



The Three Pillars of Formation in the OCIA

Liturgical, catechetical and pastoral formation represent the three essential “pillars” of a healthy OCIA process. These three elements ensure that participants in the OCIA will have an authentic experience of Jesus Christ accompanying them on their journey of faith, an experience akin to that of the disciples on the road to Emmaus.¹

Although these aspects are emphasized to different degrees depending on the period of formation and the needs of the individual, each should be present throughout the four periods of the OCIA.

Liturgical

As Catholics, we are a liturgical people. All that we do flows from and is oriented to the liturgy. This reality is reflected throughout the OCIA process, especially as participants take part in the major rites which mark the transition from one period to the next, culminating in the Sacraments of Initiation. Several minor Rites offer additional experiences of God’s grace and care.

Throughout the process, participants move from being recipients of the Church’s liturgical action to “full, conscious and active” participation in the liturgy of the Church and integration into the community of believers.²

Catechetical

Catechesis in the OCIA must be organic, systematic, complete, and oriented toward assisting participants in turning away from sin and embracing the fullness of Truth in Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and Magisterium of the Church. The formation environment should neither be that of a rigid lecture hall nor a fluid and unstructured sharing of feelings. Instead, catechesis in the OCIA emphasizes a kerygmatic “Catechesis for Conversion” which cultivates an atmosphere of personal encounter with Jesus Christ.³ This encounter should lead to a more profound knowledge of and love for Jesus Christ along with the desire to serve Him in and through His Bride, the Church.

Pastoral

The OCIA should be imbued with a generous spirit of hospitality in which every participant is viewed as a unique, unrepeatable soul who is loved by God. Facilitators listen attentively, answer questions and “speak the Truth in love”⁴ so as to gently assist participants in moving from an earthly, self-centered orientation to a life of intentional discipleship in Jesus Christ. In this regard, they represent the Church who, “patiently accompanying her children and responding to the pace of their maturing, shows herself to be an attentive mother.”⁵

¹ Luke 24:13-35

² Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, # 41

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1427

⁴ Ephesians 4:15

⁵ Dicastery for Evangelization, Directory for Catechesis, # 64