



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: May 31, 2025
FROM: Joline Belliveau, National Chairperson of Service
TO: Provincial Presidents and Secretaries
CC: National Officers
National Life Member Liaison

**Please forward this message to chairpersons of service
according to your provincial communications protocol.**

Introduction to the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

There are many ministries members can join to serve in the church. One such ministry is the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). OCIA began in 1972 when bishops saw a need for such a process, as the worldview was slowly changing and society was becoming increasingly secular.

OCIA is a sacred journey for those seeking to enter the Roman Catholic faith. It provides a structured yet flexible process of reflection, prayer, instruction, and discernment, welcoming adults and older children who feel called to deepen their relationship with Christ.

OCIA is intended to be available in every Roman Catholic parish, encouraging participants to join the process within their local faith community. Those who embark on this journey are invited to progress at their own pace, typically taking eight to 12 months, though for some, the path may extend to two years or more.

As participants move through the process, they are encouraged to:

- Attend Sunday Mass regularly
- Engage in weekly OCIA sessions
- Become actively involved in the life of the parish

Throughout each stage, the OCIA program is guided by the local parish pastor, clergy and religious leaders. Increasingly, lay Catholic catechists play a vital role in leading sessions, offering instruction and fostering a welcoming community.

OCIA Schedule and Structure Catechetical Talks:

- Reflection: Discussing the readings from the previous Sunday's Mass
- Catechetical Talks: Covering the main teachings of the church

The process unfolds in four key stages:

- Q – Inquiry Stage (exploring the faith)
- C – Catechumenate Stage (learning and preparation)
- L – Lent (a deepening of commitment)
- M – Mystagogy (living out the faith after initiation)

The catechumenate phase, rooted in the Greek word *katechein*, embodies guidance, instruction and preparation for baptism, confirmation and the renewal of baptismal vows. OCIA offers participants knowledge and the spiritual support needed to embrace their Catholic faith fully.

For those serving within this ministry—whether as catechists, mentors, or simply as parish community members—OCIA represents a unique opportunity to lead others into a deeper understanding of their faith. By facilitating honest dialogue about doubt, belief and personal transformation, OCIA becomes a transformative experience that not only converts individuals but also enriches the lives of the entire parish. It is a testament to the church's commitment to being both historically grounded and dynamically responsive to the needs of modern society.

There's much more to explore about this ministry. For instance, many parishes have adapted the OCIA process to better reflect local pastoral needs, integrating ongoing faith formation long after the initial sacraments have been celebrated. If you're passionate about serving in OCIA or just curious about how it functions in practice, there are fascinating stories and varied approaches from communities worldwide that might deepen your appreciation for how the church continually renews itself while remaining faithful to its mission.