

RCIA Network of England & Wales

NEWSLETTER
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RCIA National Resource Discussion & Developments – An Ongoing Project

Although there are many good resources for RCIA, primarily the Rite itself, there is always a demand for more and those who are part of RCIA groups in parishes around the country often go to great lengths to 'cobble' a 'programme' together. The RCIA Network offers excellent resources through the website but it was felt that we might initiate a conversation to hear from those in the field and to discern whether or not another resource would provide further opportunities to promote understanding, implementation and practice of the Rite. To that end the RCIA Network has hosted a series of meetings in order to explore the possibility of developing national resources.

From the membership listed in the 2008 edition of the RCIA Network Directory, invitations were sent to a contact person in each diocese to invite them to a Resource Discussion day. People were asked to bring a copy of the resources, specific to their diocese, and be prepared to comment on their development, how they are used, strengths and weaknesses. On Thursday, 13 November 2008, at the Nottingham Diocesan Centre in Mackworth, Derby, 28 people attended this Discussion Day, with 13 dioceses' represented, along with

members of Our Lady's Catechists and CAFOD.

As presentations of the existing RCIA resources being used at diocese/parish level were shared it was evident that some very comprehensive and positive source material had been developed. We heard about Handbooks, catechist's packs, guides & guidelines, formation resources, accessible leaflets & indexes, training sessions, celebration of liturgies, networks of parish teams and pastoral adaptations to the Rite.

It was exciting to become aware of all the very good material being used and we discussed the ways in which these resources might be shared further afield and, where possible, made accessible electronically.

Acknowledging that there is already good material out in dioceses, which to date has stood alone as individual material, we began to consider the possibility of compiling a National resource which could support existing teams while offering formation to new RCIA groups.

How would the experience of RCIA in England & Wales benefit from having a national resource?

We considered the following points:

- *That the RCIA Network has members from all over England & Wales*
- *That the process of RCIA is officially 20 years old in E & W and a more mature understanding and practice has developed during that time*
- *That RCIA is a long term process*
- *That it is important to continue to refresh and renew the profile of RCIA*

Several models of potential ways forward

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were suggested ranging from: Formation & Study Material for Teams, Study Guides, Pastoral Directory, Content Guidance, Creative Options to National Statues. In a lively exercise people were asked to choose a table representing the model which was of interest and gave them energy. We were then asked to SWOT this method by considering the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and how these elements might be taken into account when developing this particular model. From the buzzing hum of conversation in the room it was obvious that there was enthusiasm for some form of National resource.

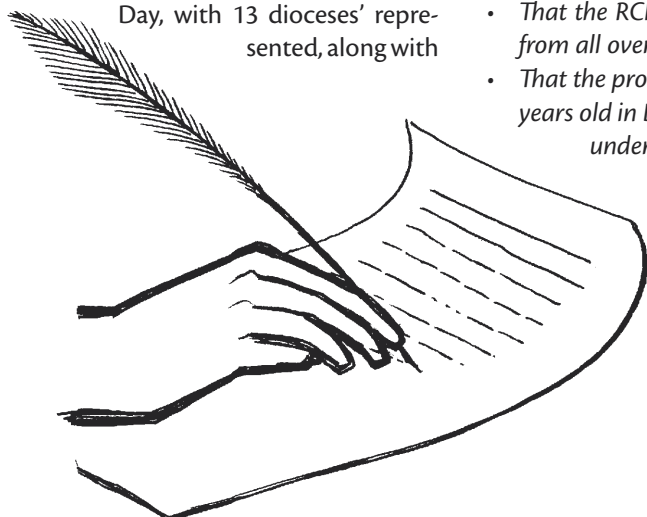
Ongoing Development~

On 19 February those who were able gathered once again in Derby to follow through on the model of 'Study Material for Formation of Teams'. We worked in groups on a 'trial' formation session which incorporated prayer, reflection, reading material and action points. We then reflected on the experience and thought about how the groups we know might use this format.

Each person has now taken away a title or theme in order to prepare another 'trial' formation session.

With the wealth of experience in the National RCIA Network the potential to produce a resource that benefits the whole is very tangible. Will keep you posted!

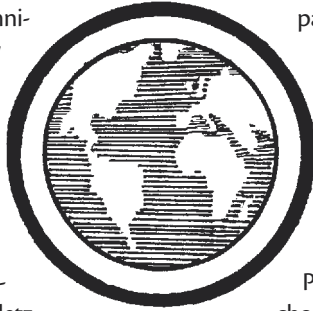
Molly Styant



Handing on what we have received from the Lord NAFC Convention November 2008

It was an absolute privilege to be at the Fifth International North American Forum on the Catechumenate's Convention in Cleveland, Ohio November 6th-9th 2008. The Convocation was entitled: 'Handing on what we have received from the Lord' and drew 500 participants mainly from North America and Canada. At the Convocation the Forum was celebrating its 25th anniversary and the 35th anniversary of the Rite. The Forum works both ecumenically and internationally and was set up to implement the Rite in the US and Canada. It currently has 14,000 members.

An impressive line up of speakers included Richard Galliardetz whose opening address 'Each day the Church gives birth to the Church: reflections on the contemporary ecclesial context of Christian initiation' presented cultural (based on North American culture), theological and ecclesial issues that are pertinent to initiation. The theme of apprenticeship was developed



in the major addresses. Kathleen Dorsey Bel-low spoke on 'The community that apprentices all through its very way of life and witness,' focusing on no. 75 of the Rite. Mary Birmingham spoke on 'The apprenticing community's formation in Christ through liturgy and word.' We were reminded that as well as the RCIA being an apprenticeship for participants that as practitioners we are also apprentices. We were sent off with encouragement by Bishop Gerald Weisner OMI with his presentation 'The future of our parishes as initiating communities: encouragement and challenge.'

Participants were also able to choose from a varied selection of breakout sessions and roundtable/dialogue discussions. At the round table session: 'Dialogue with initiation leaders beyond North America' I gave a ten minute presentation on my own PhD research based on the RCIA and the concept of liminality, and was able to share some of the findings of 28 inter-

views done here in the UK with adults who have been through the RCIA.

The convocation was affirming, encouraging and spiritually uplifting. We celebrated superb liturgies with the highlight being the closing liturgy celebrated by Bishop Paul-Andre Durocher (Bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall, Ontario). The conference gave a real sense of the RCIA operating on an international level and the scale of it and its expert organisation by Jim Schellman the director of Forum and team was impressive. Hospitality, networking, conversation, the presence of numerous resource exhibits and showcases by various publishers and organisations, conference dinner (with cabaret by Christopher Walker), in the luxurious setting of the Cleveland Renaissance Hotel were all part of a wonderful experience. Convocation has been happening once every five years and as the only participant from the UK I was made to feel extremely welcome; it was one of the best conferences I have ever attended.

Deborah Bhatti

RCIA & Social Justice

For the past six years I have been working in CAFOD's Spirituality team as a justice spirituality facilitator. What is one of those you may well ask?! Well, most of my job involves adult faith formation, communicating how CAFOD's work is part of the Church's commitment to global social justice. During the course of this work, I have found that many Catholics are not very familiar with the Church's social teaching and some have not heard the message that "Action on behalf of justice (is) a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel". (*Justice in the World – 1971 Synod of Bishops, Paragraph 6*).

Why is this? The Catholic Bishops of America stated in their 1998 document "*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*" that: "it is clear that in some educational programs Catholic social teaching is not really shared or not sufficiently integral and explicit. As a result, far too many Catholics are not familiar with the basic content of Catholic social teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith. This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel." I share the concerns expressed by the bishops and so started to think about how to respond to this challenge.

I have very much enjoyed working closely with adult education advisers during my time at CAFOD and I think I have come to understand some of the challenges that they face when trying to integrate a message of global social justice into their programmes. I began to wonder if there was more that CAFOD could do to facilitate this work. I was particularly interested in looking at the RCIA process as it is such a significant element in the provision of adult formation across the dioceses in England and Wales.

Last year, therefore, CAFOD's Spirituality team commissioned Veronica Murphy to do some research, asking for the opinions of RCIA practitioners, in the light of paragraph 17 of the Directory for Catechesis which states:

"By means of catechesis, in which due emphasis is given to her social teaching, the Church desires to stir Christian hearts 'to the cause of justice' and to a 'preferential option or love for the poor'; so that her presence may really be light that shines and salt that cures."

The aim of the research was to better understand the needs of those running RCIA programmes and to find out whether there was anything that CAFOD could do to support their work of integrating social justice into their programmes more easily and effectively.

Unfortunately there is not space to go into the details of the report in this article, but one

of the suggestions made by the RCIA practitioners was that there should be a specifically named area of the CAFOD website to host appropriate resources that practitioners might choose to use. The report also suggested that the local CAFOD diocesan offices could be used as resources for those facilitating the RCIA process, for instance by the provision of "speakers who can enthuse and inspire individual parish groups." "Developing local CAFOD workers' understanding of the RCIA" the report continued, "and encouraging closer relationships between them and parishes using the RCIA, through diocesan advisers, where these are in place, is therefore strongly recommended."

The recommendations of the report and the insight of those who took part were invaluable, serving to give me a much better understanding of both the RCIA process and, hopefully, where the work of CAFOD and the global social justice message can fit into that. The Spirituality team is trying to respond to these recommendations, in particular looking to provide a focussed part of the CAFOD website, as best it can and I hope that there will be many future opportunities for us all to work together to integrate an understanding of global social justice as part of our faith into adult faith formation.

Susy Brouard (CAFOD)

Network News

One of Us

Study Days

Two Study Days have been arranged for the Network in 2009. This follows the recent pattern of alternating between a Conference over a couple of nights in one year and regional study days in the other year. The study days allow more of the Network to come together as not everyone is able to take time to come away to a Conference. It also allows us to focus on a number of topics which will be of interest to all involved in assisting in an RCIA Team.

The two days will be:

- *Tooting Bec, Saturday 13 June*
- *Bristol, Tuesday 30 June*

See below for information about what is happening in the North of England.

The title of the day is 'One of Us' and it will follow the format of an input in the morning about the involving the local assembly in the Rite of Christian Initiation — what is the role of the community and how can it be fostered. In the afternoon there will be a choice of two workshops: *Forming an RCIA team* — looking at the different roles within the team and how they might be developed; *Receiving the Baptised* — reflecting on some of the issues that arise when we receive into the Church those who have been baptised whether they are catechised or uncatechised.

A booking form has been sent out to Network members with this Newsletter. The day is open to anyone involved in RCIA whether Network members or not. Further copies and more information can be found:

- www.rcia.org.uk/Events/2009

The cost of the day is £30 for an individual, but £50 for 2 or more from a parish team. These fees are the same as in 2007. The

work of the Network is solely funded from receipts that it puts on.

Diocesan Collaboration

At the end of the 2008 Conference *Forming Threshold Companions* people were invited form in groups according to their province of dioceses and to explore ways of working together. From this invitation the Northern dioceses (Liverpool province + Shrewsbury) and the Southern dioceses (Southwark province + Clifton) have been meeting to look at how they might work together to offer formation in RCIA.

In the North plans are being put together for a diocesan RCIA 'road show' which will make its first stop in Middlesbrough diocese on 17 October 2009 — watch this space!

Network Guidelines

Over the last few years the Executive of the RCIA Network has been reviewing Guidelines which describe the purpose of the Network and how it operates. The Guidelines date back to 1995 and were amended at the 2004 and 2006 conferences.

After looking at making further amendments to the Guidelines it was realised that a new approach was necessary. Given the mystique or misapprehension that still surrounds RCIA in many places it was thought a brief description of what RCIA was would be a useful tool. From this developed a more narrative style that described the Rite, the Network and how the Executive serves the Network.

The text can be found in the new edition of the Directory of Members and on the Network's website:

- www.rcia.org.uk/About

As a Network there is no mechanism for adopting the new Guidelines but the Executive offers them as the current expression of what the Network is and how it operates. The Executive would welcome any comments from members on the Guidelines.

Resources for RCIA Teams

As reported by Molly Styant on page 1 the Executive has initiated a collaborative process to identify and create resources to assist RCIA teams to deepen their understanding of the Rite and develop ways of putting it into practice.

The first project is to develop study material for parish teams on aspects of the rite. This is in the form of a session reflecting on scripture and exploring the rite and other documents. It is hoped that the first couple of sessions will be available at the Study Days in June. They will also be posted for downloading on the network website.

Becoming the Body of Christ

Sheila O'Dea who ably facilitated the 2008 Network Conference *Forming Threshold Companions* is part of a team at an RCIA Summer School, *Becoming the Body of Christ*, being organised at All Hallows College, Dublin by Dublin diocese.

The Summer School is from 28 June -3 July and further details can be obtained from the website.

- [web address here](#)

CASE news

Practical Guides

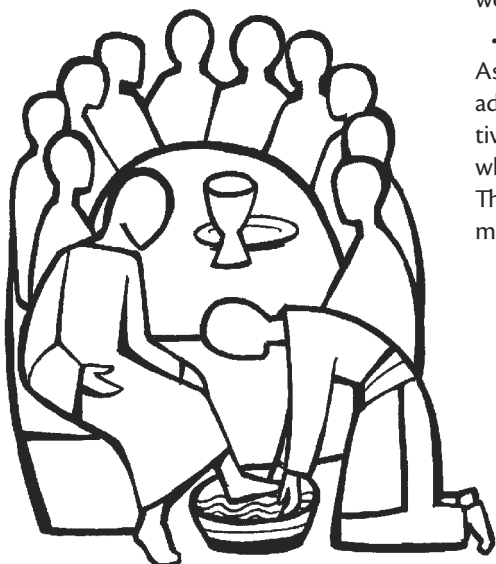
The Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation have produced a series of simple, attractive leaflets on practical Evangelisation.

- www.caseresources.org.uk

Easter press release

CASE have issued a press release telling the stories of a number of people's journey of faith this Easter: Barbara, a 59 year old model, David, a 55 chief executive and Vivien, a primary school teacher in her thirties.

- http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/media_centre2/press_releases/press_releases_2009/easter_journeys_to_catholicism_a_model_a_chief_executive_and_a_primary_school_teacher



Singing the Rite Music:

— Music & RCIA 5

The music we sing in the liturgy has tremendous power to form us. For many people it will be something they have sung at Sunday Mass that they will recall in the week rather than the homily.

One of the reasons we sing in the liturgy is because it opens up our memories. The way that melody and text can be wedded together means that singing actually helps to remember the words. Music also helps to make a liturgy memorable and this also means a particular piece of music can re-ignite memories. We can associate a piece with a person, a place or an occasion — it provides the soundtrack to our memories.

Music can reach those parts which words alone do not touch. St Augustine wrote:

How I wept, deeply moved by your hymns, songs and the voices that echoed through your Church! What emotion I experienced in them! Those sounds flowed into my ears, distilling the truth in my heart. A feeling of devotion surged within me, and tears streamed down my face – tears that did me good.

Music can reach those parts which words alone do not touch.

This places a great responsibility on musicians that the music they choose to use in the liturgy is memorable — or more bluntly is something worth recalling! I know that for myself I can be surprised when the melody of psalm response, for example, comes to me unexpectedly yet has an apposite insight into how I am feeling.

Music can therefore be an important stimulus into mystagogy — the reflecting on the Easter mysteries. I am great believer that those aspects of a celebration which we remember, the parts that affect us, are those which have significance.

Before we reflect with other people it is important to reflect for ourselves. If I recall last Sunday's Mass what do I remember? Are there words that stand out? Or is it people or liturgical action — or even just the sound? What might this be saying to me? What is it telling me about God?

Music is a core element in the celebration of the Easter Triduum. There are texts which we sing over the three days which are not repeated in the rest of year. I have come to realise over the years that people have a capacity to remember the melodies and refrains of the Triduum from year to year — not just the musicians but the congregation too. This year a couple of members of the congregation approached me to ask

why we were not singing a particular psalm response at the Easter Vigil. It was a good reminder about what these three days special is that they are different from other celebrations, they are rich in symbol and action, they are inherently memorable. Indeed we are about *anamnesis* — the recalling of the past into the present — a re-remembering. It is not a historical re-enactment; a liturgical passion play where we have forgotten the ending.

The act of mystagogy is an act of anamnesis. We recall the past event, for example baptism in the Easter Vigil, but we are not just replaying a videotape of memories trying to be back where we once were. We recall from the present, from the perspective of our current situation and to this situation we make connections between the event and the tradition of the Church we stand

in. What did it feel like to step into the water? What did that reveal of God. And then, what does this say to use of how we

are to live — a future hope. In mystagogy everything comes together — past, present and future; experience, encounter, witness and tradition; image, symbol, words, music and all the other senses; head and heart, thought and feeling — not in some neat diagram but in the rushing wind of Holy Spirit who leads and guides us.

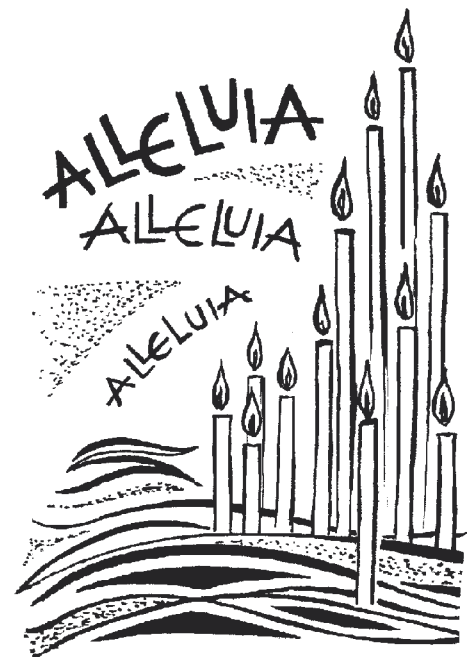
Through the Catechumenate a team should develop skills in liturgical catechesis which can be developed and deepened in mystagogy. In the particular to allow time to reflect on the experience of celebrating the liturgy whether a particular rite or Sunday worship. Connections can be made in the prayer by singing a refrain or response. If singing sounds too difficult much of today's liturgical music can be found on CD's or even downloaded from places like iTunes. But I don't want to let slip the idea that singing might be too difficult it only needs someone to start — once you are over that hurdle everything else is easy!

If you sing nothing else why not get into the habit of singing Alleluia. There are many different settings of word; each bringing out different dimensions of this Hebrew word which means 'praise God'. For something rousing and joyful try the Celtic Alleluia by Fintan O'Carroll. There was a time when this tune seemed to be ubiquitous such there was a danger of it becoming commonplace and losing its vigour. In my own parish we only use it in the Easter season so

that it come back fresh at the Easter Vigil. There is also the simple Easter plainchant Alleluia. When we sing this we are connecting ourselves with the tradition of the Church, our song is an echo of those who sung it before us. For a quiet alleluia I like 'Alleluia Fontium' by Paul Inwood which can built up with simple overlapping parts but can just be sung gently and meditatively. In one parish I was in we used to sing it at the Preparation of Gifts at the Easter Vigil — a moment's quiet reflection after the events of initiation.

The Church speaks of the Easter seasons as the days above all to be singing Alleluia.

Martin Foster



RCIA Network

This Newsletter is produced by the RCIA Network Executive for the RCIA Network. Views expressed are not necessarily those of either the Executive or the Network.

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