mission.

"Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213).

This DVD features six significant aspects of the Sacrament of Baptism: Community, Word, Water, Oil, Garment and Light.

Both available from the Catholic Enquiry Centre:

[catholicenquiry.com/resources/multimedia.html](http://catholicenquiry.com/resources/multimedia.html), 1300 432 484, [info@catholicenquiry.com](mailto:info@catholicenquiry.com)

## Survey of Resources Being Used by RCIA Groups

Kathleen Reimert from Sale Diocese has suggested using *Network News* to find out what technology is being used by RCIA groups - particularly what websites but also apps and other resources - and how they are being used. It would be great to compile a list and make it available to *Network News* readers and others.

Kath is willing to compile such a list.

You can contact her on [tutor12@live.com.au](mailto:tutor12@live.com.au).





# NETWORK NEWS

*Network News* is the quarterly bulletin of the Australian Catechumenate Network. The Australian Catechumenate Network (ACN) is a support network of those who share the vision of the catechumenate. Its purpose is to promote the practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) through sharing ideas and challenges. ACN Membership is open to all Australians who have a commitment to and/or work with the RCIA in Australia.

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of *Network News*.

## Feedback

To send feedback or get further information about items in *Network News*, contact the editor, Elizabeth Harrington, Liturgy Brisbane, GPO Box 282, Brisbane 4001, fax 07 3221 1705, [harringtone@liturgybrisbane.net.au](mailto:harringtone@liturgybrisbane.net.au).

## Your Contributions Invited

The next issue will be circulated in early November. Send your stories to share, news or events to publicise, articles to contribute or resources to recommend (*flyers/advertising material as jpeg files please*) by 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014 to the editor, Elizabeth Harrington, (contact details above).

Australian Catechumenate Network  
The Australian Catechumenate Network (A.C.N) seeks to support all those who share the vision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)