

# The Catechumenate in the Early Church

Keep these ideas in mind as you study **Unit 1, Session 4**.

In the early Church, the process of becoming a Christian, known as the catechumenate, took several years. The catechumens were allowed to join the Christian community in liturgy. They were then asked to leave before the Liturgy of the Eucharist. When their initiation was complete, catechumens became known as neophytes, or beginners in the faith. **PAGE 25**

By professing loyalty to God, those who were preparing to join the Church could have been charged with treason and sentenced to death. **PAGE 25**

For the first few centuries of the Church's history, the Sacraments of Initiation were celebrated together at the same time. Today, though, most Catholics are baptized as infants and receive First Holy Communion and Confirmation when they are older. **PAGE 26**

Because of Adam and Eve's choice to turn away from God, we are born into Original Sin. **PAGE 27**

The virtue that guides us to give to God and others what is due them is known as justice. **PAGES 27 AND 286**

Just as water cleansed the earth of sin during the great Flood, so does it cleanse us from the stain of Original Sin. Catechumens are taught that they are re-created through the waters of Baptism. **PAGE 27**

The graces that are bestowed by the Holy Spirit through Baptism confer upon us God's righteousness and leave a character, or indelible sign, on our soul. This character consecrates us for worship. **PAGE 27**

When we are confirmed, the celebrant anoints the forehead of the person being confirmed and says, "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." **PAGE 28**

To be confirmed, one must have reached the age of reason, usually around seven years of age; be willing to profess freely faith in Christ and his Church; be in a state of grace; have the intention of receiving the sacrament; and be willing to follow Jesus. **PAGE 28**

Through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we are united with Christ and his act of praise and thanksgiving offered on the Cross. **PAGE 28**

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