

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of SACRAMENTO



# MINISTRY DAYS 2019

Jornada Pastoral

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CATHOLIC FUNERAL  
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# Re-imagining RCIA Inquiry

*Ministry Days 2019*

*Deacon Ken Crawford*





# Introductions

- Deacon Ken Crawford
  - Ordained June 2018
  - Convert to the faith (RCIA – Sacraments Easter 1999)
  - Been helping with RCIA since 2000
  - 2000 to 2009, Ss. Peter and Paul, Rocklin
  - 2010 to current, St. Clare, Roseville
  - Emphasis on Inquiry period



# Overview

Goal: To convince you that the Pre-Catechumenate (often called Inquiry) must be handled very differently than the Catechumenate

- Review Rite text for differences for Inquiry
- Overview of Inquiry based on above
- Ideas for how to make Inquiry different
- Things I struggle with



# Review of the Rite Text



# Inquiry Rite Text ‘outline’

“This (Inquiry) is a time of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.”

- No time limits
- No “structure”
- Introduction/beginning



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 36

“Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the preceding period of precatechumenate is of great importance and as a rule should not be omitted.”

- If it is of great importance, it must somehow be different from the Catechumenate.



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 36 #2

“It is a time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed..”

- Evangelization vs. Catechesis
- As leaders we must proclaim God





# Inquiry Rite Text par. 37

“The whole period of the pre-catechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek baptism may mature.”

- Again, evangelization vs. catechesis
- Goals
  - Inquirer increases will to follow Christ
  - Inquirer increases will to seek baptism



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 38

“Priests and deacons, catechists and other laypersons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the Gospel (see no. 42).”

- What is to be explained?: “The Gospel”
  - Gospel = Good news
  - Focus appears to be on the overall message Christ was bringing, not detailed theology or doctrine



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 38 #2

“Opportunities should be provided for them to meet families and other groups of Christians.”

- Something I think we mostly overlook
- How would we better facilitate this?



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 42

“The prerequisite for making this first step (Rite of Acceptance) is that the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates.”

- Key word: “beginnings”
  - Goal is to start the change
- Key phrase: “taken root”
  - Change in the way they live their life
  - Change in the way they think



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 43

“Before the rite is celebrated, therefore, sufficient and necessary time, as required in each case, should be set aside to evaluate and, if necessary, to purify the candidates’ motives and dispositions.

- Part of Inquiry is for us to get to know them
- Responsibility to “purify” them if they aren’t here for the right reasons



# Inquiry Rite Text par. 43 #2

“With the help of sponsors, catechists, and deacons, parish priests (pastors) have the responsibility for judging the outward indications of such dispositions.”

- Re-iterates importance of previous quote
- Must take time to get to know them
- Must judge whether they are ready for Catechumenate



# Overview of Inquiry



# Overview of Inquiry

## Timeline

- Start: Whenever the Inquirer approaches us
- Ends: With Rite of Acceptance
- Duration: Not specified
  - But implies a notable change of heart must happen
  - That's not a quick thing





# Overview of Inquiry

## Stated goals

- Have taken major first steps to embracing Christ
- Working on changing their lives
- We get to know them and their intentions



# Overview of Inquiry

## Implied goals

- Help them get over their stumbling blocks
  - Protestants have their “baggage” they need to leave behind
  - Secular Inquirers often struggle with at least some moral principles of the faith
- Build relationship of trust with them
  - Must be personal
- Difficult assumption: Unbaptized individuals know little of the faith



# Overview of Inquiry

## Differences from Catechumenate

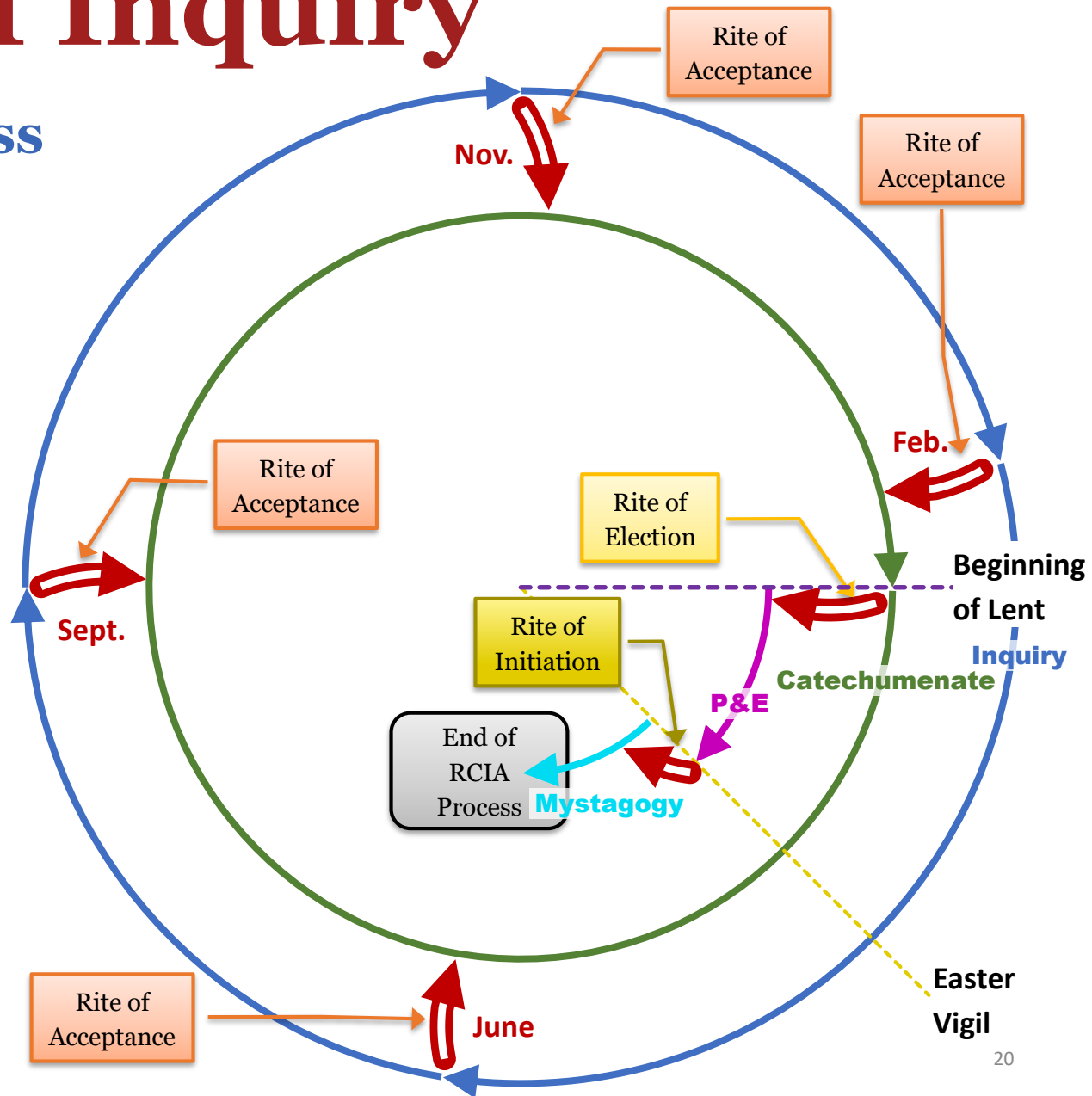
- Less focus on catechesis and more focus on evangelization
- Less structure
- More personal and interactive to needs of each Inquirer
  - Think “conversation” not “lecture”



# Overview of Inquiry

## St. Clare Parish Process

- Year round
  - Inquiry
  - Catechumenate
- Not single path
  - Many Rite of Acceptances
  - Decisions/meetings before each Rite





# Practical Ideas



# Inquiry practical idea #1

Ensure Inquiry is a year-round process

- Value goes beyond differentiation from Catechumenate
  - **MUST** be able to work with potential converts ASAP when they first contact the parish



# Inquiry practical idea #2

Meet in different place and time than Catechumenate

- Somewhat necessary if Inquiry is year round



# Inquiry practical idea #3

Have discernment meetings with each Inquirer (separately) just before Rite of Acceptances

- Don't ever assume someone moves on
- Don't think you know a particular person well enough to skip that meeting for them
- Maintains an environment of discernment
  - Including before Rite of Election as well
- Requires year round Inquiry (so those who "stay behind" have a place to go)





# Inquiry practical idea #4

**Don't use a Catechumenate like book or resource**

- Avoid a “curriculum”
  - Evangelization must be tailored to needs more so than Catechesis
- Prevents Inquiry from being for fixed time
- Easier for Inquirers to start at any time
- Can have lots of booklets, handouts and other tailored resources based on their needs
  - Only give them out as appropriate to individuals



# Inquiry practical idea #5

Let the Inquirers drive the discussion

- May need to give them topics to pick from
- Think more like Q & A session than a lesson
  - But Q & A must feel like evangelization, not catechesis



# Inquiry practical idea #6

Get out of the classroom

- Go to mass as a group then have discussion afterward
- Do a tour of the Church
- Go to some event outside the parish



# Inquiry practical idea #7

Tell your own conversion stories

- Evangelization is something very personal
- Stories helps them open up



# Inquiry practical idea #8

Have them tell their stories

- Evangelization is something very personal
- Stories helps them open up
- Knowing their story helps us target the discussion



# Inquiry practical idea #9

Sit around a table or in a circle

- Avoid it feeling like a classroom
- Don't stand at the whiteboard while they sit in chairs or at desks (or even tables)



# Inquiry practical idea #10

## Have a dedicated Inquiry team

- Does all of that sound like a lot?
  - It is!
- Find people who are passionate about evangelizing and have them be a separate sub-team from the main RCIA team



# Struggles





# Getting “early” Inquirers

- People don't show up until they've already made the decision
- Would be much better if we could get them when they first are thinking about it



# They can't decide on topics

- Often hear “I know I don't know much, but I don't know what I want to talk about”
- Need to find ways to read between the lines when they tell their stories to be able to suggest topics that are relevant to them



# They want a timeline

- Proper Inquiry doesn't have a timeline
- Inquires come ready to become Catholic and want a definitive timeline as to “how long the classes are”



# One-on-one “intimidation”

- Lot’s of people prefer the ability to blend into the group
- Hard to do when there’s only 1 or 2 Inquirers
  - Inevitable with year round process
  - Particularly just after Rite of Accepantances



# Catechesis instead of Evangelization

- Letting them drive the topics makes it too easy for the session to become a Q&A catechesis session
- Have to try to take questions/topics the direction of overall evangelization
  - What's the underlying root of their concern that is at odds with the Gospel?



# Conclusion

**Inquiry must be handled very differently than the Catechumenate**

- Year round extremely important
  - Has its challenges but very worth it
- Sessions driven by Inquirers needs
  - Open discussion instead of teaching from book
  - Evangelization not Catechesis
- Be creative



# Additional Information

- Webpage:
  - <http://deaconken.org>
- E-mail:
  - [ken@deaconken.org](mailto:ken@deaconken.org)
- Slides
  - <http://deaconken.org/blog/category/presentations/>
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date.
  - Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>

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