

RCIA Network of England & Wales

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 6
SEPTEMBER 2008

Forming Threshold Companions

The Network met in July for its biennial Conference on Forming Threshold Companions. As a record for those who were able to attend and to give a flavour to Network members who could not join us these are some accounts by participants.

What are we apprenticing people into?

'What are we apprenticing people into?' This was the challenge that was left ringing in my ears as we left Manchester at the end of the RCIA Network Conference this July. We were invited by Sheila O' Dea to recognise that what we model to those we accompany on their journey of initiation is much more influential than what we simply teach, as carefully prepared as it might be. It was timely to be reminded that it is the whole community that celebrates, that catechises, that forms-throughout the Liturgical Year! And we were encouraged, reassured even, to trust the wisdom in the Rite!

The whole experience of the conference was rooted in reflection on the Word of God and it was wonderful to enjoy the brave silences that allowed the Word to speak and resound in

our lives, enabling us to drink deeply from the living waters of the Word of God.

The table groups greatly helped this experience and I found myself nourished by the reflections, thoughts and especially questions raised during the times of sharing. One question that was shared in our group that has particularly stayed with me was:

"Has the Body of Christ ever been anything other than broken?"

The week of our conference coincided with further reports of fatal stabbings on the streets of our nation and this question helped me connect what we were experiencing with our brokenness, not just those of us who gathered together but the whole Body of Christ. The brokenness of Christ in the stories we shared, stories of searching, stories of disappointments were taken up in the breaking of the Word and most powerfully for me in our celebration of the Eucharist. These gave way, were a doorway into an experience of the LAVISHNESS of God, in our feasting on the Word. Sheila drew our attention once again to the richness, the lavishness in the Rite, which reflects the abundance of divine life into which

we are all called to enter into and in turn accompany those on the threshold into.

As I look back on the conference and reflect once again on that question 'what are we apprenticing people into?' my mind goes to #75 of the Rite, which we spent some time considering. For me the conference reassured me that we are apprenticing people into intimacy with the Word, Jesus, who was broken for us on a cross. Apprenticed into the Word who breaks us, breaks us open, who opens to us the possibility of transfor-

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mation, the potential for a new and more abundant life. This life is lived together, the life of the community, the life of the Body, the same Body that initiates. And that as we worship together we are then sent, sent to apprentice and accompany others towards their own thresholds of possibility.

Alex Heath

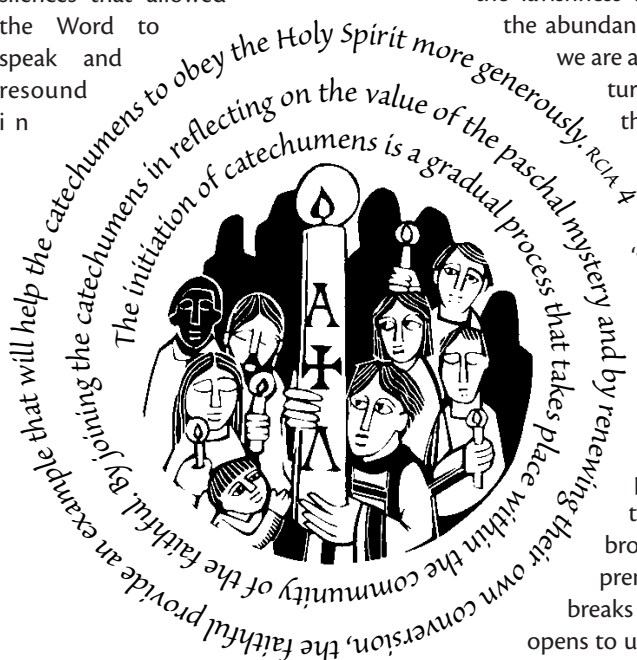
A vision of RCIA

"Damn it, Dunning, Do it!" said Christiane Brusselmans some 30 years ago to Jim Dunning, realising the potentially immense impact of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

"Companions" — though most of us as yet unknown to one another — journeyed from the length and breadth of England and Wales to learn and experience more about 'forming threshold companions'.

We were led by Sr Sheila O'Dea from Canada, who has also worked in the US, and is currently lecturing at All Hallows in Dublin. She brings the RCIA perspective from each. Sheila reminded us that even so many years later there is a large gap between the Rite and living the pastoral reality, in particular concerning connections with the whole parish community. We need to be conscious of the fullness of the RCIA vision: that we are "apprenticing" someone into a way of living and to be aware of the story they are living in. Similar to living in a foreign country. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" Prov. 29:18.

Together we reflected on the title of the Conference — what does it mean to 'form threshold companions?' 'Who are the com-



panions? If someone says: "There's a catechumen in your community, what impact does this have on the rest of us?" What impact if there is no catechumen?

Taking the statement from the Rite "The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously" (Para 4), the vital importance of the role of the whole community was emphasised. Together we explored how and when the community fulfils its role, recognising the responsibility and apostolic vocation in the circumstances of daily living: in their homes, in conversations, in the liturgy and by their testimony. As the community of baptised all are called to be the presence of Christ for others today and to lead others to "communion with Christ" (GDC 80/81).

Reflecting on the feast provided by the liturgies of the Rites, especially those of the Easter Triduum, we saw in the lavish symbolism how we are transformed as whole communities. Into these communities catechumens and candidates are welcomed and nurtured. Sheila is a liturgist and encouraged us to experience afresh the richness of the liturgy the Church lays before us: to feast on both the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist, allowing them to nourish and teach us.

This feast is offered to us, not only in the Rites applicable to the process, but at Sunday Mass as it offers the opportunity for catechesis following on from the Liturgy of the Word: a catechesis that calls us all to ongoing conversion. This led to wide discussion on the 'Dismissal' of catechumens (and, if uncatechised, candidates) – or, as it turned out, lack of it. This was an issue for most of those present. It is quite rare for parishes in the UK to practice Dismissal, often because we are principally dealing with candidates rather than catechumens. Even catechumens have either been frequent Mass attenders over a number of years or, and this was the experience of many, they have not yet "adopted the practice" of attending Sunday Mass regularly. Sr Sheila emphasised the benefits of practising Dismissal – explaining that the session resulting from the Sunday Liturgy of the Word is the core of catechesis, the principal catechetical session in the RCIA process. Any supplementary weekday meeting of catechumens and candidates is just that – supplementary. This latter, of course, adds to the richness of the entire process. When practising Dis-

missal as it should be practised, the entire parish community is involved in the process for its duration.

The mystery of Christ unfolds in the Liturgy with the Liturgical Year being the programme for formation. "Every time the word is proclaimed it has new meaning and power... It is the living and active Word" (from the Introduction to the Lectionary) in which Christ is present. Sheila invited us to look again at our approach to the Word of God, reminding us that "Liturgy is the privileged place of catechesis" (RCIA 75).

Sheila commented that the Mystagogia period is often the weakest part of the process as practised in our parishes. This should be the time for new Catholics to reflect on the mysteries they have now experienced to the full. We must become fully mentoring communities and the RCIA process shows us how we are as "Church" – proclaiming, listening, responding, praising and thanking and eating and drinking.

Maybe this Conference was the shot in the arm we needed to inspire us anew to realise the vision of the RCIA. Many thanks, Sheila!

Susanne Kowal

Inspiration and Passion

Forming Threshold Companions was the theme for the recent RCIA Network Conference, held in Manchester and attended by 70+ people from across the dioceses. It was led with inspiration and passion by Sister Sheila O'Dea, a Mercy Sister from Canada, who is currently on the staff at All Hallows, Dublin.

Enough of facts, however, for this conference was all about experience of participants/parishes becoming threshold companions and forming threshold companions! From the outset, the liturgy was formative. Sheila's ears and mouth were blest, then participants did the same for one another around their table, as part of the opening Liturgy. The book of the Gospels was enthroned and texts read and re-read with great care. Music chants were relevant, beautifully sung, easily learnt and accompanied by a small team of musicians.

At small groups at round tables, we studied specific texts of the Rite and possibly found, like myself that, we were not as familiar with the Rite as we thought! We reflected on Gospel texts, shared insights and deepened them by repetition of the scriptures. In the well thought out liturgies, we knew the power of the Word (and the Liturgical Year), as the primary teacher in the RCIA process. Lectionary based catechesis is indeed formative.

Sister Sheila is dynamic, amusing and easy to follow. With the aid of Powerpoint, she

led us through the purpose and challenge of Forming Threshold Companions, bringing us to the heights of the process. Being also realistic, we were helped in the final sessions, to decide on one step that we would take on our return, to begin to meet the challenge of a process, that was ongoing, with no breaks at all, but might need to be adapted to local resources and personnel. After all the ultimate aim of RCIA is to bring participants to an ongoing relationship with Christ, through experiencing the Paschal Mystery.

A very big thank you goes also to the organising team for all the planning and preparation of the two days: including the venue, the flowers, drinks and sweets; the music, chants, and liturgies, and the special celebration of Mass for the Feast of St Thomas. Thank you everyone for the inspiration, friendship, warmth and beauty of the 2008 RCIA Network Conference on Forming Threshold Companions.

Anna Hawke

On the RCIA Network website [www.rcia.org.uk/Events/2008/index.html] there are photographs of the Conference and some further resources including a detailed summary by Caroline Dollard and list of music resources used. On Walking the Rite way [http://www.rcia.org.uk/blog/conference/forming-threshold-companions/] there are some immediate reactions to the Conference.

20 years on

After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus commanded his disciples, 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.' (Matthew 28:19–20)

These words were taken to heart by the men and women of the early Church, and the teaching and initiation of converts into the Christian community, culminating in the Easter celebration of baptism, confirmation and eucharist, came to be one of the glories of the Church.

The English language text of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, contained in this volume, is an important part of the Church's desire to restore the adult catechumenate to its rightful place in the life of our communities. The Rite is the exemplar and rule for all Christian Initiation and we therefore commend it to the attention of all parish communities, and direct that it be implemented by the First Sunday of Advent 1988 so replacing any previous interim version.

page xi, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

What every Catechumen should know about St Paul

At the September meeting of the RCIA Network Executive there was a discussion about the Year of St Paul we are currently celebrating and how we might mark it in the Newsletter. The question was asked what should a catechumen know about St Paul? The following are some ideas. Thanks to Sue Petritz, Joanna Price, David Slingsby and Molly Styant for their contributions.

Introduction

Paul was one of the most influential figures in the history of Christianity due to the variety of his writings and the depth of his thought. Every Christian has been affected in some way by what has been written by Paul.

The theology of baptism which is found in Paul's letter to the Romans and heard at the Easter Vigil shapes the Church's understanding of Initiation and therefore the Rite. (Some Eastern Churches have the Baptism of Jesus as the primary source of their theology or the images of the water and the spirit found in John's Gospel and Epistles.)

Paul's Life

Paul was a ruthless persecutor of Christians.

Christians first encountered Paul as a sinister and frightening man who stood in the background as they stoned Stephen to death for his faith – and 'he approved of the killing' Acts 8:1. He worked for the Jewish religious establishment who 'went from house to house arresting both men and women and sending them to prison'. At this stage Paul did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah and he almost certainly did not believe that Jesus rose from the dead. He saw the Church as a dangerous subversive movement which needed stamping out.

- The Christian response to people who are completely against the Gospel is patience, love, forgiveness – and sacrifice.

Conversion on the road to Damascus

For Paul, his conversion on the road to Damascus and his vision of Jesus changed his life and its direction totally (Gal 1:10-17; Acts 9:1-22). He is overwhelmed by the love of Jesus Christ and devotes himself to showing to everyone that 'Jesus was the Christ' (Acts 9:22). This mission extends to the whole world: it is not just limited to Jews and so Paul takes the good news 'gospel' to the gentiles. Through his correspondence, with the churches he set up or planned to visit around the Mediterranean, we learn of the issues that early Christians grappled with, as they tried to live in the example of Jesus. These are just as valid in today's world.

- Conversion for a Christian in the making may be as dramatic as Paul's or it may be a more gradual process. How do our lives change as a result of our discovery of and meeting with Christ?

On the road to Damascus everything changed. It was whilst he was on his way to Damascus with soldiers, equipped with names and addresses of Christians to be rounded up that his life suddenly changed due to an encounter with Jesus (Acts 9:3). Presumably Paul thought the resurrection was a fraud or a delusion. Was he thinking about the way Stephen died, praying for those who were killing him in the words 'Lord do not hold this sin against them'. Perhaps suddenly a lot of things began to make sense and he heard Jesus saying 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

- There are some people who are so against the Gospel that it is difficult to believe they can ever discover faith in Jesus Christ for themselves. But it can be amazing what God can do – especially if we trust Him.

Personal Experience colours how we see Christ – Paul's famous personal encounter on the road to Damascus may seem extreme; not everyone, not every catechumen is struck by a blinding light and hears the voice of Christ as Paul did (Acts: 9:3-9).

- However, perhaps we have had a moment where an action, an event, even a word has given us a new insight. Like Paul who was persecuting the fledgling Christian Church, we may be challenged to stop some type of action and turn our lives toward Christ and a new path/road. It is in our personal ex-

periences of meeting Christ in our daily lives and with others that we leave our blindness behind and follow Him more closely.

After his conversion, Paul is like many neophytes, who after the Easter Vigil, just can't help but tell everyone about how great God is. Paul's love for Jesus Christ shines through in all he writes.

- Look at how often Paul names Christ in his Thanksgiving (see 1Cor 1:3-9, Second reading of First week of Advent 2008).

Paul was always ready to explain his faith to anyone who wanted to know.

Festus was the Roman Governor based in Caesarea. When he took up his post he found Paul left behind in custody by his predecessor, Felix (Acts 24:27). King Agrippa and his sister Bernice paid a visit to Festus to pay their respects. Festus thought Paul was harmless enough and wanted to let him go but Paul had exercised his right to appeal to Caesar. Agrippa asked Paul to explain his faith and gave him leave to 'speak on your own behalf'. Agrippa responded by saying 'A little more and your arguments would make a Christian of me'. Agrippa sounds a little like a man on the very edge of faith. He was much more receptive than Festus, who just thought Paul was mad) and he must have discerned the challenge in what Paul had to say and in the complete conviction with which he spoke. History does not record whether or not he became a believer.

- It is for us to proclaim the Gospel with our lips – and leave it to God to change the individual.

Paul was an enthusiastic preacher of the Good News.

His enthusiasm was such that in Troas he recorded as preaching into the middle of the night. Unfortunately the effect of this on a young man, Eutychus, who was sitting on a window sill was to nod off and fall down three floors. He is reported as surviving the incident and Paul carried on with the Eucharist, talking until daybreak. (Acts 20:7-12)

- There is a very human side to Paul which we see either in the accounts of his travels in the Acts of the Apostles or in the frustrations he articulates in his letters.

Small is Beautiful – St Paul felt his mission was to bring the Good News, grace and salvation of Jesus Christ to the world; first to



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the Jewish community and then, in particular, to the Gentiles. He began his teachings in synagogues, but moved into the community he was visiting, often being hosted by a head of the household and his/her family. This household would then become his base. He met people in these houses in small groups which echoed the experience of the Upper Room (Acts 20: 6-9).

- Catechumen will be familiar with the parish rooms/halls used for meeting the small group of people who are sharing the Good News together. It may be that someone in a catechumen's household has been a witness of faith to them which has drawn them to enquire. Similarly you/the catechumen may be the one to stimulate the process of faith exploration in your household.

Paul reached out to Europeans

The first Christians came from a mainly Jewish background. They knew the Old Testament, the Law, the prophets and the psalms. To the Greek philosophers of Athens the Gospel seemed very foreign and difficult for them to unpack.. Paul saw his ministry leading into the world of Greeks and Romans (Acts 16:9). He knew that he had to get inside their mindset – to find a way of making primary contact with them. He saw an altar to 'an unknown god' and said 'in fact the unknown God you revere is the one I proclaim to you' (Acts 17:23)..

- There is only one Gospel but it is a message for everyone irrespective of their cultural background. But the language we use may depend on the people we are reaching out to.

Paul's Writings

Paul's early letters to the young Christian churches in Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth and Rome are probably the earliest documents that we possess from the beginning of the Christian church, dating from about 50 to 58 A.D. Some were written at least 10 years before the gospel of Mark and probably about thirty years before Matthew's gospel.

The First Letter to the Thessalonians is widely accepted as being the first letter written by Paul. Although Paul spent only three weeks in Thessalonica, (Acts 17:1-2) it was enough to found a Christian community. He was forced to leave there suddenly, when encountering opposition from the Jews. Later in his travels when he arrived at Corinth, Paul wanted to write so as to give continual support to the people he had left in Thessalonica.

- They form the oldest preserved documents in the New Testament. Paul's letters are therefore worth reading.

Paul gives the earliest written account of the Eucharist in 1 Cor 11:23-26.

- The beginning of this passage could be taken as a motto for catechesis: *For this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you.*

Sharing our Story – Although Paul writes many personal reflections and teachings in his letters to communities, it is his relationship with the Evangelist/Gospel writer Luke which gives us much of Paul's story. St Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles recounts and informs us with the narrative, the conflicts, the finer details, and even the travelogue of St Paul's activities. Like the catechumen Paul shared his life story and ministry with many people including this trusted, companion and friend.

- The journey a catechumen will make is also about sharing their/our story with people in the context of the RCIA. This can be a time of sifting through the narrative, identifying the finer details of how God has been active in people's/our lives and marking the events and stages of our journey.

Letter writing in Paul's time followed a particular format and Paul generally uses this

structure when writing to churches he has set up or that he plans to visit.

- First are the greetings as Paul identifies himself as sent from God and identifies the recipient of the letter. Second is the Thanksgiving in which God is thanked for the gifts of the Spirit everyone receives. Third is the body of the letter: what Paul wants to teach. Fourth is the exhortation to the people to apply to their lives and fifth is the closing spiritual farewell.

In the Year of St Paul it would be a good idea to use the second reading at Mass as the basis for reflection and catechesis. Encourage catechumens to read the whole letter —starting with one of the shorter texts

- The order of the letters in the New Testament is based on their length starting with the longest, Romans, ending with the shortest, Philemon.



God of infinite wisdom,
you chose the apostle Paul
to proclaim your Son to every nation.

*We pray that these your servants,
who look forward to baptism,
may follow in the footsteps of Paul
and trust not in flesh and blood,
but in the call of your grace.*

*Probe their hearts and purify them,
so that, freed from all deception,
they may never look back
but strive always toward what is to come.*

*May they count everything as loss
compared with the unsurpassed worth
of knowing your Son,
and so gain him as their eternal reward,
for he is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.*

Network News

New Executive

The work of organising the conferences and study days and other projects is done by the Network Executive. At the Conference in July there was an opportunity to nominate new members to the Executive and the group came together for a first meeting in September. Some members of the Executive had asked to stand down — Liz Anderson, Teresa Barber, Nuala Gannon and Allen Morris — and we are very grateful for their contribution over the last few years. The Executive now has 10 members, five of whom are new. At the September meeting Caroline Dollard was elected as Convenor. Members of the Executive are:

Paula Bailey is Adviser for Adult Formation and Secondary Religious Education in the Diocese of Nottingham. She is based in Derby. Hobbies include playing musical instruments, swimming, cycling, reading and wine - though not necessarily in that order.

Caroline Dollard lives in Middlesbrough Diocese working for a small charity supporting adult faith development. As a member of a rural community she enjoys a shared responsibility for initiation at parish and diocesan level. She has recently been appointed as a part-time Marriage and Family Life worker for Middlesbrough diocese.

Anna-Maria Dupelycz hails from Yorkshire but now works for Northfields parish in West London. She is a member of the working group on the Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age. She also acts as the treasurer for the Network.

Martin Foster lives in West London where he helps lead the music on a Sunday morning at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill. He works for the Bishops' Conference in the area of liturgy and is Membership secretary for the Network.

Michael Keogh is a priest of Middlesbrough Diocese in the parish of St Michael's Thornaby. He is the RCIA coordinator for the diocese.

Linda Pennington has just started her seventh year working for the Diocese of Leeds as Coordinator for Catechesis. Linda has been involved with the RCIA Network for six years and has been a member of the Executive for four years. She lives in Otley, West Yorks with her family and a mad border collie named Flash but regularly crosses the Pennines to watch Manchester United.

Sue Petritz is passionate about RCIA and following the whole rite. She sees RCIA in England and Wales as being in its infancy, and the people have yet to see a vision of the Church as RCIA. She would like to see

RCIA as central to the life of every parish community, and the appreciation of mystagogy as lifelong.

Joanna Price With two grown up sons and married to an Anglican, I'm a college librarian and have been involved in catechesis, mainly RCIA for over twenty years in the Diocese of Plymouth down in the Southwest. My parish on the Devon, Cornish border, within sight of Dartmoor and the sea was one of the first in the diocese to celebrate the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Enthusiastic as ever, I am still involved in RCIA at parish, deanery and Diocesan level. Each year I look forward anew to welcoming a group of enquirers and accompanying them on their exciting journey.

David Slingsby was baptised an Anglican and was received into the Catholic Church in 1976. He has been involved in RCIA work at parish level for over 10 years and has also served on the Leeds diocesan working group for RCIA which produced the *RCIA Catechists Pack*. He believes that the RCIA model is not only the way to introduce people to the Church but also a vision of renewal for the whole Church.

Molly Styant is Adviser for Adult Formation, Parish Catechesis and RCIA in the Diocese of Southwark based in the Christian Education Centre, Tooting Bec with particular responsibility for the parishes in Kent. I look forward to working with the RCIA Executive and the practitioners we will encounter who are involved in the vital process of the RCIA.

Relationship with Bishops' Conference

The RCIA Network is connected with the Bishops' Conference through two of its Departments. Through a long standing arrangement the Department for Christian Life and Worship can nominate two representatives on to the Executive. They are currently Caroline Dollard and Martin Foster. They report to the Department primarily through the Liturgy Formation Subcommittee. The more recently formed Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis has invited a member of the Executive to attend Department meetings. Linda Pennington has agreed to serve in this capacity.

Current Work

At its September meeting the Executive reviewed the July Conference, looked at plans for the day with diocesan teams on 13 November exploring the possibility of national resources, reviewed the work on the revised Guidelines and began to plan the 2009 Study days.

Directory of Members

A new edition of the Directory of Members will be sent out in the new year. If your contacts details or interests etc, have changed please inform Martin Foster [Martin.Foster@cbcew.org.uk].

North American Forum on the Catechumenate

James Schellman, Executive Director of the North American Forum recently sent greetings to the RCIA Network. He suggested that members might be interested in their regular Newsletter which can be downloaded from their website [www.naforum.org]. He also issued an invitation to their Fifth International Convocation which is happening 6–8 November in Cleveland, Ohio. A glance at the brochure shows a mouth watering roster of names and topics.

Life4seekers Magazine

A new magazine style publication from CASE which offers an introduction to the Catholic Church in England and Wales through a broad spectrum of articles. *Life4seekers* can be viewed online at: www.life4seekers.co.uk/online/magazine/index.html

Rest in Peace

Kevin Donovan sj was born in 1931 and was ordained as a priest in the Society of Jesus in 1965. In the later 1960s he was a student of Joseph Gelineau, who died on 8 August 2008, at the Institut Catholique, Paris. He was Professor of Liturgy at Heythrop College and founded the MA in Pastoral Liturgy there. From 1982–91 he served as parish priest at St Ignatius, Stamford Hill in North London. With Veronica Robbins he was one of the pioneers of RCIA in England and Wales and provided both formation and inspiration for many people. From 1992 until his death he served as parish priest at Sacred Heart, Wimbledon. He died on 21 August 2008.

*Remember Kevin,
In baptism he died with Christ:
may he also share his resurrection,
when Christ will raise our mortal bodies
and make them like his own in glory.*



Singing the Rite Music:

— Music & RCIA 4

The beginning and the end of the Catechumenate is marked by major liturgical rites: the Rite of Acceptance and the Rite of Election. For the period itself there are major liturgies given in the Rite but this does not mean that this is a period devoid of liturgy and prayer, far from it. The catechumenate is the time of apprenticeship; the time when the catechumens begins to build up the habits of being a Christian. At the heart of these habits is Sunday Mass: the weekly gathering of the local community to celebrate in Word and Sacrament what God has done for us and continues to do. Sunday Mass is the primary liturgy of the catechumenate.

Where dismissal catechesis is followed — the dismissal of the catechumens before the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and then a time of reflection on the Sunday word 'to share their joy and spiritual experiences' — some

may choose to use a brief song to accompany their departure. There is an example in *Cantate* (Decani) by

Christopher Walker, *May the word of God strengthen you*. As the dismissal should be regular, habit-forming, some may chose something simpler which might be sung by the whole assembly without recourse to words. Christopher Walker's *May God bless and keep you* would be suitable as a refrain or a biblical phrase such as Stephen Dean's *A lamp for my steps* (*Cantate*).

In the time of reflection catechists might consider using the psalm response or the gospel acclamation to aid reflection. Reference might also made to the Opening song where the choice has been apposite. Even where there is not dismissal catechesis or even weekly catechesis founded on the word it would be a helpful echoing if the time of prayer in the weekly session picked up on the Sunday Liturgy of the Word through text and song.

A good relationship between musicians and catechists can be one of the starting points for both the integration of the catechumens in the assembly and for the assembly taking up their role in the initiation of the new members.

The key to the period of the catechumenate is found in paragraph 75 in the Rite. This outlines the necessary formation and guidance which shapes the apprenticeship. It highlights 4 aspects of Church life that the Catechumen needs to grow in. The 4 aspects could be described as catechesis; community and witness; liturgy; apostolic

activity. The formation and the growth should be integrated and progressive — it is not having done a 'chunk' of catechesis we better do some social action...

This is an article about Music and the Rite so my question is how does music both in the Sunday liturgy and the prayer in the weekly session relate to and affirm the four aspects of formation?

A catechesis... accommodated to the Liturgical Year. It is often said that the words we sing in the liturgy have more power than the homily. How often do we find ourselves humming the melody of something we sang at Sunday Mass, recalling the words; do we find ourselves doing the same with the homilies. What we sing in the liturgy should therefore be worth remembering! For musicians it is worth reflecting on the texts which we use. How often are the words

drawn from scripture or the liturgy? Do the texts we use over a given period reflect the breadth of Catholic doctrine and tradi-

tion? It is worth recognising that two reformers, Luther and Wesley, used the hymn as one of their main tools of catechesis.

To sing something in the context of catechesis brings in another dimension — it reaches parts that words alone cannot reach.

If one of the foundations of the catechesis is the liturgical year then music is an important way of highlighting the passing liturgical seasons. I suggest that 'accommodated to the liturgical year' means a number of things: that the period of the catechumenate covers at least a whole liturgical year, it is related to the idea of the catechumentae as being habit forming, the 'training in the Christian life' means to become attuned to the rhythm of the seasons, lastly it means that the fundamental content of Catechesis is found in the liturgical year — i.e. the mystery of Christ. Parish musicians should be alert to how the music they choose can help alert people to the rhythm of the seasons. This will include repertoire that is particular to a season but also how the sound of the music reflects the atmosphere of the season. The seasonal repertoire may be one way of introducing catechumens to the traditions of the Church.

Prayer - Witness - Community The one who sings well prays twice is often attributed to St Augustine. The use of song in prayer and catechesis can be a useful reminder or introduction to different ways of praying.

One of the reasons that we sing in the liturgy is to unite as one voice, the voice of the Body of Christ. Our singing is not only a sign of our unity but it also helps us to be formed and grow as a community. The songs we sing both build the community and help us identify ourselves as a community — it's one of the reasons why Church music can be such a fractious area music can touch on who we are deep inside.

As we, and the catechumens, grow in identity (our identity in Christ) so we are strengthened to bear witness.

Suitable liturgical rites It is not being fussy or pedantic to think that whenever celebrate liturgy or prayer within the context of RCIA (well any context, actually) that it should consist of more than words. We should be attentive to environment, music, symbol and gesture and use them well. We are forming people in habits and we should forming them in good habits! Ultimately we are forming them to fully, consciously and actively participate in the Easter Vigil. To participate one has to know and be comfortable in the languages of the liturgy.

The Church's life is apostolic Well maybe not a sing-a-long on the soup run... though the reflection on the experience should be integrate into the catechesis and prayer. The challenge to musicians is again about the texts we sing. One of the positive developments over the last 30 years has been the writing of hymn texts which speak of the mission of the Church and place it in a scriptural context. Do the words we sing ever challenge us to be more Christ-like?

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