

Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

The process of Christian formation is a lengthy one, composed of many periods, each with its own unique character. All are important, since observing the character of each period contributes to the character of the new Christian—which is the character of Christ himself.

Our present period (at least for most) is the “Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate.” Can you name its nature, purpose, and emphases?

Consider how the Rites book describes it (nos. 36-38, 40 below), and consider your own treatment of this period.

Although the rite of initiation begins with admission to the catechumenate, the preceding period or precatechumenate is of great importance and as a rule should not be omitted. It is a time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all. Thus those who are not yet Christians, their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to him. For he who is the way, the truth, and the life fulfills all their spiritual expectations, indeed infinitely surpasses them.

From evangelization, completed with the help of God, come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love. The whole period of the precatechumenate is set aside for this evangelization, so that the genuine will to follow Christ and seek baptism may mature.

During this period, priests and deacons, catechists and other laypersons are to give the candidates a suitable explanation of the Gospel. The candidates are to receive help and attention so that with a purified and clearer intention they may cooperate with God’s grace. Opportunities should be provided for them to meet families and other groups of Christians.

During the precatechumenate period, parish priests (pastors) should help those taking part in it with prayers suited to them, for example, by celebrating for their spiritual well-being the prayers of exorcism and the blessings given in the ritual (nos. 94, 97).