

Eliot Kapitan

Unfolding the Mystery of Christ

Sunday by Sunday Formation of Catechumens



Faith Sharing/Study Guide



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Free Faith Sharing / Study Guide
for

Unfolding the Mystery of Christ

*Sunday by Sunday Formation of
Catechumens*

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How to use this guide.

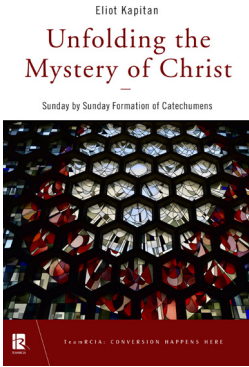
Even if you are not regularly involved with the Christian Initiation of Adults, the book, *Unfolding the Mystery of Christ*, especially **Part I. Forming the Faithful in Christ**, can be helpful for all Christians. It lays out the ways the church regularly forms all the Christian faithful by means of:

- the Paschal Mystery of the dead and risen Christ,
- Sunday and Sunday Mass,
- the liturgical year of feast days and seasons,
- continuing catechetical formation that happens in many ways,
- and church life on and off the parish property.

The book is filled with stories to help build the connection to life in faith and belief. The hope is that they call up your stories and experiences. The questions in this guide may help you think in practical ways about your own life.

You can do this alone. You can do this with a small group. It may be a faith sharing group to which you already belong (if the group wants to do this together) or a new group just for this purpose. Parish staffs or baptismal catechumenate teams may use it to enrich the ministry they do by engaging in conversation about key aspects of Christian formation.

Use the questions when they are helpful. Change them as needed. Make up your own.



Eliot Kapitan.
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Introduction

Formation Begins with Sunday

Page 1 – The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the Universal Norms for the Liturgical Year the General Roman Calendar state: “. . . throughout the course of the year the Church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ. . . .”

1. How have I seen or experienced the unfolding of the life and mystery of Christ in my own life?
2. How have I seen it in the life of someone I know?

Pages 4–5 – “Although information about Christ and Christianity is important, formation as a Christian and conformation to him are central.”

1. How do I, how can I balance information (knowledge) about Christ with formation in and conformation to (being like) Christ?

Part I

Forming the Faithful in Christ

Chapter 1

From the Very Beginning

Page 11 – My own story. Think of how long it took me to learn a skill, an art, or a trade (for example, cooking, woodworking, tennis, fishing, gardening, my work and profession).

1. Who helped me be good and get better at this?
2. What joy do I get from a job well done? From learning a new or better way to do something?

Pages 12–13 – The Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47 describes four key elements of early Church living. They are still important for us today.

1. How do I attend to the “teaching of the apostles” and to the church today about the teachings of Christ?
2. How do I engage in the common life of Christians with other parishioners?
3. Why do I go to Mass each Sunday and find ways to pray more simply on other days?
4. Why is it important to share some of what I have (time and resources) with those in need?

Page 15 – Be Holy at Home. “Look for times and ways in daily life to be conscious that Christ is present and living among us.”

1. How have I in the past and how do I now strive to be holy at home?

Page 16 – Be Part of Small Groups. “Faith life is enriched there in ways that cannot happen in the large group setting.”

1. What did I learn in the small groups of which I was a part?
2. What did I value?
3. Why was it helpful?
4. What about any current small group?

Pages 17–18 – Be Charitable and Just. “We cannot be Christian without doing for others in ways suited to our abilities and responsibilities.”

1. How have others been merciful to me?
2. How have I been more merciful, more charitable and just in living the Christian life?

Chapter 2

Liturgy and Paschal Mystery

Page 22 – “Liturgy helps us do all this [CSL, no.1]. It is in this communal public prayer that the faithful in Christ celebrate whose we are and how we come to know what we believe and how we are to behave. Liturgy is, in fact, the first school of the Church.”

1. Describe an experience of liturgy when I learned or experienced something important about being Christian.
2. Describe an experience when what I believe was strengthened.

Pages 24–25 – “Why is the Paschal Mystery so important, so central to faith? How does the action of the dead and risen Christ raise us up in big and small ways?”

1. Describe an example, big or little, of living the Paschal Mystery in the life of someone I know.
2. Describe one in my own life.

Page 26 – The bishops at the end of the Second Vatican Council wrote “Christians can yearn for nothing more ardently than to serve the people of this age successfully with increasing generosity.”

1. How have I served someone with increasing generosity?
2. What can I do next?

Chapter 3

Sunday and the Liturgical Year

Pages 29–33 – The Church’s Unfolding Story on Sunday and the hard work of liturgy.

1. How have I, how do I prepare to do some special ministry at liturgy: greet, usher, read, distribute Communion, sing, play an instrument, decorate, preach, or lead prayer?
2. How have I, how do I now prepare to be a member of the assembly?

Pages 33ff. – The Church’s Unfolding Story Throughout the Liturgical Year.

1. What liturgical season do I like the best?
2. Why?

Pages 42–43 – The Importance of Attending to the Whole Liturgical Year.

1. Since the primary “textbooks” for Christian formation are the *Lectionary for Mass* (book of selected Bible readings), the *Roman Missal* (book of communal prayers), and the liturgical songs, how do I, how can I come to Mass more prepared to hear, pray, and sing?

Chapter 4

The Ongoing Catechetical Reform

Pages 56–57 – *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States.*

1. How has my experience of the Christian life, for good or for ill, shaped who I am and what I believe?
2. Since parish life is the basic curriculum of living the Christian life, how is my parish doing?
3. How am I helping my parish do this task?
4. How am I participating in it?

Page 58 – The US bishops wrote about one of the forms of catechesis, “*Post-baptismal or permanent or continuing catechesis* for all Christians to constantly nourish and deepen their faith throughout their lives.”

1. How have I learned and enriched my faith life?
2. How am I doing it now?
3. What might I do in the future?

Chapter 5

The Baptismal Catechumenate

Pages 70–71 – Praying, Believing, and Living the Christian Life. “Life is filled with learning and formation, and relearning and reformation.”

1. What am I doing this year to learn more about the Christian life I do live?

Part II

Steps for Preparing a Week during the Period of the Catechumenate

The second part of the book focuses on specific ways the parish provides suitable training and formation for catechumens and candidates that is consistent with the vision and norms for Christian initiation. The following segments may also be helpful for broader use.

Step 1. Praying with the Liturgical Texts

Pages 99ff. – Suggestions and resources for anyone to prepare for Sunday Mass.

Step 2. Consulting with Some Liturgical Ministers

Page 111 – *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, a guide for preaching, offers a 65-minute agenda that may be helpful for any Bible study or faith sharing group to prepare for Sunday. It is also suitable for individual use.

Step 7. Designing the Week

Pages 129ff. – Thomas Groome developed the Shared Christian Praxis Method that makes use of sound catechetical and experiential learning principles. This segment outlines the five-step method that is suitable not only for the baptismal catechumenate but also for a host of other Christian learning events.