

## **RCIA Glossary**

**ABSOLUTION** The power of the priest to forgive sins through the Sacrament of Penance. Christ gave this power to the apostles when he said, "If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound." (Jn 20,23)

**ACOLYTE** This term denotes the office, ministry or order of clerics who assist at the altar and at other liturgical functions.

**ACT OF CONTRITION** An act of heartfelt sorrow and aversion for sin with a sincere and firm resolution to avoid sin in the future.

**ADVENT** *arrival or coming* The season which precedes Christmas and also marks the beginning of the liturgical year.

**AGE OF REASON** In Church usage, the age at which a person attains a state of moral responsibility and also incurs the obligation to observe various legal and moral prescriptions.

**ALB** A long white linen vestment reaching the ankles. When celebrating Mass this garment symbolizes purity of heart.

**ALMS** Something freely given, to the needy prompted by love for the recipient.

**AMBO** The lectern from which the scriptures are proclaimed.

**ANGELUS** A short prayer said in the morning, at midday, and in the evening in honor of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and in veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**ANNULMENT** A decree issued by a competent Church authority or tribunal that an ecclesiastical act or sacrament is invalid. Used most often with marriage.

**ANOINT** to pour oil on.

**APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION** The continuous and authoritative succession of the Church from the time of Jesus Christ to the present.

**APPARITIONS** The sense-perceptible vision or appearance of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, angels or saints.

**ARCHBISHOP** Title of a bishop with jurisdiction over an archdiocese.

**ARCHDIOCESE** A territorial division of the Church that is governed by an archbishop. It differs from a diocese in that an archdiocese is the primary see of an ecclesiastical province consisting of one or more diocese.

**ASH WEDNESDAY** The first day of Lent and the seventh Wednesday before Easter. Ashes are placed on the foreheads of the faithful.

**BAPTISM OF DESIRE** A perfect act of love of God made by an unbaptized person who expresses true contrition for sin and shows an intention of doing everything God has ordained for salvation. A way through which the unbaptized come to share in God's universal plan for salvation. God does will the salvation of all persons.

**BEATIFICATION** A statement by the Church that the deceased is regarded as dwelling in heaven.

**BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT** A service which has its origin in the Middle Ages for the purpose of acknowledging Christ present in the reserved sacrament.

**BISHOP** A successor of the Apostles; an ecclesiastic who has received the highest of the sacred orders.

**CANON LAW** The name given to the official body of laws for the Catholic Church.

**CANONIZATION** The decree of judgement by the Church, given in a Papal Bull, that one already beatified is to be regarded as a saint and to be venerated everywhere.

**CARDINAL** The name given to the members of the Sacred College. They advise the Holy Father and govern in the Church.

**CATECHISM** Instructions in Christian doctrine.

**CATECHUMENS** People who are being instruction in the Catholic faith with a view of reception into the Church.

**CATHEDRA** The chair at which the bishop sits during liturgical services.

**CELIBACY** State of being unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**CHRISM, THE HOLY** A mixture of olive oil and balsam blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass. It is used for Baptism and Confirmation.

**CHURCH** The people who are assembled together by the call of God. Primarily a people, not a building.

**HOLY COMMUNION** A sharing in the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood.

**COMMUNION OF SAINTS** The union of the faithful on earth with those in heaven and in purgatory.

**CONFESSION** The voluntary accounting of one's sins to a priest.

**COUNCIL** A formal meeting of Church leaders convened by the appropriate bishop, to deliberate, clarify, study and enact decrees pertaining to the life and belief of the Church.

**CRUCIFIX** A representation of the cross with the figure of Christ crucified.

**CURIA, ROMAN** The bureaus which assist the Pope in the governance of the universal Church.

**DOGMA** a truth revealed by God and, herefore, an article of Faith. It is thus proposed by the Church to be believed by all Catholics. Some of the dogmas of the Church are the Incarnation, Redemption and Assumption.

**EASTER DUTY** The obligation to receive communion during the Easter Season.

**ECUMENICAL COUNCIL** A world wide meeting of bishops presided over by the Bishop of Rome. There have been 21 Ecumenical councils in the history of the Church.

**ENCYCLICAL** A letter addressed by the Pope to the episcopate through out the world.

**EUCCHARIST, THE** "Thanksgiving" is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

**EXCOMMUNICATION** the penal exclusion of one of the faithful from the community of the faithful.

**GENUFLECTION** The act of bending the right knee to the floor as a sign of reverence and adoration for God.

**IMPRIMATUR** Latin word meaning "let it be printed"

**KISSING THE ALTAR** The kiss is seen as a sign of love and respect.

**LAITY** All those baptized faithful who are not in Holy Orders, or in some religious state of life approved by the Church.

**LAMP, SANCTUARY** the light which, by Church law, is kept burning wherever the Blessed sacrament is as a reminder that Jesus Christ is truly present there.

**LATIN**, The official diplomatic language of the Church and the official language of the Roman Rite of the Church.

**LECTIONARY** The liturgical book containing the scriptural passages, which are used for the celebration of the Liturgy of The Word in the Mass.

**LENT** The time of preparation for the Feast of Easter.

**LITANY** A prayer consisting of a series of invocations with responsive petitions.

**LITURGY** The official public worship of the Church. The worship of the entire Church.

**MARIOLOGY** The branch of theology which deals with the role of Mary in the plan of God.

**MEDALS** A piece of metal or plastic on which has been impressed the representation of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or one of the Saints. They serve to remind the faithful, of those on the medal.

**MYSTICAL BODY** The spiritual society formed by the union of Christ and His Church. Christ being the head and His followers the members of the Body.

**NIHIL OBSTAT** A Latin phrase which means “nothing hinders”. The phrase is printed in the front of a book, which indicates it has been examined by an ecclesiastical church censor who has found nothing in the publication which would be contrary to faith or morals.

**NOVENA** Nine days of public or private prayer made in preparation for a feast or for special graces.

**PASCHAL CANDLE** This large candle is a special symbol of the presence of the Risen Christ.

**RECONCILIATION ROOM** Small room for the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation set up for face-to-face confession, though a screen is sometimes available.

**RECTORY** Residence for priests

**RITE** The prescribed manner of performing or conducting liturgical services, such as the specific way of administering sacraments. The complete liturgical ceremonies, both the actions and the language, used by the particular divisions of the Western and Eastern catholic Churches.

**ROSARY** A series of prayers in honor of our Blessed Mother.

**SACRAMENT** Actions of the Church through which Christ continues to minister among his people. The purpose of the sacrament is to sanctify the people, to build up the Body of Christ, and to give true worship to God.

**SACRAMENTALS** Various actions and objects which are recognized by the Church as instrumental in bringing about the sanctification of the people. (e.g. Sign of the Cross, palms, ashes, medals etc.)

**SACRAMENTARY** The book which contains the texts and directives for the celebration of the Eucharist.

**SACRARIUM** Special sink used for washing sacred vessels used at Mass.

**SACRISTY** A room for the storage of sacred vessels, vestments, and so forth, in a church, sometimes used for vesting.

**SANCTUARY** The portion of the church building that contains the altar

**SANTTUARY LAMP** A candle or lamp that is kept burning before the Blessed Sacrament

**SCHISM** The formal refusal of a church community to recognize the authority of the pope; separation from the Church of Rome.

**SEE** The territory presided over by a bishop. The Holy See is the Diocese of Rome.

**STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS** Colorful windows often found in churches; many tell biblical stories or depict saints, others are symbolic

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS** A series of meditations on the sufferings, death, and burial of Christ

**STATUES** Three dimensional representations of Jesus, Mary, the saints, or angels; often found in churches, but away from the main altar

**TABERNACLE** The structure in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, sometimes at a side altar or in a separate chapel

**TRADITION** The oral handing down of certain infallibly correct truths pertaining to faith and morals from one generation to the next. These doctrines are not found written in Sacred Scripture, although their sources were divine, having been told to the Apostles by Christ Himself, or revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

**TRANSUBSTANTIATION** The change, at the Consecration of the Mass, of the whole substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

**TRIDUUM** Three days devoted to special religious activities. Precedes Easter: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

**VENERATION** The reverence or honor paid to saints, relics of martyrs, etc. because of their personal sanctity or closeness to God.

**VESTIBULE** Foyer and entrance to a church

**ZUCCHETTO** The small cap worn by bishops and other prelates. It was originally designed to cover the tonsure (shaved bald spot). Today, however, it has become a sign of dignity.