



Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

"The Initial Conversation"

While each inquirer should meet with the pastor early on in the process, this initial meeting can be conducted by a member of the OCIA Team who is thoroughly familiar with process in general and the approach of the parish in particular.

The initial conversation with an inquirer should be warm and welcoming and put them at ease.

The OCIA Team member leading the conversation (interview) should have a basic knowledge of the Church's marriage laws, should questions about marriage arise. But the interviewer need not be versed in canon law, nor should they make any evaluation of the marriage situation in the interview. If appropriate, the inquirer may be referred to the pastor or member of the pastoral staff who is qualified to pursue the resolution of marriage questions.

The purpose of the initial meeting / conversation (interview) is three-fold:

1. To welcome and put the inquirer at ease - Welcome will be conveyed by conducting the meeting in a comfortable setting, by the warmth of the interviewer, and by the interviewer's use of good listening skills.
2. To find out the inquirer's background - The information needed will include:
 - A. Religious Background: To what religion, if any, does the inquirer belong? Has the inquirer ever been baptized? When and in what Church?
 - B. Catechetical Background: Has the inquirer received any religious education? What are the sources of his or her understanding of the Catholic faith?
 - C. Marital History: Is the inquirer presently married? Are there any previous marriages of either the inquirer or the inquirer's spouse?
 - D. Motivations and Expectations: Why has the inquirer come forward at this time? What is he or she hoping to find?



The OCIA Questionnaire can begin to be completed at this time. The interviewer, not the inquirer, should fill out the questionnaire.

Based on the information gathered at the initial interview, several important questions can begin to be addressed by the OCIA Team in conjunction with the pastor, including:

- i. What formation would be appropriate for this inquirer?
 - ii. Who might be an appropriate sponsor?
 - iii. Given the inquirer's background, what religious issues should we address?
 - iv. Will the inquirer need to speak to a qualified member of the parish staff about any marriage issues sometime during the precatechumenate?
3. To provide information and answer questions - Information provided to the inquirer should include the time and place of the meetings of the precatechumenate, and a general description of the four phases of the OCIA process. Any questions that can be answered on the spot should be answered. Long discussions should be deferred to the group meetings.
4. A subsequent evaluation of the inquirers readiness to proceed to the Rite of Entrance (for catechumens) or the Rite of Welcoming (for candidates) should be undertaken later in the pre-catechumenate. *OCIA #42* describes these signs as follows:
 - The “beginnings of a spiritual life and the foundation of Christian doctrine have been planted”
 - “First faith” has been “conceived”
 - “Initial conversion” a “desire to change their lives and enter a relationship with God in Christ”
 - The “beginning of a sense of penitence”
 - “A habit of calling to God in prayer”
 - “A sense of the church”
 - “A first experience of the company and spirit of Christians”
 - “Preparation for this liturgical order” (ie. have they participated in some kind of “inquiry” formation)



*Conversation and Evaluation before the
Rite of Election / Continuing Conversion*

OCIA #75-76 lays out the qualities of the catechumenate. They are a solid metric for determining the readiness of catechumens and candidates for the Rite of Election / Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion.

- “Appropriate catechesis” has been “given by Priests, Deacons and Catechists” which has been “divided into steps and fully presented.”
- Participants should:
 - “Not only a suitable knowledge of dogmas and precepts, but also an intimate knowledge of the mystery of salvation, which they desire to make their own”
 - Be “familiar with the practice of the Christian life”
 - Be “helped by the example of sponsors and godparents (I think we can add “parents”)
 - “Grow accustomed to praying more easily to God”
 - “Witness to the faith”
 - Keep “an expectation of Christ in all things”
 - “Follow inspiration from above in their works”
 - “Show charity to their neighbor even to renunciation of themselves”
 - Have “a progressive change of outlook and morals” which becomes evident in its social consequences and gradually developed” (ie. deepening conversion).
 - Be learning “to cooperate actively in evangelization and the building up of the Church by the testimony of their life and their profession of faith”