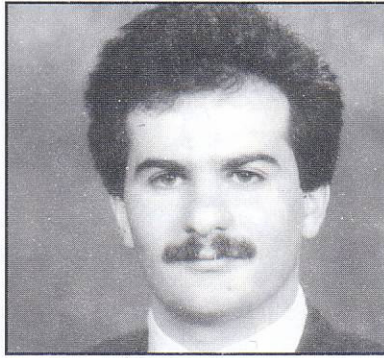




Living Witnesses
THE ADULT CATECHUMENATE

A Program
for Preparing Adults for Baptism
and Ministry in the Church

The Division for Parish Life
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
302 - 393 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 3H6
Phone: (204) 786-6707, Toll Free 1-800-665-7361



This is Magid. He has recently come to Canada from Iran. He has been encouraged by some of his new friends to come to church. The experiences of religion in Iran were trouble-some for Magid. He has begun to attend church on a regular basis and now is seeking for baptism. He is only beginning to know about the Christian faith, and has many questions.

Magid will be assigned a sponsor and will meet with other people each Sunday following worship. He is inquiring about the faith. When he is ready, he will be welcomed into the congregation as a candidate for baptism. He, with his sponsor, will continue to meet with the catechumenal team in the parish. The Sunday lectionary will be the centre of much of their discussion. He will learn to pray.

If Magid continues to feel called by God for baptism, after a period of time a date will be set. Then he will receive a book called *Praying the Catechism*, and a more intense time of preparation will begin.

The congregation will be called to pray for him and to assist him throughout this journey.



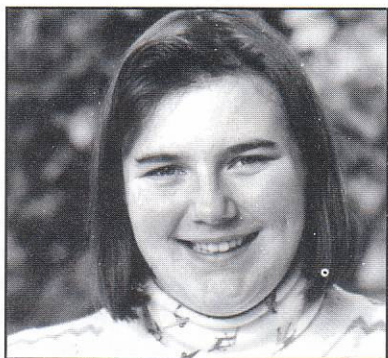
This is Shelley. She has been a member of the church all of her life. She went through a stormy period in her life, and with her child, Jillian, returned to the church. Shelley began to feel the call of God to look more carefully at what she believes. What she learned in Sunday School and confirmation now seems distant.

Shelley has joined the catechumenate training team to prepare for a reaffirmation of her baptism. She will be welcomed in the church as a candidate. She will be prayed for by the parish. She will be asked to set a time for this reaffirmation. She thinks that it will be next Easter.

She also has a sponsor to walk with her, someone she has learned to trust. In the group meetings, and when they have other times to be together, they learn much from each other. The person who is called to be a sponsor finds that he is also being touched by the process in ways that were not imaginable when he began...

He has decided that he, too, will use the Easter season for affirming his baptism.

Shelley will stay with the group for fifty days after the affirmation. She will be asked to consider the ways in which God is calling her to mission in the world. She plans to serve as a sponsor of others in the years ahead.

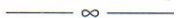


This is Stacey. She is 17 and finishing her grade twelve in high school. Stacey came to church to play the flute in the liturgy. She liked the parish so much that she decided to stay and become a member.

Stacey has not attended church much. Her grandmother was the main influence in her life; she often would talk to Stacey about God. Stacey prays twice a day and reads a portion out of the Bible as a regular practice.

She has had a rich devotional life but has never found a community in which she felt comfortable. Her faith will be strengthened by this close association with other people in the catechumenal process.

Stacey's sponsor is an advisor to the youth group, and so Stacey will be part of that community in the church as well as meeting on Sundays after church with other catechumens. She, also, will be reaffirming her baptism.



These things are happening in a parish in our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Similar things could be happening in yours.

WHAT IS THE ADULT CATECHUMENATE?



Catechumenate is a traditional name used for those adults preparing for baptism - people called by God to be part of the church. They are helped and encouraged to understand the faith that comes as a gift of God.

Through this process they are encouraged to see how the call to follow Christ will touch every part of their lives.

The catechumenal process serves not only new Christians, but also those returning to the faith. Parents who bring their children for baptism can also be helped to renew their own faith and commitment through such a process. Some parishes are using this process for their confirmation ministry.

Each candidate takes as much time as is required. The candidates begin to make the linkage between their lives and the lives of the people of faith in the scriptures. Because they are accompanied by a sponsor, they also hear the story of faith and life from another person, as well as from other candidates.

This catechumenal process involves the whole congregation. Each of the candidates is accompanied into the church by a sponsor and welcomed by the whole parish. The parish is called to support the candidates by their prayers and their witness in word and action.

The catechumenal process is, quite simply, making disciples the way in which Jesus did: attracting followers, calling them to special relationships, sharing with them the mission and ministry to which God has called them, and leading them into a new life of service to God.

The Division for Parish Life, through a grant from Forward in Mission, has initiated an adult catechumenate program in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Synodical training teams are in place in January of 1994. These teams are available to help your congregation get started. You will hear announcements about such training sessions from your synod in the near future.

Materials are prepared for use in the project*. A booklet entitled *Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate: Preparing Adults for Baptism and Ministry in the Church* provides a rationale for, and describes, the process. A second booklet, *Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate: Congregational Prayers to Accompany the Catechumenal Process*, has suggested prayers for congregations as they follow the process with the candidates.

A *Manual for the Catechumenal Process* has been prepared for the team of people in your congregation who will help in this process. The workbook describes the roles of pastors, catechists, coordinators and sponsors.

Praying the Catechism can be given to each candidate when the time of baptism or baptismal affirmation is set. This booklet is a devotional book based upon Martin Luther's Small Catechism. There are meditation guides for each day, as well as prayer suggestions. It is divided into two parts: the first 40 days are for use prior to baptism; the second 50 days follow the baptism.

You and your congregation are invited to join other parishes throughout Canada in making this process a part of your congregational life. The Division for Parish Life believes that the whole parish will be enriched through its use, and invites participating congregations to write and share their experiences.

**These books are available at Augsburg Fortress*