

Dismissal is Mystagogical

The focus is on 4 key areas:

- Why is the dismissal important?
- What is the dismissal?
- How to do the dismissal
- How will quality dismissals change us

Why is it important?

- It catechizes about the Body of Christ and each person's role in the Body
- It becomes a teachable moment for the assembly
- It reinforces and honours the dignity of baptism

What is dismissal?

It is a formal sending of catechumens

After the dismissal formulary, the group of catechumens goes out but does not disperse. With the help of some of the faithful, the catechumens **remain together to share their joy and spiritual experiences.** (RCIA #67)

- It is not a time for catechesis
- It is not a time to study scripture
- There is no dismissal catechesis and no dismissal catechist
- It is an extension of the liturgy of the Word

It is only for the catechumens

- It is not for the baptized candidates
- It is not for other unbaptized members of the assembly

It is not optional

- See RCIA 67c, 75.3, 81 and 83

It is done whenever catechumens are at Mass

- Ordinarily they are dismissed and "remain together to share their joy and spiritual experiences" (RCIA 67)
- However, the dismissal by itself is catechetically formative; if a gathering is not possible (e.g., at weekday Mass), consider dismissing anyway
- Takes place every Sunday; not limited to a season or block of Sundays

What it is not

Some things we often say, but the RCIA doesn't say. Catechumens are not necessarily dismissed to:

- break open the Sunday readings
- do lectionary-based catechesis
- do dismissal catechesis
- be nourished by God's Word
- form community with one another as a small group

Some of those things could happen after the dismissal, but the rite is not asking for them. All the rite asks for is that the catechumens be dismissed and that they do not disperse so that they can share their joy and spiritual experiences.

How to do dismissal

The dismissal itself is a liturgical action

- After the homily, presider calls the catechumens to gather at the front of the church
- Use one of the forms at RCIA 67 A or B (or similar words)
- Doesn't have to be stiff, but shouldn't be chatty; it's a big deal
- Rite allows for improvisation:
- "The celebrant recalls briefly "the great joy...and urges them to live according to the Word of God" (RCIA 67a)
- Note this rubric is for the Rite of Acceptance; adapt rubric to be less solemn on other Sunday dismissals
- Use resources like books by Jerry Galipeau or Mary Milne for simple but effective dismissal texts

The gathering is mystagogical

- The gathering is a sharing of joy and spiritual experiences from today's liturgy of the Word
- It is always mystagogical
 - What did you see?
 - What did you hear?
 - What difference does it make in your life?
- This often takes the form of breaking open the word; but that isn't a requirement

The sharing of joy is a direct response to the Word just celebrated

- For the unbaptized, the sharing of joy is a deeper listening, a more profound hearing of the Word in a way that begins to form them into authentic disciples
- All of us, catechumens and baptized disciples, are converted by God's Word
- The way we offer praise and thanksgiving is determined by our role in the Body of Christ (by our "order")

What will change by doing quality dismissals?

For catechumens

The catechumens "learn" from their dismissal that a joyful response to God's saving word is required of us.

- It gives them ideas and methods to build the witness of Christ in their lives.
- It directs the heart towards God.
- Fosters participation in the liturgy.
- Nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.
- It prepares them gradually to enter the worship assembly of the entire community.

For the baptised

What Catholics learn is that our sharing in the sacrifice of the Mass is both a privilege and a responsibility of baptism.

The challenge for those of us on RCIA teams is to influence our parish worship in such a way that that liturgy—especially the dismissal—teaches that by the way it is celebrated.

A simple 30 minute dismissal session

The basics of leading a dismissal session are not too difficult. There are three things to pay attention to:

1. The room
2. The flow of the faith sharing
3. The “so what” – What difference is this going to make in their life.

The aim

The aim of the dismissal session is to enable it to be a mystagogical experience for the catechumens. What is the experience they are having with the risen Christ in today’s liturgy of the word, and how can they make that be a difference in their life.

The Room

When you leave, you need to go somewhere. Make sure the room is prepared ahead of time. The faith sharing after dismissal is not catechesis. It is an extension of the liturgy. So, if possible, you want to go to a room other than the usual catechetical space. If that’s not possible, try to make the catechetical space look more like a prayer room and less like a classroom. You might want to have a candle, a cross, some flowers, and possibly a stand for the lectionary.

Have the chairs arranged in a circle, and place a Bible on each chair (or a copy of today’s readings).

The flow

Opening (1 minute)

Try to maintain an attitude of prayer as you gather. There will be time for socializing later. A simple way to keep the prayerful sense of the liturgy is to recite the refrain of the responsorial psalm from Mass and have the catechumens recite it back. If you are at all musical, by all means, sing it.

Next have everyone sit in the circle. Begin the faith sharing with a statement like this:

Today we heard readings from _____, _____, and _____. Tell us something you remember from the Gospel reading.

What do you see? (8 minutes)

Encourage everyone to share something they remembered. After everyone has spoken, ask them to go deeper into the reading. Have them open their Bible’s to the passage. Ask them each to name something they see in the reading. Keep going deeper, and keep focused on what they see. Paint a word picture to encounter all the characters in the reading.

- Characters, scenery, actions, crowds.

Ask them to describe in as much details as they can in their word picture.

What do you hear? (8 minutes)

Now go around again, asking everyone what they hear in the reading. What are the sounds in the word picture.

- Background sounds, quietness, wind, people talking.

Pay particular attention to questions they hear spoken. Ask them if they heard anything new or surprising. Start to go deeper – Do you hear anything in this passage that the Lord is saying to you?

So What? What difference is this going to make in your life. (8 minutes)

Ask everyone to reflect in silence for a minute on why they think these readings matter. After some silence, ask the group questions about what the readings mean. If your parish uses a question of the week, use that to draw out the so-what moments.

Or ask how, having seen and heard what they have in this scripture passage, their lives might be different in the coming week.

Ask if they have discovered anything new about themselves, about God, or about the church.

Ask what questions does this passage raise for them that they are struggling with.

The close (5 minutes)

Summarize what you heard from the group and close with a prayer of your own or another traditional prayer.