

"Seek the Living God provides an individualized formation path for each inquirer leading them to lifelong discipleship. Using five insightful questions to engage each seeker's unique needs, the evidence of their ongoing conversion is illuminated through dialogue with an RCIA team mentor. A model calendar, formation plan, and creative involvement with community provide a flexible guide suited to diverse parish RCIA teams."

— Emily Filippi
Director of Office of Christian Formation
Diocese of Richmond

"Seek the Living God is a creative and practical resource for those who lead the Period of the Precatechumenate (Inquiry) in the RCIA. Nick Wagner shares great insight and experience as he breaks open this important time of evangelization. He provides extremely helpful questions, examples, tools, and ideas for the period of inquiry, which all too often looks like 'Catholic classes' rather than a time of encountering the living God, hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ, and opening one's life to the power of the Holy Spirit. This book will help RCIA leaders and teams to avoid the temptation of a 'one size fits all' precatechumenate, and will enable them to recognize and bring out the many hues of those who seek the living God."

— Karen Kane
Director of the Office for Divine Worship and Sacraments
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Seek the Living God

Five RCIA Inquiry Questions for Making Disciples

Nick Wagner



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Wagner, Nick, 1957– author.
Title: Seek the living God : five RCIA inquiry questions for making disciples / Nick Wagner.
Description: Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2017. | Series: TeamRCIA | Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017041124 (print) | LCCN 2017020309 (ebook) | ISBN 9780814645406 (ebook) | ISBN 9780814645161
Subjects: LCSH: Catechetics—Catholic Church. | Questioning. | Discipling (Christianity) | Initiation rites—Religious aspects—Catholic Church—Study and teaching.
Classification: LCC BX930 (print) | LCC BX930 .W28 2017 (ebook) | DDC 268/.82—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017041124>

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Introduction

Some time ago, I found myself in a new parish, and I volunteered to join the RCIA team. At my first team meeting, the discussion was about who would teach which topic for the precatechumenate classes in the fall. There were ten classes on the schedule that covered things like “The Existence of God,” “Jesus,” “Holy Spirit and Trinity,” “The Church,” and so on.

The inquirers would all be given textbooks that contained all the topics, and they were expected to read the appropriate chapter before class. The classes met every Monday evening for 90 minutes from September through November.

On the Sunday after the last class, the inquirers would all come to Mass to celebrate the combined Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and Rite of Welcoming Baptized Candidates.

I was told that this schedule and process were the same every year, year in and year out. It didn’t matter who the inquirers were. Anyone who wanted to become Catholic was expected to attend the same ten classes that started every year in mid-September. (And that was just the precatechumenate! They still had to attend all the classes during the catechumenate period.)

If someone asked about becoming Catholic in January or May or August, he or she was told that classes start in September.

I want to tell you about four of the inquirers I met that year.

Four Seekers

Bill was an evangelical Protestant. He had read the Bible cover to cover and could quote a seemingly unlimited number of passages in response to any situation or question he was faced with. His deep spirituality and prayer life led him to seek a deeper experience of faith that he hoped he would find in the Catholic Church. As part of his search, Bill had visited most of the parishes in the diocese and had had personal conversations with more than twenty-five priests.

Kevin was an ex-convict and a recovering addict. He had prison tattoos up and down both arms. He had been raised in a Catholic family but had never been baptized. When I met him, he had been married to a faithful Catholic woman for six years and had been going to Mass with her all that time.

Adhi had been raised as a nominal Buddhist, but his family was not active in their religion. Adhi caused a bit of a problem for the team because he showed up three weeks after the precatechumenate classes had begun. There was a lot of conversation about letting him join the existing group of seekers and trying to catch him up or making him wait until classes started again the next year.

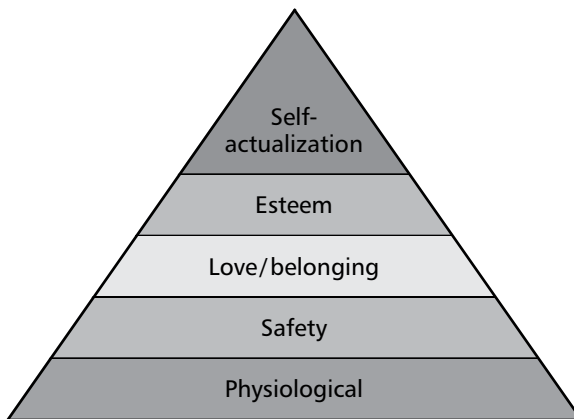
The fourth inquirer was Alice. Alice was not really an “inquirer.” Alice didn’t believe in God and didn’t intend to become Catholic. She was engaged to one of our parishioners, and because she was in love with him, she had agreed to get married at our church. She also would occasionally come to Mass with her fiancé. But she had no intention of signing up for Catholic classes.

At this point, I felt like the guy who was warned about the hazards of drinking. He had been told that vodka over ice would give him kidney failure, rum and ice would cause liver failure, and whiskey with ice would give him heart problems. The solution, he was told, was to avoid ice.

The RCIA team was focused on the ice, and the ice was not the problem. Each of the four inquirers I met had specific needs, all of which were different from each other’s. But nobody was talking about that.

What Do People Need?

You have probably heard of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow identified a pyramid of human needs ("A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review*). The most basic, physical needs (such as food and water), are at the bottom. The highest, creative and spiritual needs (the desire to become the best you can be or "self-actualization"), are at the top. According to Maslow's theory, needs higher on the pyramid cannot be met unless the needs below them have been met. If you are starving, for example, you aren't too worried about being a good swimmer or a fast reader.



Usually (although not always), seekers who come to us are not lacking for physical needs or safety needs. Some seekers who come to us are looking to satisfy the third level of need: love and belonging. They are looking for friendship, intimacy, or a sense of family.

Other seekers are at the fourth level of need: esteem. If someone has low self-esteem, that person may be seeking respect, validation, and acceptance.

In Maslow's original theory, the highest level of need is self-actualization. Some seekers come to us wishing to become the model Christian, or an ideal parent, or more spiritually disciplined.

In his later years, Maslow added a sixth level: self-transcendence. He came to believe that a fully actualized human is one who has some higher goal outside oneself, an altruistic personality focused on the good of others. (See "Critique of Self-Actualization Theory," in *Future Visions: The Unpublished Papers of Abraham Maslow*.)

It is helpful for RCIA teams to have an understanding of Maslow's hierarchy, but it is not a perfect system. Maslow himself said there are no rigid boundaries between the levels. There can be significant overlap among the various kinds of needs. And later researchers have criticized Maslow's theory as either being completely inadequate for describing human need or as being too culturally specific.

The important takeaway for RCIA teams is that every seeker who comes to us will have a unique set of needs and a hierarchy of needs. The hierarchy may not match Maslow's, but it is there. If someone asks us what they have to do to become Catholic, and we have one single answer for everyone who asks, we are almost sure to miss meeting the true needs of almost everyone. We are focusing on the "ice" and not on the unique circumstances of each seeker.

The RCIA Team

There were seven people on that RCIA team, not counting myself. All of them were good souls, dedicated volunteers who truly wanted to help people seeking to become Catholic. They had never been formally trained in the catechumenate process. They didn't even know there was an official text and Rite.

Even so, they had a lot of gifts. They were compassionate, caring, and concerned about the inquirers. They sacrificed hours and hours of their time to plan and execute not only the precatechumenate classes but also classes for the catechumenate and mysta-

gogy periods. They were giving and loving folks who were doing the best they could.

My challenge was to find a way to help them channel their gifts, energy, and commitment in a way that would be truly helpful to the inquirers. The team, of course, already believed they were being helpful. They believed in God and Jesus and the Spirit and the church. They knew in their hearts that if they could teach others about those things, the inquirers would come to believe as they believed. But that way of thinking is still focusing on “the ice.” It reduces every seeker’s need to a pat set of answers that must serve every situation. It is a one-size-fits-all approach that is rarely successful in leading inquirers to a lasting faith.

I am not sure how that RCIA team developed their approach to formation. If I had to guess, I might say that each of them was asked to be on the RCIA team by either the pastor or another team member. I would guess that most of them protested they didn’t “know enough” to be helpful. And then, perhaps, some gentle Catholic guilt was applied along with a promise that “everything you need is in the textbook we use.” It’s easy enough to find such textbooks. Other teams find class outlines on the internet. Some even use prerecorded videos so all the RCIA team has to do is turn on the television.

Textbooks and videos might be helpful in some catechetical settings. But for most inquirers, these kinds of resources are responding to the wrong level of need. An inquirer is someone who is seeking. When we meet them, often they tell us that what they are seeking is to “become Catholic.” But becoming Catholic means one thing to Bill and another to Kevin and another to Adhi. And Alice wasn’t even seeking to “become Catholic,” but she was, indeed, seeking something. The challenge for RCIA teams is to discover the exact need for each seeker.

How Do We Know What Each Inquirer Is Seeking?

Coincidentally, about the same time I was getting to know my new RCIA team, I also came across two books by adult educator

Malcolm S. Knowles: *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* and *Using Learning Contracts*.

In *The Adult Learner*, Knowles wrote:

The most effective facilitator is one who can encourage adults to consider rationally and carefully perspectives and interpretations of the world that diverge from those they already hold.
(99)

This seemed to me to be exactly the goal of an RCIA team in relation to an inquirer. Knowles lists seven things that successful adult educators do:

1. Prepare a conducive learning environment.
2. Create a tool for mutual planning.
3. Diagnose learning needs.
4. Formulate a plan to meet those needs.
5. Design the learning experience.
6. Facilitate the learning experience with suitable techniques and materials.
7. Evaluate the outcomes (see *The Adult Learner*, 120).

Knowles expanded on that seven-point process in *Using Learning Contracts*. In his preface, he wrote,

The one [technique] that has made the most difference in what I do and has solved the most problems that have plagued me as an educator is the process of contract learning. (xi)

Contract learning is difficult to define because it can take on a variety of forms. Indeed, in *Using Learning Contracts*, Knowles lists “religious institutions” as one of the many places contract learning is used. Most of his examples, however, are better suited to academia and business training.

Even so, by studying his examples and understanding the underlying principles of contract learning, it is possible to apply

Knowles's insights to adult faith formation. Knowles asks and answers the question of how to develop a learning contract:

There is no one right way. In fact, one of the chief virtues of contract learning is its almost infinite flexibility. Its heart is the process of negotiation between learners, facilitators, and resource persons. (43)

I took his message to heart and set out to adapt the principles of contract learning to developing a faith formation plan for inquirers. Contract learning offers an effective and powerful listening tool. And the contract learning process also provides a clear map of the unique formation process that will be most effective for each inquirer.

Malcolm Knowles's six assumptions of adult learning

1. **Need to know:** Adults need to know the reason for learning something.
2. **Self-concept:** Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education; involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
3. **Experience:** The learner's experience (including error) provides the basis for learning activities.
4. **Readiness:** Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and/or personal lives.
5. **Orientation:** Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.
6. **Motivation:** Adults respond better to internal versus external motivators.

Source: *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, 57–63.

Seek the Living God

The purpose of this book is to give RCIA teams a way out of the one-size-fits-all precatechumenate process so many of us have fallen into. In these pages, you will discover the true purpose of the precatechumenate period and how to use this important time to discover what the inquirers are actually seeking.

The first paragraph of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* gets at the core of what all of us are actually seeking. In identifying the purpose of the initiation process, the rite says:

The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely *seek the living God* and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. (1, emphasis added)

Underneath every request to “become Catholic” is a deep, heartfelt longing for God. Your mission, as a guide in the initiation process, is to help seekers explore that longing and to enter fully on “the way of faith and conversion.”

This book will give you the skills you need to start your inquirers on a path to lifelong discipleship by listening deeply to their true needs. You will be confident that you are leading your seekers through a fruitful, conversion-centered inquiry process that will set them on a clear path to living and praying as committed Catholics.

After just a few meetings with your seekers, you will be able to easily create a customized faith formation plan that is tailored to the unique needs of each person. And the best part is that the seekers do most of the work in developing their own plan. Your role shifts from being the Catholic “expert” to being a mentor and coach.

And once you understand how the five-question process works, you can easily train others to use it. New team members don’t have to worry about “knowing enough” to be on the team. They just have to be able to ask five questions.

Before we get to the five questions, we will take a fresh look at the purpose of the precatechumenate period of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. These five questions are ideally used during the inquiry phase of initiation. However, many RCIA teams have been using the precatechumenate as a kind of “mini-course” or introduction to Catholic teaching. If initiation is going to be a true conversion process, we have to recover a more authentic understanding of the precatechumenate. That’s what we will do in chapter 1.

Next, in chapter 2, we will examine adult learning theory, specifically in regard to establishing initial goals and processes for learning. For adults to learn effectively, they have to take responsibility for their own formation. And catechists have to let go of the need to “teach.” If we can make this shift in our understanding of the learning process, our initiation processes will flourish.

Chapters 3 through 7 cover the actual questions we will use in the inquiry process. It is helpful to think of these five questions more as categories than literal questions. To help with that understanding, each of these chapters begins with twenty different ways to ask the same question. In addition, I provide three examples of ways you might ask each question when talking with children and their families. I encourage you to use all of these examples as inspiration for your own questions that best fit you and your inquirers.

In chapter 8, I show you, step by step, how to shape the responses you received to the five questions into a practical, workable, customized faith formation plan for each inquirer. The power of this process is that each formation plan springs from the actual wants and needs of the individual seeker. Because each plan is specific to each seeker, you will see a much greater commitment to lifelong discipleship in your seekers.

Chapter 9 gives you a clear and concise guide for implementing your seekers’ faith formation plans. In this chapter, I show you how to take seriously that directive that “the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized” (RCIA 9). This process will only work if we move the formation of the seekers out of the

classroom and into the active life of your parish. In a sense, your entire parish becomes your “RCIA team,” and you become more of a facilitator to help the parish live out “its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ” (RCIA 9).

One of the most frequent questions I receive when I talk with RCIA teams is: How do we know when the seeker is ready? There are both objective and subjective criteria we can use to answer that question. One of the stronger points of this formation process, however, is that the seekers themselves will establish their own markers for readiness. This is such a game changer! We no longer have to be the gatekeepers of the sacraments. In a collaborative discernment process with each seeker and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the weight of the decision for readiness moves off of our shoulders and onto the heart of each seeker.

For many RCIA leaders, this way of implementing faith formation will require new ways of thinking and new skills. Even so, I believe that most of us who are passionate about the catechumenate process have within us all the gifts we need to be able to evolve into this new way of doing things. So in chapter 11, I spend some time discussing the “ideal catechist.” None of us has all the skills and talents we need to do this ministry perfectly. But all of us have exactly the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us to accomplish the mission to which we have been called. My hope is this description of the ideal will help all of us to stretch ourselves to be the best catechists we can be for the sake of the seekers.

The concluding chapter is a question for ourselves: What could happen if we did this? In building relationships and engaging the larger community, the question is more important than the answer. If we want to form committed disciples, we have to ask the right question. If we want to involve the entire parish, we have to ask the right question. And if we want to become the best catechists that God has called us to be, we have to ask ourselves the right question.

I have also provided a few helpful resources at the end of the book. There is a bibliography of resources for those of you who wish to dive deep into understanding this learning process. There

is also a model calendar that provides a sample formation plan for seekers. Another helpful resource is a goal-setting worksheet for your seekers to use. And finally, an extensive collection of Catholic prayers you can use with your seekers in the initial inquiry process and throughout their formation.

The core of this process is very simple, and you can use these questions with your very next inquirer. You will be amazed at the powerful conversion that will happen with your inquirers—and with you. So let's get started.

Chapter 1

The Purpose of Inquiry

In academia, we might start the contract learning process by identifying the objective of a course of study. In an evangelization and conversion process, we begin by asking where the Holy Spirit is leading the inquirer.

We will do that by asking the inquirers five questions. Before we get to the questions, however, we have to all get on the same page about the purpose of inquiry.

RCIA teams will often say that the most difficult part of the RCIA process to implement is the period of mystagogy. I must respectfully disagree. The period that RCIA teams seem to have the most trouble with is the first period. All of the difficulties we have with the period of mystagogy are usually caused by the way we implement the period of precatechumenate.

Someone told me recently the precatechumenate in their parish is one session. One parish I was in had a ten-session precatechumenate program that required a textbook. If you Google “precatechumenate,” you can find precatechumenate “lesson plans.” You can also find YouTube videos that seem intended for inquirers to watch as the core element of their precatechumenate process.

All of these are misunderstandings of the purpose of this first period of the RCIA process. If you turn to the “Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults” (just before paragraph 36 of the RCIA), we see there that the precatechumenate “is a time of no fixed duration or structure.”

Furthermore, RCIA 36 says the precatechumenate “is a time for evangelization.” Indeed, we sometimes forget that the official title for this period is “Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate.” If we focus on the first part of the title, *evangelization*, how can we conceive of a set number of sessions, lesson plans, and videos as the core of this period? Evangelization is (or should be) happening all the time. If we are truly evangelizing, we can never tell inquirers to “come back when classes start.”

People keep usurping the word *evangelization*, making it more difficult for us to accomplish the primary mission of the RCIA—go and make disciples. First it was the evangelicals, who used the word to identify a portion of Christianity quite distinct from Catholicism. On the face of it, there’s nothing wrong with a group defining itself with the term *evangelization*. The difficulty for Catholics, however, has been our reluctance to speak and act as evangelists for fear of becoming identified with some of the more fundamentalist and flamboyant types of evangelicals.

Next it was businesses, especially in the tech industry. Guy Kawasaki, a former Apple employee originally responsible for marketing the Macintosh in 1984, initiated the idea of the evangelization of a product or business. His goal was to create passionate user-advocates (“product evangelists”) for the Macintosh and the Apple brand. His goal was the same as ours, just translated for business. We strive to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. He was bringing what he saw as the good news about the Apple brand to the world.

Catholic Evangelization

If we are going to be effective evangelizers, we have to understand what Catholics mean by *evangelization*.

The reason we exist as a church is to evangelize. In Matthew's gospel, the last thing Jesus said to his followers was: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (28:19).

Pope Paul VI wrote: "The task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. . . . She exists in order to evangelize" (On Evangelization in the Modern World, 14).

And Pope Francis said: "All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization. . . . Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization" (Joy of the Gospel, 120).

Sometimes I read churchy pronouncements like these, and I get the same feeling I get when I have to go to the dentist. I know I should. It's good for me. But it's going to be pretty uncomfortable, and I don't really want to.

Pope Francis asks us to think about evangelization a little more deeply. He reminds us that all of us, at some point, were lost. We were hurting. Maybe we were hopeless. And in the midst of our despair, Jesus reached out to us and saved us. Maybe Jesus came to us through a friend or a family member. Maybe in a moment of prayer or at Mass. Maybe in some "coincidence" that reminded us that God is always with us. In whatever way, Jesus rescued us.

Today, right now, there are millions of people who don't know that saving love. They are falling deeper and deeper into hopelessness and despair. And all of us who have felt the love of Jesus know that we don't have to suffer any longer. Pope Francis said the church is a field hospital on a battlefield and our number-one job is to heal the wounds (see Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," *America*).

What If?

If we think of evangelization as healing wounds, that sounds a lot more Catholic. We don't have to walk up to strangers and ask them if they are saved. We don't have to quote long passages from the Bible. We don't even have to know much theology. We

New evangelization

Where does “new evangelization” fit into the church’s mission to evangelize? Pope John Paul II promoted the need for a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization” of Catholics and other Christians who “have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church” (see *Mission of the Redeemer*, 33).

Pope Francis affirmed the need for a new evangelization, noting that it is carried out in three principal ways:

1. In the area of ordinary pastoral ministry, especially Sunday worship, by which the faithful are nourished and renewed
2. In the area of ministry to baptized members who have let their faith grow cold and who need a commitment to the Gospel
3. In the area of those who do not know Christ or who have always rejected him.

About this third area, Pope Francis says: “Lastly, we cannot forget that evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to *those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him* (*Joy of the Gospel*, 14).

The place of new evangelization—the restoration of the lapsed baptized to a life of discipleship—is at the service of primary evangelization—the announcement of Jesus Christ to those who have yet to hear the Good News.

just have to know the love of Jesus and be willing to love those who need love.

Pope Francis also said that, like the woman at the well who evangelized her entire town after one conversation with Jesus:

“Anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love” (Joy of the Gospel, 120).

Three Movements of Evangelization

As Catholics, we are not known for our evangelization skills. We tend to be quiet about our faith, careful not to offend or make others feel awkward. We absolutely love the meme, “Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words.” That notion seemingly lets us off the hook about talking about our faith. Can’t we just live by example and let that serve as our evangelization?

In part, yes, we can. Pope Paul VI said that our proclamation of the Good News is first of all a “wordless witness” by which the actions of our lives “stir up irresistible questions” in the hearts of others (see *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, 21).

What we are currently doing, however, is not working. Our wordless witness is not enough. We need to be able to explain why we do what we do—“what Peter called always having ‘your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have’” (1 Pet 3:15, qtd. in *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, 22). Pope Paul VI said:

The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed. (22)

The third movement of evangelization is when the message “is listened to, accepted, and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it” (23). It is at this third movement that most RCIA teams are formally engaged in evangelization. We usually meet seekers once they have already encountered Christ on some level, and they come to us with a desire to know more.

How to evangelize like a Catholic

Most of us are not going to start quoting Scripture and inviting strangers into a personal relationship with Jesus. However, there are some simple, gentle ways we can put words to our “wordless witness.” Here are a few ideas.

1. Change your perception of yourself. Instead of identifying yourself as an RCIA team member, think of yourself as someone who shares faith with others. For example, if asked, “What do you do in your parish?” reply: “Primarily, I share my faith, and I help others grow in faith.” Even if you can’t bring yourself to say that out loud, think it to yourself before you reply.
2. Pray every morning that the Holy Spirit will give you a chance to share your faith with someone.
3. Talk to strangers. Talk to people at the grocery store, the coffee shop, on the bus or subway, or at a restaurant. Set a goal for three, four, or five conversations a day with strangers.
4. Talk about everyday life. You don’t have to begin the conversation with a deep religious question. Use Jesus as your model. He didn’t walk up to the woman at the well and begin by asking her about her faith life and her many husbands. He asked for a drink of water. Just ask for a drink. Or comment on the weather. Or what you had for dessert. Or the latest victory of your home team. Just start things off, and see where the conversation goes.
5. If it feels right, ask a deeper question. Don’t force the conversation to a deeper level, but don’t shy away from it either. What’s the worst that could happen? Here are a few example questions, but come up with your own that fit your personality and interests:
 - How are you growing personally?

- What single thing would you like to make absolutely certain you do (if at all possible) during your lifetime?
 - How do you think a person can keep from becoming a workaholic?
 - What do you consider to be two major turning points in your life?
 - What is something you consider to be a great personal success? Why was it so significant?
 - What is the key to maintaining balance in your life?
6. After you ask a question, just listen. Try to hear the answer beneath the answer. Pope Francis says our job is to bind up the wounds. Listen for the wound. You don't have to do anything about the wound right now. Just deeply listening is a healing action.
7. *If it feels right*, offer to pray either with or for the person about what they shared with you. Again, don't force prayer upon people who aren't open to it, but don't automatically assume they aren't interested in your prayer, even if they said they aren't religious. Let the Holy Spirit guide you.
8. *If it feels right*, invite the person to join you at church this coming Sunday.

When Does Evangelization “Start”?

What this means for RCIA teams is that we are *always* in the first period of the RCIA—the period of evangelization and precatechumenate. It doesn't start in September. It doesn't end after one session or ten sessions. And it's not about teaching theology. Evangelization is about healing the wounds.

When an inquirer comes to us and asks “How do I become Catholic?” there is almost always something deeper under that

question. If we don't take the time to listen to the deeper questions, we will miss the opportunity to heal the wounds.

If we are going to be effective at this, we have to rethink how we encounter each inquirer. When someone walks into the church office, calls, emails, or speaks to you after Mass about becoming Catholic, what would be the most loving way to encounter that person who may be suffering?

If we were medics in a field hospital, our first response would be to drop everything and attend to the wounded. Then we would start binding up the wound right there on the battlefield. We wouldn't wait. We'd start right away.

So ask yourself, in your situation, in your parish, how can all of your "medics"—your RCIA team, your pastor, your parish secretary, and everyone in your parish—develop a more immediate loving response to inquirers?

The next thing to do is a fuller diagnosis. You want to find out what the deeper wounds are.

And, finally, you want to treat the wounds with a healing therapy designed specifically for each person.

In order to diagnose and treat the deeper wounds, we are going to create a faith formation plan using an adapted contract learning process. To develop a specific faith formation plan for each inquirer, we will focus on five general questions.

These five questions are much more than just questions, however. They are invitations to tell stories. And in the stories, we will learn how the Holy Spirit has already been working in the heart of each inquirer. We will learn the unique call each inquirer has heard. And we will discern the best path forward to help each inquirer encounter the saving love of Jesus.

At the end of this five-question process, we will have a clear faith formation plan, designed specifically for each inquirer. We will have ongoing measures to determine the progress each inquirer is making toward his or her healing process. And we will have observable criteria that will be clear to both the inquirer and the RCIA team about the readiness of each inquirer to take on the next steps in becoming disciples.

Before we get to the questions, let's take a deeper look at how the contract learning process can be adapted for faith formation and conversion.