

LIGUORI CHRISTIAN INITIATION PROGRAM

Journey of Faith



FOR ADULTS

ENLIGHTENMENT AND MYSTAGOGY LEADER GUIDE



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Journey of Faith for Adults Enlightenment and Mystagogy Leader Guide (827174)

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Third Edition

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Enlightenment and Mystagogy: A Review

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

Since the earliest centuries, the Church has set aside the season of Lent as a particular time for repentance, conversion, and preparation for the sacraments. The RCIA process and celebration of baptism is centered on the Easter Vigil, with the rites of election and calling, scrutinies, and entire catechumenate scheduled in relation to that feast (RCIA 17, 20–26; CCC 1168; CIC 856).

Because repentance and conversion require personal and internal preparation, the *Journey of Faith for Adults, Enlightenment* lessons focus on guided, prayerful reflection. The lessons will assist the participants in their internal preparation for the sacraments, and encourage them to live out their faith in hands-on ways.

“[Enlightenment] is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance” (RCIA 139).

While the elect do not fully possess the graces and gifts of discipleship during the period of purification and enlightenment, they should feel ownership of their Christian faith. Baptized candidates, as members of the Christian Church, should begin to identify themselves as Catholic and express their faith in keeping with sacred Tradition.

The sessions and events during the enlightenment period should allow participants to experience Lent along with the parish community, whose members are also undergoing spiritual renewal and preparing to celebrate the paschal mystery more deeply (RCIA 138). At the Easter Vigil, the faithful will renew their baptismal vows as the participants profess their faith in Christ and the Catholic Church. This unity and integration will grow throughout the period of mystagogy, which usually corresponds to the Easter season.

Rites and Sacraments During the Period of Enlightenment

The enlightenment and purification period begins with the rite of election. Please refer to the *Catechumenate Leader Guide* and other *Journey of Faith for Adults* materials for details.

The Scrutinies

Rather than examination, interrogation, or harsh judgment, “the scrutinies...are rites for self-searching and repentance,” designed “to inspire in the elect a desire for purification and redemption” (RCIA 141, 143). The prayers and intercessions encourage the elect to strive for the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13–14; Luke 13:24–28). Through the exorcisms, they “are freed from the effects of sin and from the influence of the devil” (RCIA 144). Having previously been instructed in the nature of sin and expressed their desire and commitment to receive the sacraments of initiation, participants are strengthened and sent forth to make their discipleship a reality.

The questions, activities, journal prompts, and other material in these lessons help to prepare each participant for this stage in their faith journey. The bishop or priest will “question the candidates individually” in the formula for the profession of faith at the Easter Vigil (RCIA 224–25). Should participants express doubts or concerns about their conversion, meet with them privately to determine what additional support can be provided.

The Presentations

The *Presentation of the Creed* should be celebrated during the week following the first scrutiny and, whenever possible, within a Mass so that the faith community may be present (RCIA 157; CIC 837). It prepares the elect to memorize the Creed, for the *Recitation of the Creed* (see Preparation Rites), and to profess their faith on the day of their baptism (RCIA 148).

During the *Presentation of the Creed*:

- The prescribed readings, which replace the regular weekday readings, are proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word (RCIA 158).
- After the homily, the priest calls the elect forward to receive the words and mysteries of the Creed. The Nicene or Apostles’ Creed may be used, depending on the parish’s tradition (RCIA 160).
- The priest begins to recite the Creed, and the assembly joins in.
- The priest prays over the elect and dismisses them prior to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. If they are to stay, he reminds them that they cannot participate fully, but that they remain “as a sign of our hope that all God’s children will eat and drink with the Lord...” (RCIA 163).

E1: Election: Saying Yes to Jesus

Catechism: 422–429, 618, 2464–74

Objectives

Participants will...

- Decide how they will respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him.
- Consider the various responses to Jesus' invitation in the Gospels.
- Connect saying yes to Jesus with the *rite of election* and the signing of the book of election.

Leader Meditation

John 21:1–19

Jesus Christ has made you a fisher of men and women. The participants in your class are the fish in your net, the net you dropped at the Lord's command, the net you hauled up and have carried to shore. It is time to present the fish to the Lord. Imagine that you are Peter. Jesus is asking: Do you love me? Every day, you have the opportunity to say "yes" to the Lord. In this passage, the Lord asks Peter if Peter loves him. The first time Peter says "yes," Jesus tells Peter to feed the Lord's lambs. The second time, the Lord tells Peter to tend to the Lord's sheep. The third time, the Lord says to Peter to feed his sheep. In doing these things, Peter will act on his love for Jesus Christ. You are like Peter. In this lesson, you will bring the sheep to the Lord, and he will invite them to say yes to him. Pray for the necessary grace to lead the participants well and for sufficient grace that they will respond with a firm yes.

Related Catholic Updates

- "The Lord's Supper: Ancient Story, New Beginning" (C1104A)
- "'Light of Faith': Key Themes From Pope Francis' First Encyclical" (C1310A)
- "How God Invites Us to Grow: Six Stages of Faith Development" (C8710A)
- "Lent: Giving Our Hearts to God" (C9702A)

Leader Preparation

- Read the lesson handout, this lesson plan, the Scripture passage, and the *Catechism* sections.
- Obtain a recording of "Lord, I Need You" by Matt Maher, from *All The People Said Amen*, Essential Records.

Welcome

Greet participants as they arrive. Check for supplies and immediate needs. Solicit questions or comments about the previous session and/or share new information and findings. Begin promptly.

Opening Scripture


John 21:1–19

Light the candle and read the passage aloud. Share with participants that this lesson is all about Jesus "popping the question." He is proposing to us, and it is the greatest proposal of all time. He waits for our yes with more love than any bridegroom has ever had. Invite participants to think about how they would respond to Jesus' call as you begin the lesson.

"From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to 'evangelize,' and to lead others to the 'yes' of faith in Jesus Christ."

CCC 428





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In Short:

- Jesus invites us to say yes to his invitation to follow him.
- The Gospels report many different responses to Jesus' invitation.
- Catechumens become the "elect" through the rite of election.

?

- As you approach Easter and initiation into the Christian community, it's time to examine your life in relation to what Christ asks of you. Jesus has been calling you your entire life. How have you responded to that call?
- How will you continue to respond to Christ in new and deeper ways? Where is Jesus leading you?

Election: Saying Yes to Jesus

On the first Sunday of Lent, catechumens celebrate the rite of election and enter the period of purification and enlightenment, which leads to the celebration of the Easter sacraments. Election comes from a word that means "choose." The ceremony reflects the theme: God has chosen and called us.

The Church community hears testimony from godparents and catechists about how the catechumens have responded to God's call. The community accepts the catechumens, who state their desire to join the Church. They write their names in the Book of the Elect as one of "the chosen."

Baptized Christians seeking full communion with the Catholic Church may celebrate a rite called the call to continuing conversion.

Many Are Called

Jesus invited many to become his disciples, carry on his mission, and follow the way of the cross. Some responded enthusiastically. Former disciples of John the Baptist, Galilean fishermen, tax collectors, people from every walk of life accepted his call and followed him.

But the Gospels record several incidents in which potential disciples refused to commit to Christ and let the opportunity slip away.

"I Will...but First..."

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' encounter with those who say they desire to follow Jesus but not quite yet: "Lord, let me go first and bury my father" (Matthew 8:21; Luke 9:59). In Jesus' time, this meant, "Let me come after my father is dead." And this didn't necessarily mean the father was old or sick.

"I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home."
—Luke 9:61

CCC #22-129, 58, 266-74

ADULTS

- Offer participants time to respond to the two reflection questions in their prayer journal. Think about where Jesus has lead you, and where he is leading you now. Share any relevant experiences with the group and encourage participants to share as well.

"I Will...but First..."

- Discuss the many excuses those in the Gospel stories used to postpone their journey with Jesus.
- One man wanted to wait until his father had died, putting his perceived obligation to his father ahead of his faith (Matthew 8:21 and Luke 9:59). Another would follow the Lord only after finishing business at home (Luke 9:61).
- Emphasize that our family life, career, and personal relationships take on their true meaning only when following Christ is our highest priority. Discuss those examples from the previous question, and have participants offer scenarios where those obligations to family, work, or the home are kept while still giving Jesus a wholehearted "yes."

Election: Saying Yes to Jesus

Discuss the rite of election.

Compare election to the moment a man proposes marriage, or (as not all participants will be called to marriage) to receiving a job offer. It's a formal process, and it's filled with meaning and significance. Saying "yes" sets us on a new path in life. Jesus is inviting the catechumens to a new path—the path that leads to eternal life.

- Remind participants that while the *rite of election* marks the final stage of preparation for full reception into the Church, as an engagement or job offer letter marks the beginning of a final stage of a process, it is just the beginning of a faith journey. After as wedding comes a lifelong commitment to the marriage. After accepting a job comes the day to day task of working. The process of faith and saying "yes" to Jesus does not end here.

- Ask participants to consider their own situations of "I will but first..." Allow those who feel comfortable to share.
- Offer participants time to respond to the reflection question silently, or discuss it as a group. Think of your own example of an "I will" disciple who inspires you to share with the group. (This can be someone you know personally, or a saint you've found inspiring.)

“This Saying Is Hard...”

Emphasize that some Church teachings will be more difficult for participants to accept than others. What is easy for one catechumen to accept may be difficult for another. What is a “hard teaching” for one may make perfect sense to another catechumen. Our “yes” is an affirmation of our trust in Christ as well as a promise to follow Christ. However, we are free to say “no” to this invitation, as did some of his disciples. Sacred Scripture is clear. The one who walks away from the invitation does so in sorrow. But Jesus Christ gives us the freedom to choose.

- Pause in the lesson and give participants an opportunity to complete the activity with a partner or their sponsor or godparent. Allow time for participants to share any new realizations or discoveries.
- Discuss the cost, and difficulty, of giving Jesus a fully realized “yes.” Emphasize that the Twelve were asked to accept difficult teachings and that the Samaritan woman was asked to look critically at her own life and choices. Ask participants to reflect on the moments in their own lives Jesus is asking them to reconsider in the light of faith.

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These people declared their willingness to follow Christ, but at their own convenience, on their own terms. To them, Jesus replied: “Let the dead bury their dead.... No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60, 62).

Those who accept Jesus’ call must do so promptly, enthusiastically, and completely. The Galilean fishermen “left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:11). The tax collector, “leaving everything behind... got up and followed him” (Luke 5:28).

When Jesus came to the house of Martha and Mary in Bethany, Mary “sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak” (Luke 10:39). Martha had other priorities and wanted Mary to be a helper, but Jesus answered, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.” (Luke 10:41–42).

• What is helping you become an “I will” disciple instead of a “would be” disciple?



“This Saying Is Hard...”

In chapter 6 of John’s Gospel, Jesus foreshadows his institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist:

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”

John 6:51–56

The disciples were shocked, saying: “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” (John 6:60). When Jesus refused to modify his claims, “many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him” (John 6:66). As long as Jesus’ teaching matched their expectations, they were content to follow. When Jesus challenged their presuppositions rather than telling them what they wanted to hear, they left him.

• How do you respond when something Jesus says makes you uncomfortable?



Choose a part of Jesus’ teaching you find difficult. With your leader’s or sponsor’s help, find a Gospel verse that reflects this teaching. Let Jesus guide you as you read the passage:

Read the passage as you slowly breathe in and out.

1. Imagine Jesus talking to you.
2. Let him gently lead you through the teaching and address your concerns.
3. Sit in Jesus’ presence and listen for his loving response.

• What are your greatest fears or doubts regarding this matter? What do you find challenging?



• How does this passage enlighten your understanding? What is Jesus saying to you?

• What steps can you take to better accept this teaching?

In contrast, when Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter replied, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:67–69). The faith of the Twelve enabled them to remain disciples of Christ while others retreated, scandalized and confused.

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, he said things that must have been hard to hear. Not only did he promise her living water that would keep her from thirsting but he told her that she and other Samaritans “worship what you do not understand” (John 4:22).

Most difficult of all, he laid bare her whole life. When she said she had no husband, Jesus said, “you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband” (John 4:18). She could have reacted with resentment or indignation to any of these “hard sayings.” Instead, she ran to tell others that Jesus is the Messiah. Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony: “He told me everything I have done” (John 4:39). Her faith, and theirs, was deepened by hearing the truth.

"He Went Away Sad..."

Perhaps the most poignant of Jesus' conversations was with a rich young man who asked:

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?... All of these [commandments] I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions."

Mark 10:17-22

Although the young man had observed all the commandments, his first allegiance was to his wealth. It gave him a sense of identity and security.

• What gives you a sense of identity and security? How attached are you to your possessions?



The rich young man didn't realize that true identity and security come from Christ. He wasn't sure that what he'd find in Christ would compensate for surrendering his possessions. So he left saddened.

In contrast, consider the generosity of the woman who "came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil... and poured it on his head" (Mark 14:3). This perfume was worth "three hundred days' wages," yet that sacrifice didn't stop her. She gave generously out of love. For that reason, Jesus said, "Amen. I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Mark 14:9).

"I Do Not Know Him..."

Probably the saddest loss for Jesus came after his arrest. Just when Jesus needed his closest friends the most, they ran away. Peter, who'd sworn he would die with Jesus, denied Jesus three times: "I do not know him" (Luke 22:57). John was the only one of the Twelve Apostles who attended Jesus' crucifixion and burial.

The women were faithful, despite the danger: "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala" (John 19:25). "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb" (Matthew 27:61), watching as Jesus was buried. They returned later to anoint his body and were the first to see the resurrected Jesus, the first to carry the news of Easter to the world.

• When have you been uncomfortable about sharing your choice to follow Jesus? Why?



• When have you run from the cross?

Our Response to Jesus' Call

Our Lenten liturgies and penitential practices help us explore our own readiness to respond to Christ's call. There's probably a little bit of the would-be disciple in each of us—a part of ourselves that holds on to doubt, discouragement, or confusion in our relationship to God or Church. We may be tempted to seek our security beyond Christ and his love for us. Sometimes the demands of discipleship may seem too restrictive, inconvenient, uncomfortable, or unreasonable.

When we realize we've hesitated and want to turn back, it's time to remember all the disciples who ran away and then returned. Like Peter, we can turn from "I do not know Him" to "Lord, you know that I love you" (John 21:15). But we must then accept the cost of discipleship as Peter did.

There's no question that it's difficult to give an unconditional "yes" to Christ, to embrace wholeheartedly the cross he asks us to carry. But if we ask the Lord to help us make that leap of faith, abandoning the pride, insecurity, selfishness, or apathy that can impede discipleship, we'll respond ever more generously to him.

"Let your 'yes' mean 'yes.'"

Matthew 5:37

"I Do Not Know Him..."

Discuss with participants the kind of situations where we can be tempted to deny Jesus or run from his teachings and ways we can reaffirm our faith in moments like these.

Our Response to Jesus' Call

Emphasize that Jesus has been calling us for our entire lives. Participants will have felt it most clearly and acutely these past few weeks and months as they've inquired about the Church and become part of the community. Now is the time to examine their lives in relation to what Christ asks.

"He Went Away Sad..."

- **Group**, discuss possible responses to the reflection question. Emphasize that when we feel our identity is tied to the things we possess it can be especially difficult to be willing to let those things go and follow Jesus.
- Things that give us a sense of security can be anything from our bank accounts, to our job, to long-term friendships, to not getting involved in difficult conversations. We can get our identity from our work, our family and our children, our position in the community, even the things we own.

- Ask participants to discuss some ways we can rediscover (or discover for the first time) the person God is calling us to become.
- Some of these ways may include an ongoing practice of prayer or spiritual journaling, meeting with a trusted Catholic advisor or spiritual director, or reading Scripture or writings from the saints.

Journaling

If you have time at the end of this session, read 2 Corinthians 1:18–20 and Luke 14:28 as a group. Then allow participants some time to silently reflect on, or write, their responses to the journal questions provided at the end of the lesson.

Closing Prayer

Play recording of “Lord, I Need You” (Matt Maher, from *All The People Said Amen*, Essential Records). End with a few moments of silence and ask for petitions. Close with this simple prayer.

*Lord,
It is a blessing to know that
you are Lord, creator, and
savior. You love us with an
eternal love. It is difficult to
comprehend this kind of love
for you have given us the gift
of free will, knowing that we
may choose to walk away from
your love or we may choose to
receive this love and say yes to
it. Give us the grace to say yes,
for it is our heart’s desire to
love you, to know you, and to
serve you.
Amen.*

Looking Ahead

Lesson E1: Election: Saying Yes to Jesus is the beginning of a lifelong journey with our Lord and his Church. Each catechumen who says yes to the journey is ready to enter Lent and complete the final path to Easter Vigil. As participants prepare to enter into the Lenten season, ask them to begin examining their lives with the eyes of faith, noting areas where they could improve and offering thanksgiving for areas where they clearly see God’s influence at work.