

WALKING WITH ANOTHER TO CHRIST: THE MISSION OF GODPARENTS AND SPONSORS IN THE OCIA

OCIA Monthly Meetings

July 23, 2026

Dawn Kopitcke Ponnet, Dmin



GOAL

To clarify the mission and responsibilities of godparents and sponsors within the OCIA process, ensuring their proper selection, formation, and active participation as companions in faith.



OPENING PRAYER

Loving and compassionate God,
As we gather today to learn, to
share, and to grow as ministers, we
remember the friends who carried
the paralyzed man to Jesus. They
did not let obstacles, crowds, or
inconvenience stop them. Their faith
moved them to bring someone in
need into your healing presence.

**Lord, make us like those faithful
friends.**

OPENING PRAYER

Help us to recognize that everyone who comes to OCIA is carrying something – questions, doubts, hurts, hopes, fears, and dreams. Give us hearts that notice those burdens, hands that are willing to help carry them, and faith that always leads others toward you.

Lord, help us to always see --as you see.

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, you first healed the man's spirit before healing his body. Teach us to remember that every person longs most deeply to know they are loved, forgiven, and welcomed by God. May our words, our listening, and our hospitality reflect your mercy.

**Lord, gives us the courage to extend
your welcome**

OPENING PRAYER

As we begin this training, open our minds to learn, our hearts to grow, and our spirits to work together as one team. Help us to encourage one another, support one another, and trust that you are at work in every encounter we have with those who are seeking you.

Lord, nurture in us willingness to serve and grow.

OPENING PRAYER

May our ministry always remove barriers rather than create them, opening pathways that lead people into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

We ask this in your holy name, which is Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen.

Walking with Another to Christ: The Mission of Godparents and Sponsors in the OCIA

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AGENDA



Why the Church Has Sponsors



Understanding the OCIA Process



Sponsor or Godparent?



The Heart of Sponsorship



Practical Responsibilities



Common Challenges

WHY THE CHURCH HAS SPONSORS



The Catholic Church has sponsors because the Christian life was never meant to be lived alone. Sponsors serve as a bridge between the individual and the Church community, accompanying them as they grow as disciples of Christ. A sponsor is more than a ceremonial witness; a sponsor is a companion in faith who helps another person grow as a disciple of Christ.

BIBLICAL PRAXIS OF MENTORSHIP



- **Moses and Josuah**

BIBLICAL PRAXIS OF MENTORSHIP



- **Elijah and Elisha**

BIBLICAL PRAXIS OF MENTORSHIP



- Naomi and Ruth

BIBLICAL PRAXIS OF MENTORSHIP



- **Barnabas and Paul**

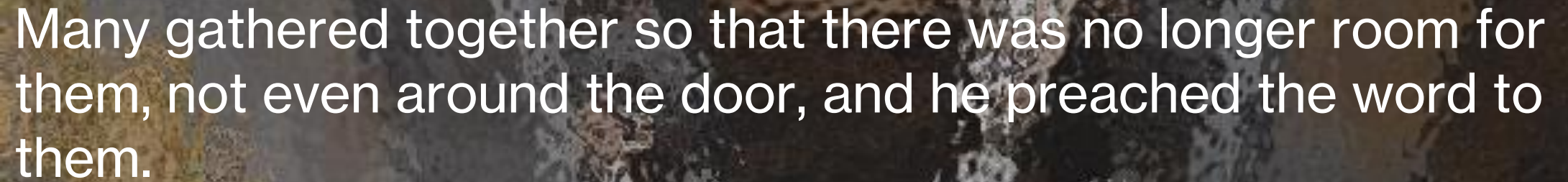
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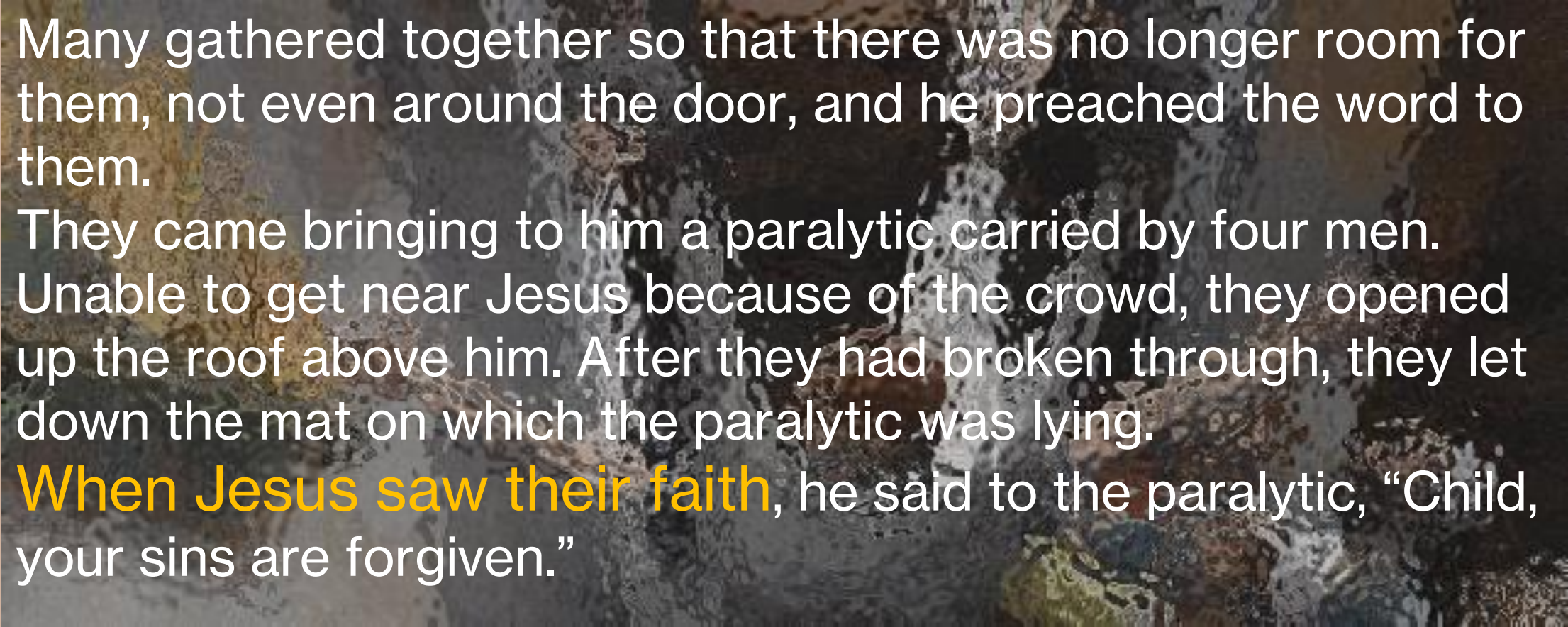
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Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them.

They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven."

MARK 2:2-5



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MARK 2:2-5



YOUR FAITH IS BEAUTIFUL (THE CHOSEN)

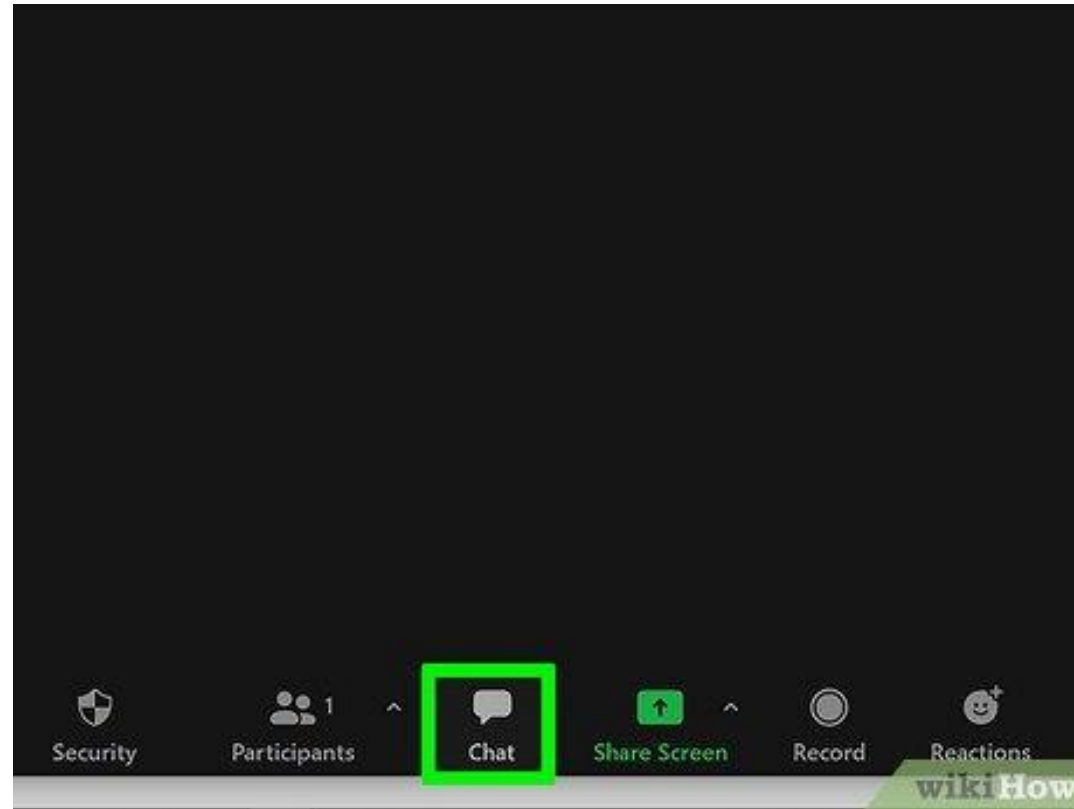
When Jesus saw their faith (Mark 2:5b)

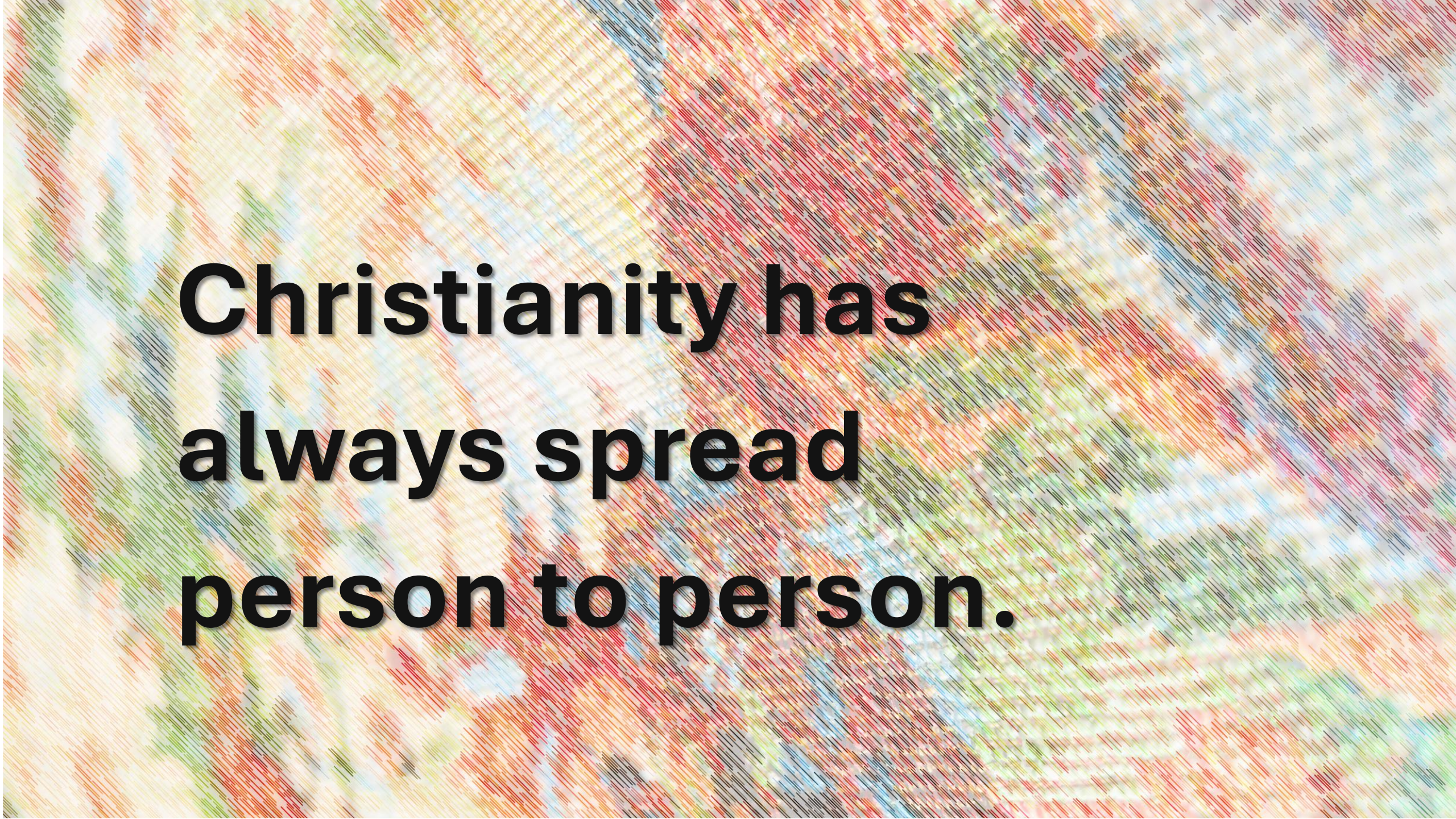


EASTER VIGIL
2025



IN THE CHAT GIVE QUALITIES OF GREAT SPONSORS



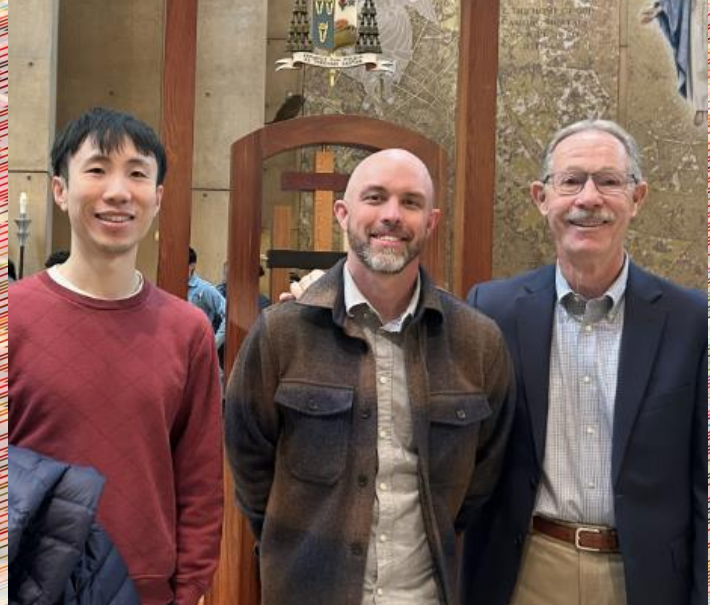


**Christianity has
always spread
person to person.**

UNDERSTANDING THE OCIA PROCESS



OCIA is often described as *messy* – and it is. It brings together families, children, teens, adults, sponsors, godparents, catechists, and the parish team, each with different stories, questions, gifts, and needs. At times, the process can feel complicated and unpredictable. Yet it is precisely this beautiful complexity that reflects the life of the Church. Like the threads of a tapestry, each person contributes a unique color and texture. Woven together by the Holy Spirit, these diverse lives create something far more beautiful than any one thread could accomplish alone – a living tapestry of faith, belonging, and discipleship.



Catechumens Elect

Mystagogia

Godparents are life long
Spiritual guides

Purification and Enlightenment

Godparents
Rite of Election, at sessions
Scrutinies, Easter Vigil

Catechumenate

At sessions, encouraging
dismissal, introducing to friends
and parishioners, doing service

Precatechumenate

Sponsors in the wings
Praying

THE INITIATION PROCESS (OCIA)

MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

Devoted to post-baptismal catechesis, this period is a sacred time of deepening the Christian life through ongoing formation, spiritual growth, and a fuller participation in the faith and unity of the Christian community.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Reception into Full Communion

ENLIGHTENMENT

RITE OF ELECTION

Calling to Continuing Conversion

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Coinciding with the season of Lent, this period emphasizes interior reflection more than formal instruction. It is a sacred time meant to enlighten the minds and hearts of participants, leading them into a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior and a more profound conversion of heart.

Minor Rites in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Penitential Rite (Candidates)
- Scrutinies (Catechumens)
- Presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer
- Preparation Rites

CATECHUMENATE

CATECHUMENATE

This is an extended period of pastoral formation and accompaniment, designed to initiate participants into the Christian life. It offers a comprehensive catechesis in the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral living, guiding them toward a mature and integrated understanding of the faith. At this stage, candidates are also paired with a mentor or sponsor who accompanies them in their journey of faith and integration into the community.

Minor Rites in the Period of the Catechumenate

- Celebrations of the Word of God (weekly dismissal)
- Minor Exorcisms (Catechumens)
- Anointings (Catechumens)
- Blessings

PRECATECHUMENATE

This is a period of inquiry and evangelization, a time marked by the awakening of faith and the first steps toward conversion and discipleship.

RITE OF ENTRANCE INTO THE CATECHUMENATE

Rite of Welcoming the Candidate

START

PRECATECHUMENATE

CATECHUMENS

CANDIDATES



Candidates

Mystagogia

Sponsors are life long
Spiritual guides

Purification and Enlightenment

Sponsors

Rite of Continuing Conversion, at
sessions Penitential Rite, Easter Vigil

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At sessions, introducing to friends
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Rite of Welcoming the Candidate

START

PRECATECHUMENATE

CATECHUMENS

CANDIDATES



At which stage of the process do you think sponsors/godparents are needed most?

George VI

Former King of the United Kingdom



George VI was King of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth from 11 December 1936 until his death in 1952. He was also the last Emperor of India from 1936 until the British Raj was dissolved in August 1947, and the first Head of the Commonwealth following the London Declaration of 1949.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)



THE
**KING'S
SPEECH**

THE SHOOTING SCRIPT



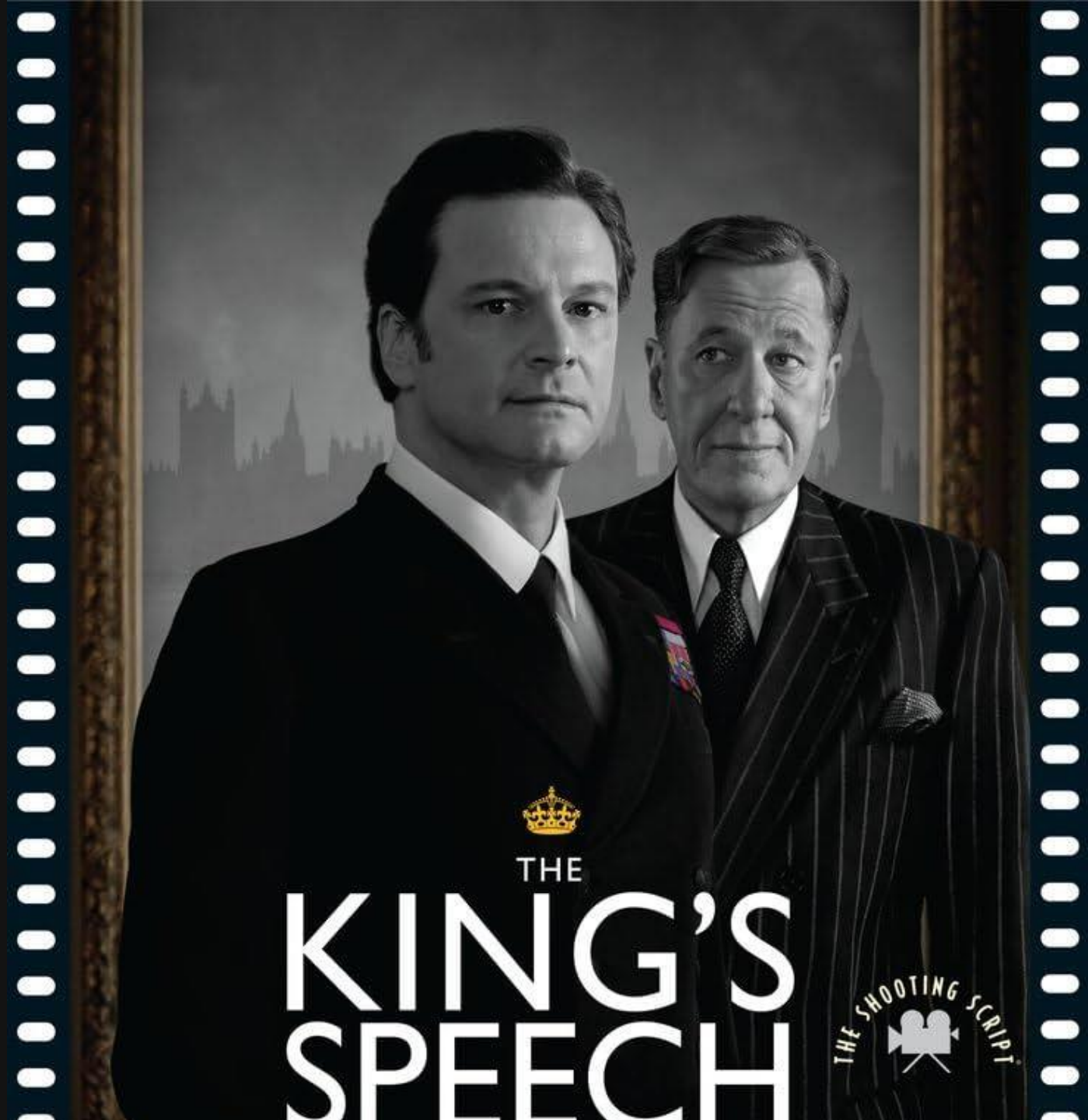

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgJlse93dr8>

Shout out –

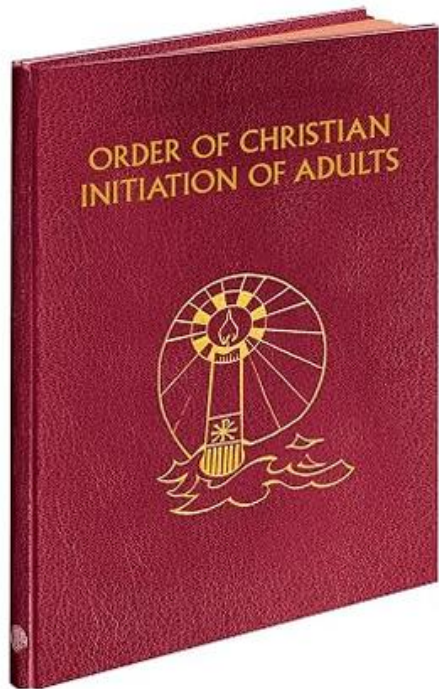
What did you
see that
informs us
about being
a sponsor?



SPONSOR
OR
GODPARENT?



Sponsor

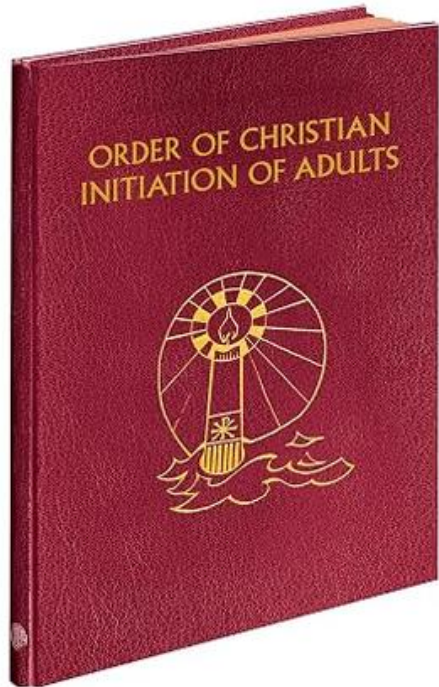


- A person who applies to be received among the catechumens should be accompanied by a sponsor, that is, by a man or woman who knows and has helped him (her), and is a witness to the individual's character, faith, and intention. It may happen that this sponsor will fulfill the office of godparent during the times of purification and enlightenment and of Mystagogy, but someone else may replace the sponsor for this task.
- OCIA 10



A gift
from the
parish

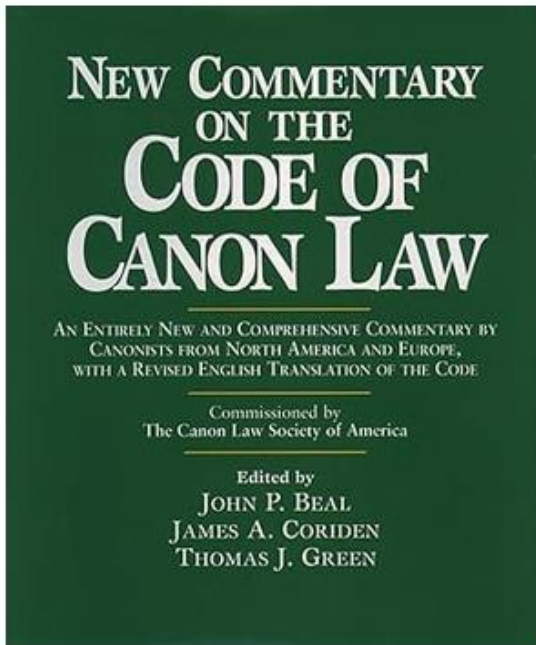
Godparent



- A godparent, however, chosen by the catechumen for his or her example, gifts and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community and approved by a Priest, accompanies the catechumen on the day of Election, at the celebration of the Sacraments, and during the Period of Mystagogy. The godparent's task is to show the catechumen in a friendly way how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to help at times of doubt or anxiety, to bear witness to and watch over the catechumen's growth in baptismal life. Chosen before the "Election," the godparent exercises his or her office from the day of Election, testifying for the catechumen in the presence of the community. The godparent's task remains important when the neophyte, having received the Sacraments, needs help to remain faithful to the promises of Baptism.
- OCIA 11



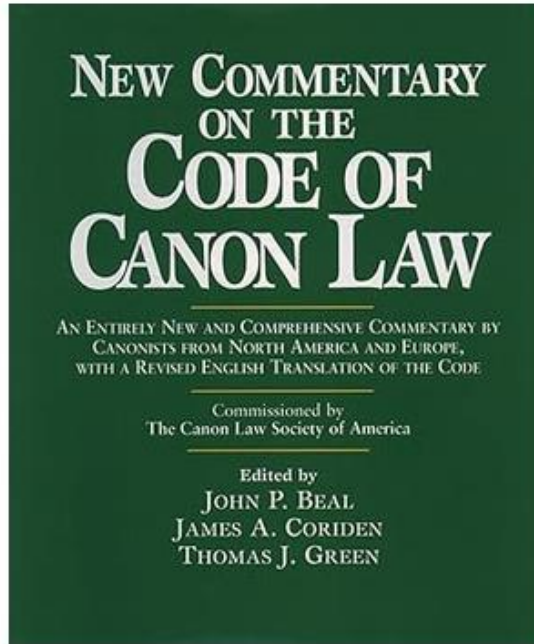
Sponsors (and Godparents)



Responsibility of Sponsors

- Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.
- Code of Canon Law 872

Prerequisites for Sponsors (summary)



- **Be at least 16 years old,**
- **Be a fully initiated Catholic**
- **Be living a life of faith**
- **Not be under any canonical penalty**
- **Not be the father or mother**
- Code of Canon Law 874

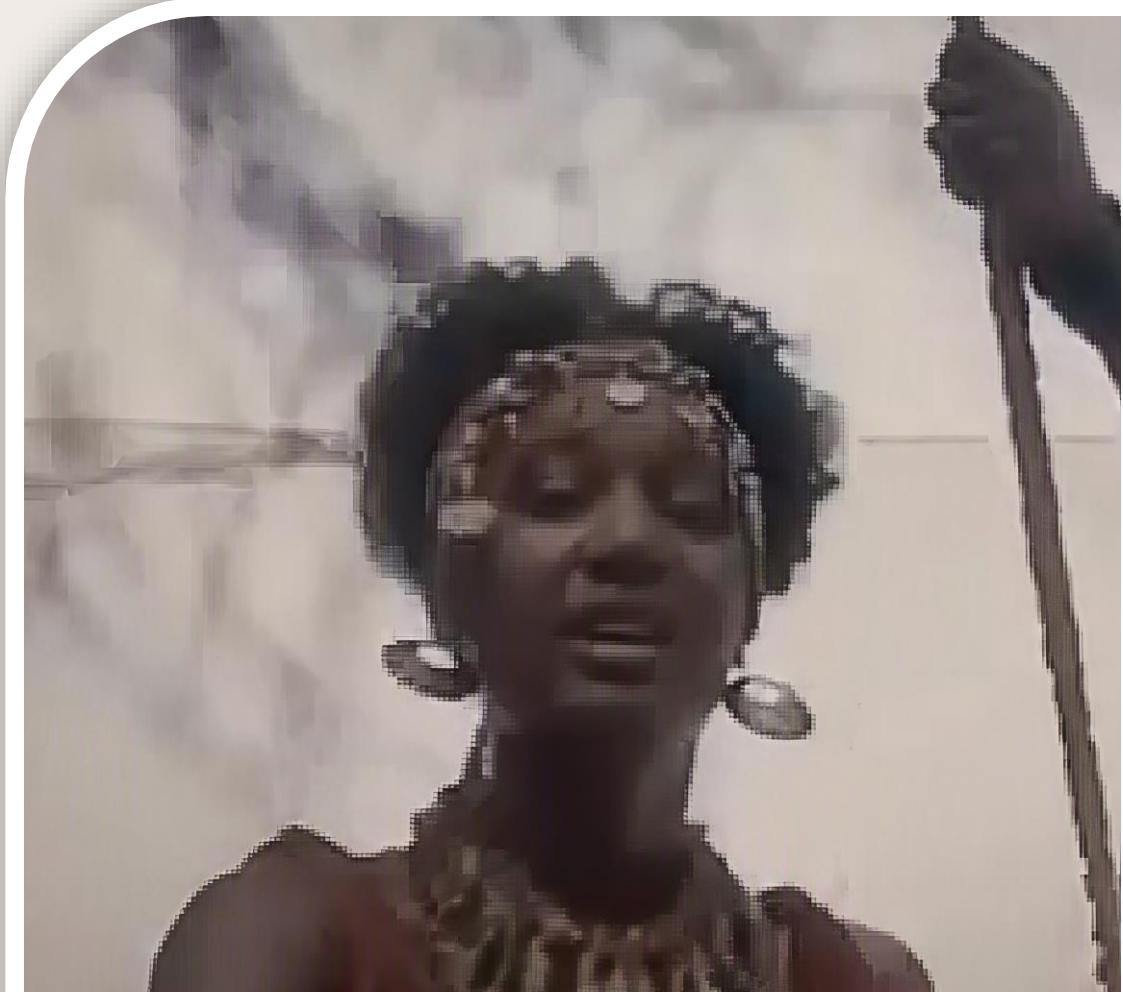
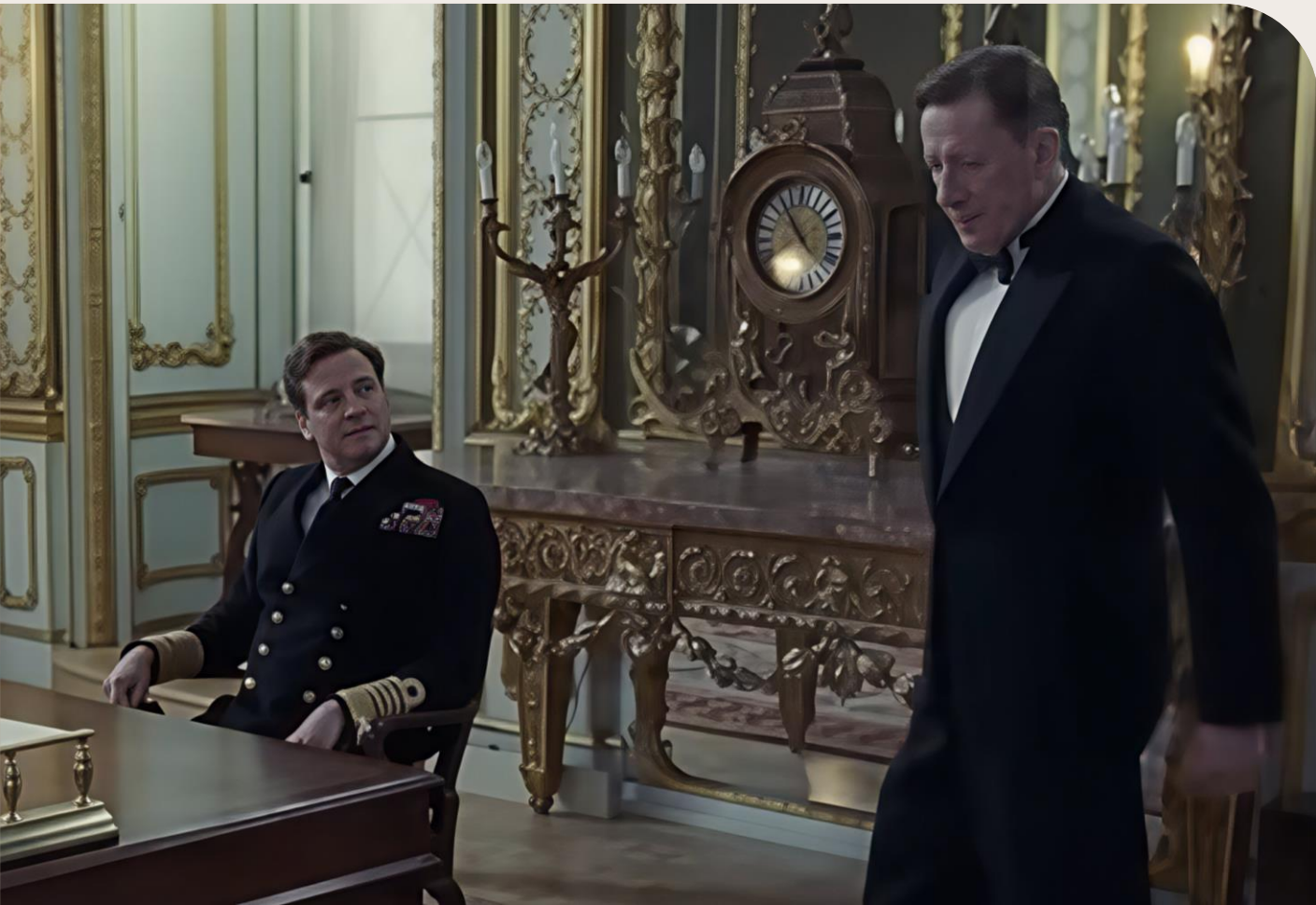
1. How do you choose or assign sponsors and godparents?
2. Do you allow catechumens and candidates to choose their own sponsor or godparent?
3. If so, what guidance do you provide? Does the same person accompany them throughout the entire OCIA process, or do you change companions at the Rite of Sending and/or the Rite of Election?
4. What qualities do you look for in a sponsor or godparent?
5. How do you prepare or form sponsors and godparents for their role?

THE HEART OF SPONSORSHIP

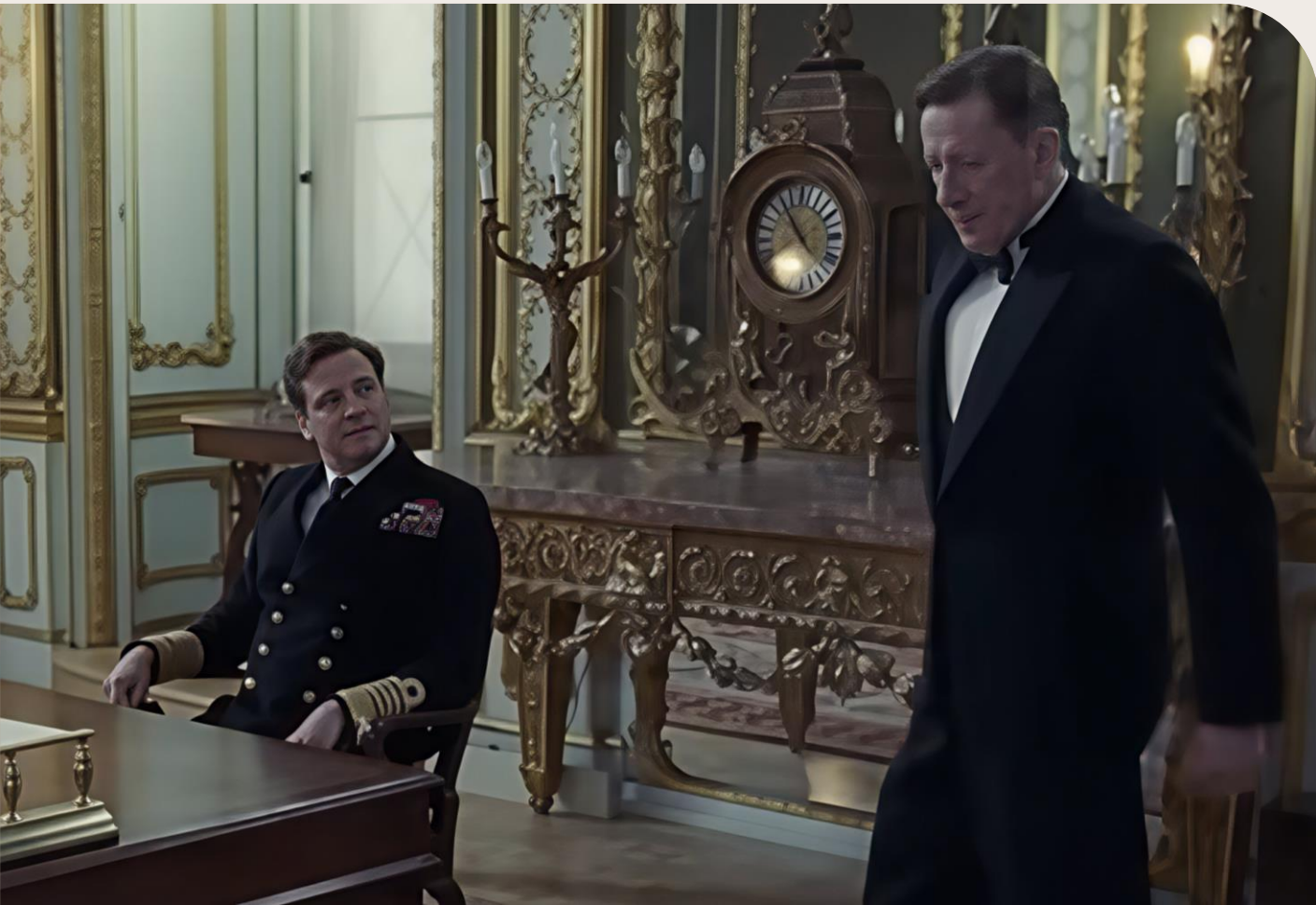


At the heart of OCIA sponsorship is accompaniment. A sponsor is more than a mentor or teacher – they are a companion in faith who walks alongside the catechumen or candidate, offering friendship, encouragement, prayer, and a living example of Christian discipleship. By sharing their own journey of faith and participating in the life of the Church, sponsors help those they accompany recognize God's presence and respond more fully to Christ's call.

REMEMBER OUR HEROES?

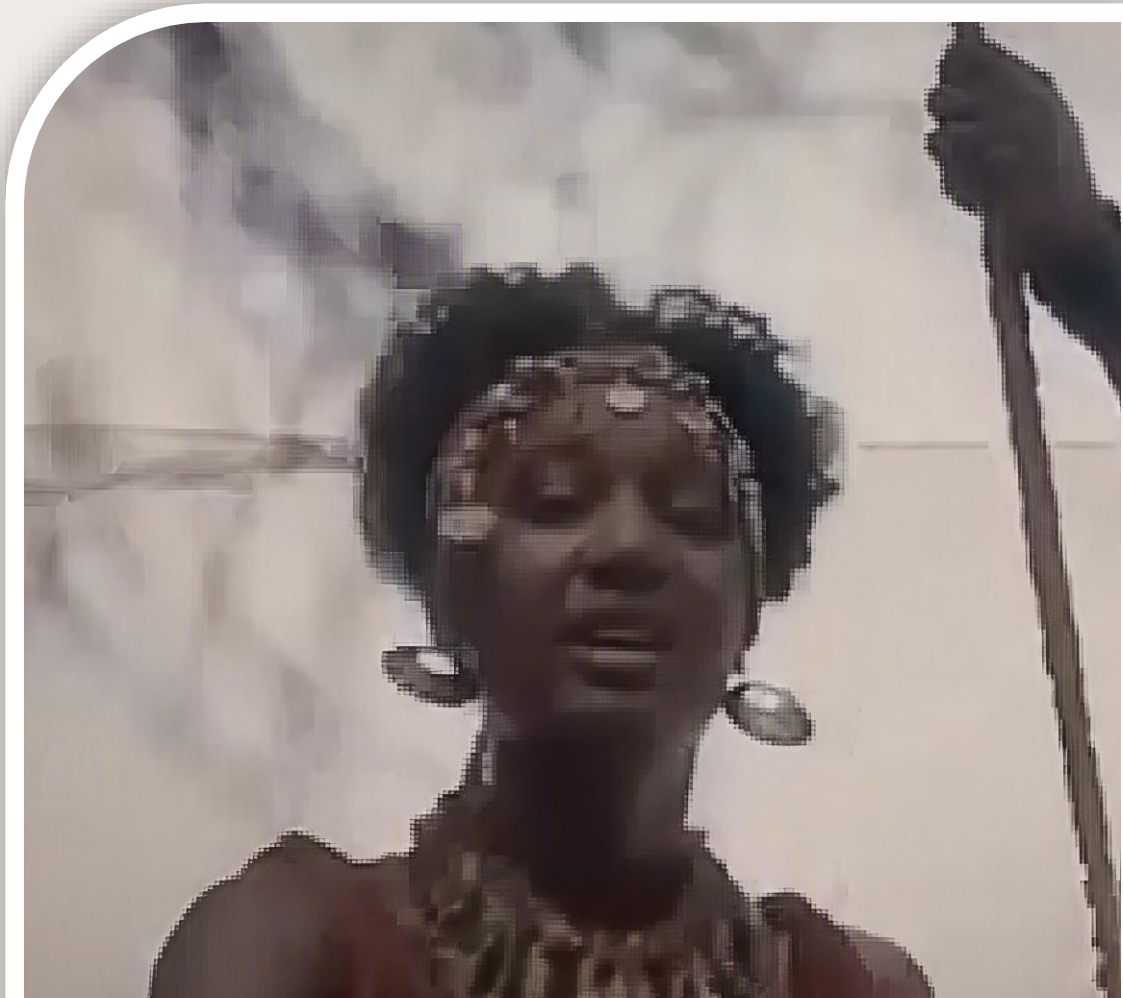
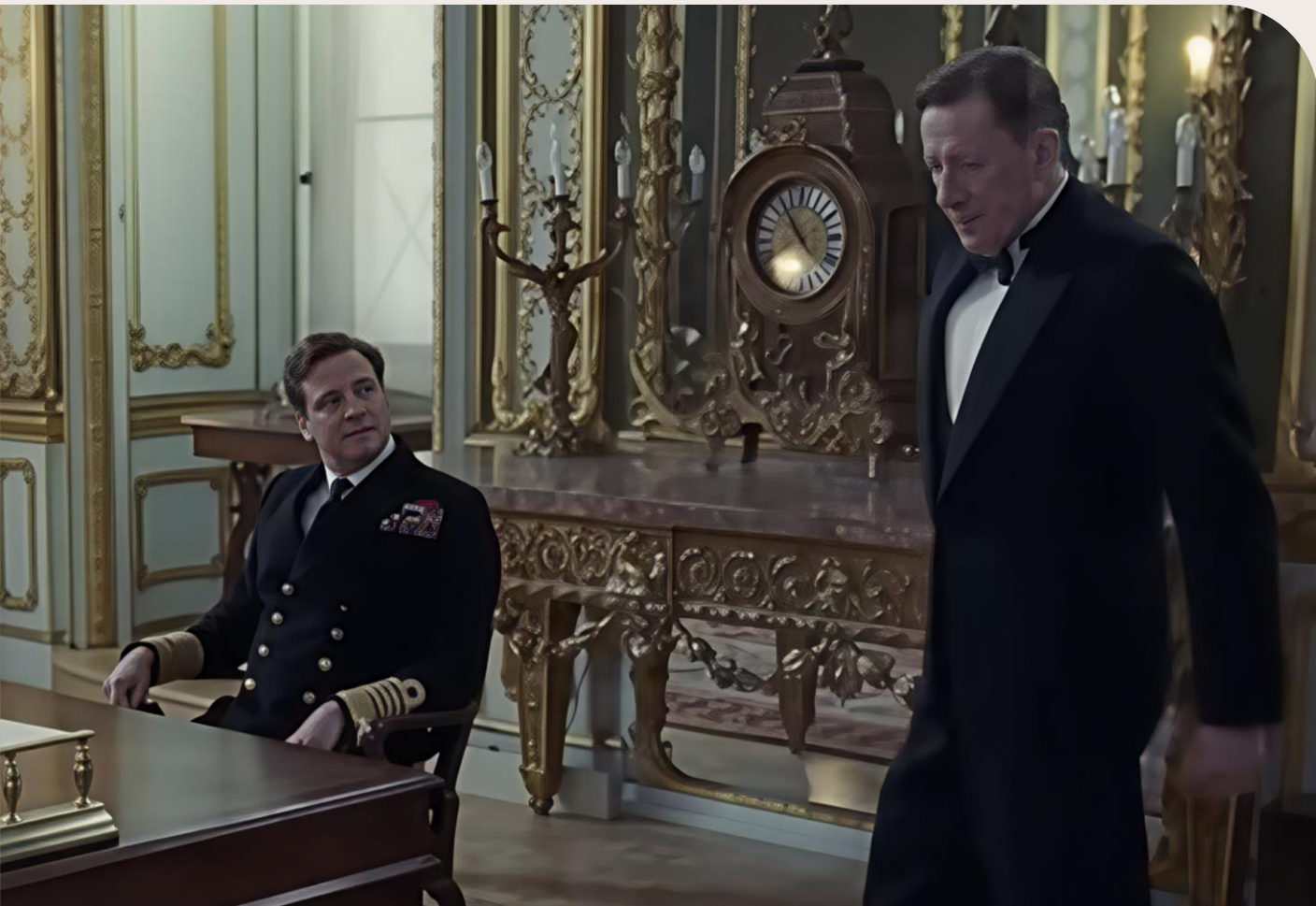


REMEMBER OUR HEROES?



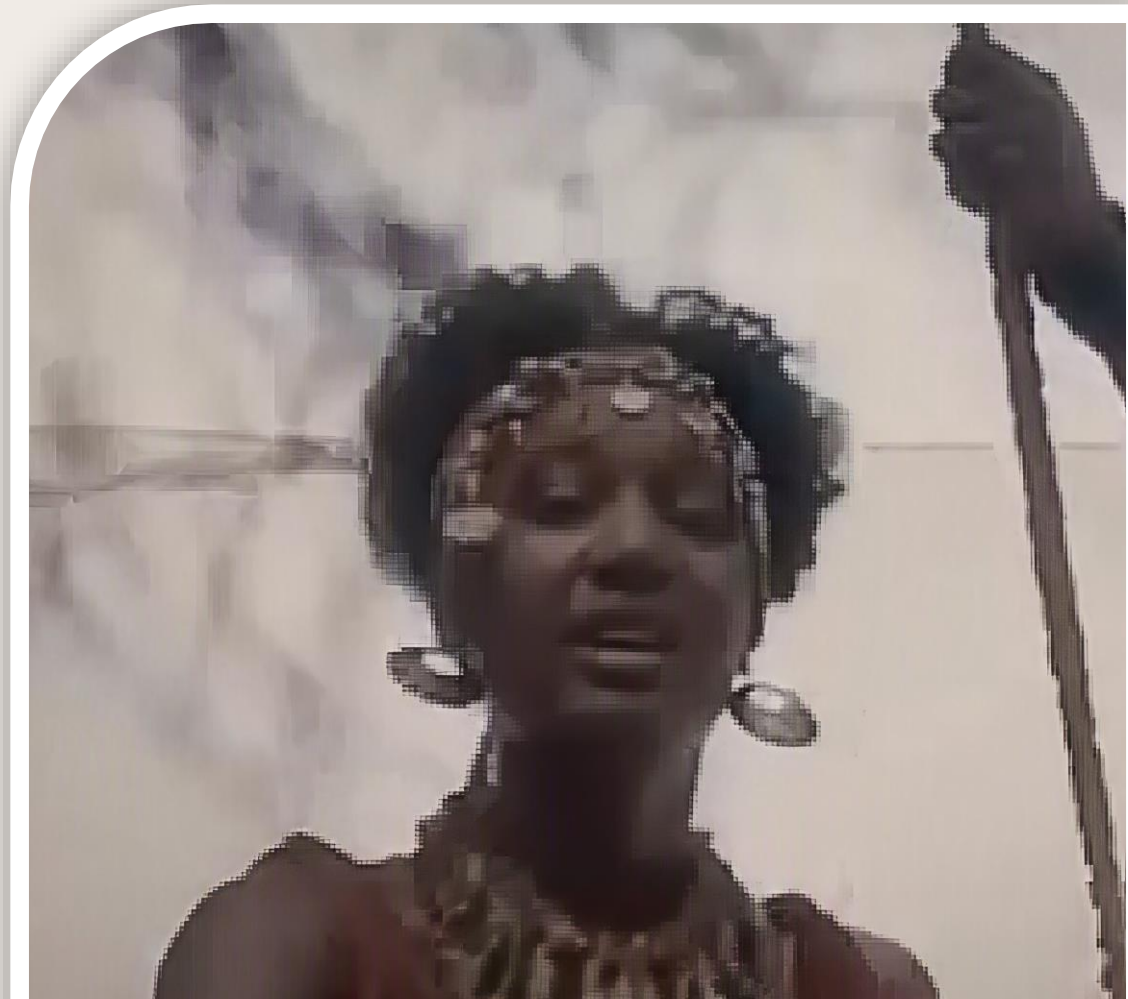
Lord God,
What gifts have you given me
to use for your greater glory?
Help me to walk alongside
another with faith, love, and
compassion, so that together
we may grow closer to you.
Amen.

REMEMBER OUR HEROES?



REMEMBER OUR HEROES?

Give me the courage to trust you and the faith to believe in you. May the courage and faith you nurture in me become a source of hope and encouragement for another brother or sister on their journey to you.



SPONSORS...

- **Accompany** – Walk alongside.
- **Listen** – Hear the person's story.
- **Witness** – Live the Gospel authentically.
- **Invite** – Help them discover a deeper relationship with Christ and the parish community.



ACCOMPANY

Accompany – Walk alongside.



LISTEN

Listen – Hear the person's story.



WITNESS

Witness – Live the Gospel authentically.



INVITE

Invite – Help them discover a deeper relationship with Christ and the parish community.



PRACTICAL RESPONSIBILITIES



An OCIA sponsor is a faithful Catholic who walks beside another person with prayer, compassion, encouragement, and authentic Christian witness, helping them encounter Christ and become fully part of the life of the Church.



Director's Need for Sponsors

- Give your sponsor a handout with OCIA Sponsor Expectations
- Give them a calendar of events
- Go over the Rites with them
- Have ongoing enrichment for them
- Let them know the parish is also walking with them
- It's okay to change sponsors

OCIA Sponsor Expectations

- Accompany the catechumen or candidate
- Share faith and personal experiences by witnessing
- Encourage participation
- Be present at important
- Listen and walk with compassion
- Answer questions
- Pray regularly
- Celebrate their growth
- Attend Sponsor Enrichment Meetings

OCIA Sponsor Expectations

Purpose:

An OCIA Sponsor is a companion, witness, and bridge who walks along with the catechumen or candidate as they grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and journey toward initiation into the Catholic Church. A sponsor offers friendship, encouragement, and support while helping the person feel welcomed, valued, and connected to the Church.

Responsibilities:

- Accompany the catechumen or candidate throughout the OCIA process, fostering a trusting and supportive relationship.
Practically: Attend OCIA catechumenal sessions, workshops, rites, and other important gatherings whenever possible.
- Share faith and personal experiences by witnessing how God is at work in their life.
Practically: Remember that sometimes words are not necessary; example, and willingness to walk with another person can be a powerful witness.
- Encourage participation in OCIA sessions, liturgical rites, dismissal, retreats, and parish activities.

Calendar

If sponsors do not know when the Rites are



OCIA Upcoming Calendar 2026-27

Sunday, July 5, Dismissal 9:30 am & 11:15 Mass & dismissal, Personal Prayer, Devotion, etc.

Monday, July 6, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Liturgical Prayer

Sunday, July 12, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Sacred Scripture

Monday, July 13, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Care for Creation

Sunday, July 19, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, The Church

Monday, July 20, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, The Church

Sunday, July 26, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Vocation

Monday, July 27, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Vocation

Sunday, August 2, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Jesus of History

Monday, August 3, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Jesus of History

Sunday, August 9, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Faith

Monday, August 10, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Faith

Sunday, August 16, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Anointing of the Sick

Monday, August 17, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Anointing of the Sick

Sunday, August 23, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Christian Leadership

Monday, August 24, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, Christian Leadership

Sunday, August 30, Dismissal 9:30 & 11:15 am Mass & dismissal, Suffering

Monday, August 31, OCIA Session, 7:30 pm, The Cross of the Disciple



Rites

Go over the
rites with the
sponsors.



Sponsors' Meetings

FIRST SPONSORS' MEETING

- Prayer
- Who are you?
- Candidate/Catechumen
- The OCIA Process
- Your Role-Expectations
- Paragraph 42
- Dismissal
- Calendar
- Discernment

SECOND SPONSORS' MEETING

- Prayer
- Paragraph 75
- Retreat days
- Rite of Sending/Continuing Conversion/Election
- Calendar
- Involvement in Service and Parish
- Discernment

THIRD SPONSORS' MEETING

- Prayer
- P&E and Rites
- Reconciliation for Candidates
- Holy Saturday & Vigil
- Mystagogia
- Discernment

The Parish as Sponsor

A grammar school art teacher in a Catholic School. A Buddhist

- Wants to join the environmental ministry
- Bible Study
- 6:20 am Mass
- Fridays during Lent simple supper



RITE FOR ENTRANCE INTO THE CATECHUMENATE

53. Then the celebrant turns to the sponsors and all the faithful and questions them in these or similar words:

You, the sponsors who are now presenting these men and women to us, and all of you brothers and sisters gathered here, are you prepared to help them find Christ and follow him?

All: We are.

It's okay to change sponsors



COMMON CHALLENGES



- 
- **Finding enough qualified sponsors**
 - **Understanding the role**
 - **Inconsistent participation**
 - **Lack of formation**
 - **Mismatched relationships**
 - **Choosing family or friends**
 - **Sponsors who are still growing themselves**
 - **Transitioning to a godparent**
 - **Continuing after initiation**

• Finding enough sponsors

- Bank them
- Change the view
- Bulletin
- Applications
- Recycle
- Spouses



- **Understanding the role**

- Just do one thing

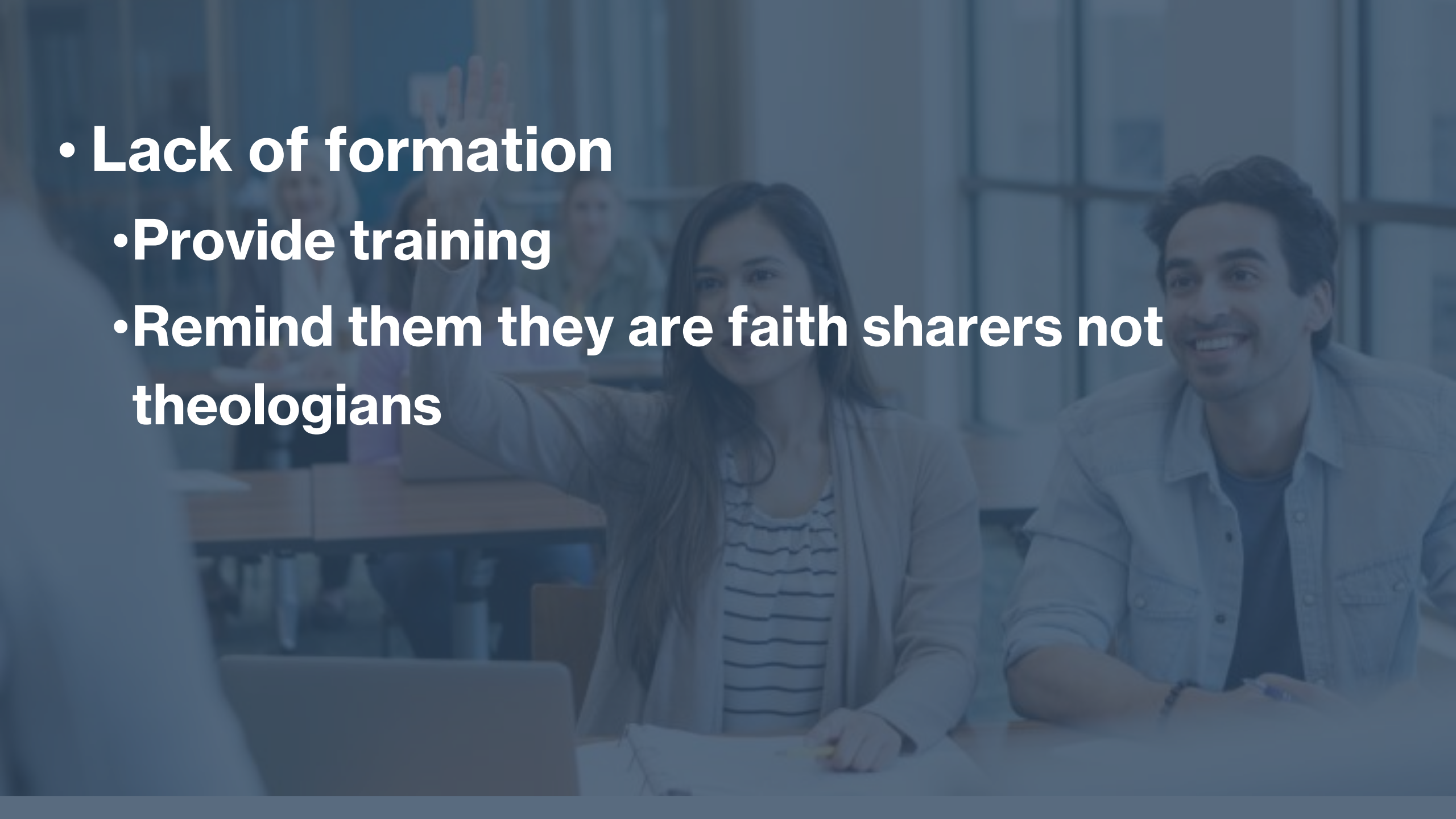
**ONE
THING**

- **Inconsistent participation**

- Job Description

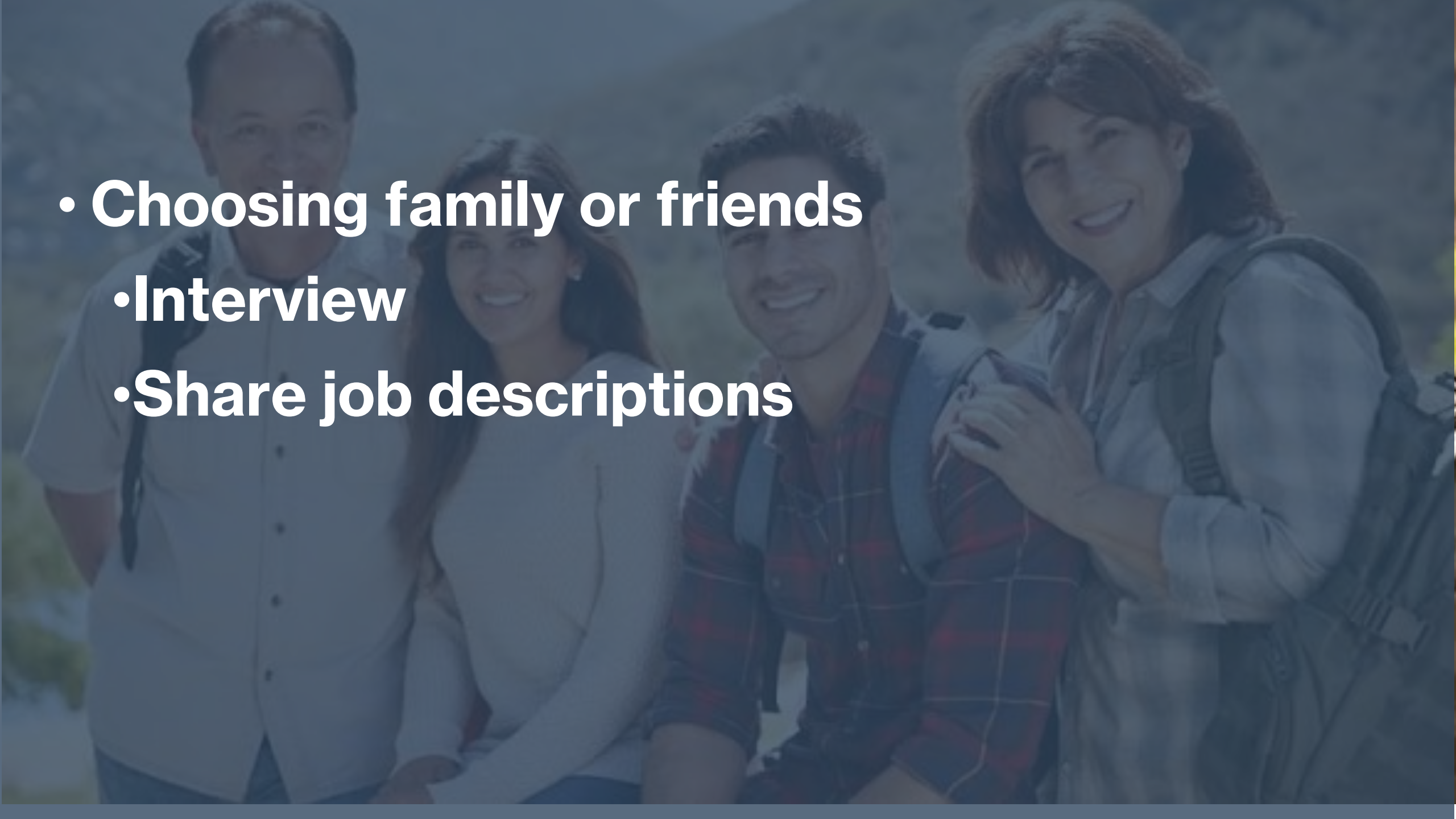
- Shared Calendar



- 
- **Lack of formation**
 - **Provide training**
 - **Remind them they are faith sharers not theologians**

- **Mismatched relationships**

- Sooner rather than later
- Pray for guidance
- Have pre- sponsor socials
- Gender issues

- 
- **Choosing family or friends**
 - **Interview**
 - **Share job descriptions**

- **Sponsors who are still growing themselves**
- **That can be a good thing**



• Transitioning to a godparent



- **Continuing after initiation**
 - **Encourage sponsors to take their candidates catechumens to their ministries and groups**





EPILOGUE

A sponsor's greatest qualification is not having all the answers, but faithfully reflecting Christ. The most lasting gift you can offer is not information, but a life that makes the Gospel believable. When sponsors pray, listen, encourage, worship, and serve alongside those they accompany, they embody the Church as a community of disciples helping one another follow Jesus.



CLOSING PRAYER

You, the sponsors, team members, and friends who now minister to these men and women, and all of you, brothers and sisters of our holy Church, are you prepared to help our catechumens, candidates, Catholics, and sponsors come to know Christ more deeply and follow him faithfully?

All: We are

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