**Glossary**

**Baptism:** The first of the seven sacraments, and the “door” which gives access to the other sacraments. Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist constitute the “sacraments of initiation” by which a believer receives the remission of original and personal sin, begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the body of Christ. The right of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on the head while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church)*

**Candidate:** One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who is now preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. At the time of full reception, he or she will make a profession of faith, be confirmed, and receive Eucharist. In the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, “candidate” is also used for those participating in the precatechumenate (baptized and unbaptized).

**Catechumen:** An unbaptized person who has entered the order of catechumens in the Church through celebration of the Right of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. Catechumens are preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through baptism, confirmation and Eucharist.

**Catechumenate:** Second period of Christian initiation of adults, which involves intense preparation in word, worship, community life, and apostolic works.

**Confirmation:** One of the ensemble of the Sacraments of Initiation into the Church, together with Baptism and Eucharist. Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism by a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which seal or “confirm” the baptized in union with Christ and equip them for active participation in the worship and apostolic life of the Church. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church)*

**Easter Season:** A period of seven weeks beginning with Easter Sunday and ending with the feast of Pentecost.

**Elect:** The name given to catechumens who celebrate the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent, signifying their being chosen by God for the initiation sacraments.

**Eucharist:** The ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal
Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ. The liturgical action called the Eucharist is also traditionally known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is one of the seven sacraments of the Church; the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life.  

_Evangelization_: The proclamation of Christ and his gospel (Greek: evangelion) by word and the testimony of life, in fulfillment of Christ’s command. In the context of the initiation of adults, evangelization is the task of the church during the precatechumenate. It involves the inviting, welcoming, witness, and sharing of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel to inquirers/candidates.

_Godparent_: The sponsor of one who is baptized, who assumes a responsibility to assist the newly-baptized – child or adult – on the road to the Christian life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

_Inquirers_: Those who participate in the precatechumenate of a parish. They are “inquiring” into Christianity in the Catholic Tradition.

_Lent_: A six-week period extending from Ash Wednesday to sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a retreat time for the Church in preparation for the Easter Triduum.

_Minor Rites_: Rites during the period of the catechumenate which includes exorcisms, blessings, and anointings.

_Mystagogy_: The fourth and final period of Christian initiation of adults, which is from Easter to Pentecost. The U.S. National Statutes envision an extended mystagogy for one year.

_National Statutes_: Particular law for the implementation of the _Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults_ in the United States approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

_Neophyte_: One who has been initiated at the Easter Vigil. The term comes from the Greek word meaning new plant, as in a new sprout on a limb/branch.

_Ninety Days_: A term used to mean the combination of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and the Period of Mystagogy which corresponds with Lent (40 days) and the Easter Season (50 days).

_Precatechumenate_: First period of the Christian initiation of adults, which is the initial introduction of an inquirer into the Christian way of life in the Catholic Tradition. It is also the period of evangelization on the part of the Church.

_Presentations_: During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, the elect are presented with the Creed and the Lord’s prayer through special rites. For pastoral reasons, both presentations can be anticipated during this Period of the Catechumenate.

_Purification and Enlightenment_: Third Period of the Christian initiation of adults, which usually coincides with the Season of Lent. It is the final period of preparation for initiation at the Easter Vigil.

_Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults_: English title of _Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum_. This is the official collection of rites of the Roman Catholic Church for initiation of adults
(including children of catechetical age) and the reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

**Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens:** The bridge between the precatechumenate and the catechumenate for the unbaptized.

**Rite of Welcome:** The bridge between the inquiry period and the period of pastoral formation that coincides with the catechumenate. It is for those already baptized.

**Rite of Election:** Presided over by the bishop, this rite inaugurates the final period of preparation for the catechumens (unbaptized) before initiation. It is the bridge between the catechumenate and purification and enlightenment.

**Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion:** Coincides with election, but is the rite for the already baptized (candidates).

**Rite of Scrutiny:** Three rites of exorcism for elect (unbaptized) during Lent.

**Penitential Rite:** Celebration for candidates, similar to rite of scrutiny.

**Sacraments of Initiation:** Usually celebrated at the Easter Vigil; includes baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

**Triduum:** The “three days” of the celebration of Easter, which begins with sundown on Holy Thursday evening and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. Includes the liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Unless otherwise noted, terms are from the North American Forum on the Catechumenate. © 2004. All rights reserved. Used With Permission.