

Ministry Spotlight

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Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19–20)

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a process that introduces people to the Catholic Church and, if they choose, helps them enter into full communion with the Church through the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation). RCIA finds its roots in the early Church of the third through the fifth centuries. This process was lost for quite some time and was reinstated after the second Vatican Council.

Designed for non-baptized adults; those from other denominations; and baptized Catholics who have not received other sacraments, RCIA lays the groundwork for a deeply fulfilling Catholic faith. Candidates gain an understanding of Catholic doctrine, an appreciation of liturgical celebrations and the Mass, and the spiritual nourishment and inspiration for facing faith challenges in everyday life.

The program follows four stages:

- 1) The Pre-catechumenate** is a time of inquiry and searching by the candidate to determine if following a path to Catholicism is right for them. Classes are begun and candidates learn basics of the Catholic Faith. The pre-catechumenate ends with a *Rite of Acceptance*, where candidates make a public profession of their intent to come into the Catholic Church.
- 2) The Catechumenate**, the second stage of the process, is a period of learning. More in-depth training is provided into the life of the Catholic Church.
- 3) Enlightenment and Purification** starts with Ash Wednesday and continues through Lent. Candidates (along with the rest of the Church) enter into a time of penance, prayer and reflection as they continue their journey of education and discernment. This stage ends with the Easter Vigil Liturgy, where candidates are accepted into full communion with the Church.

Ministry Spotlight

Ministry Spotlight

RCIA, cont'd

4) The last stage, **Mystagogy**, is about mission; the newly initiated learn about ways in which they **can participate in the everyday life of the Church.**

Candidates meet Wednesday evenings to learn about and discuss various topics, as well as attend Sunday dismissals and participate in an overnight retreat. This year's program begins **September 22**, with full initiation into the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass.

Candidates are encouraged to have a Catholic sponsor who can support them in this important journey. However, many parishioners are available to help anyone who needs a sponsor. The RCIA ministry involves the church community by welcoming, instructing, and praying for the candidates.

Feedback from those who have gone through the experience reveals much about the "journey": *What started as the beginning of a seemingly daunting and uncertain seven month road to the Catholic Church quickly revealed not a trip with an origination and destination, but a journey to Christ's Church with stops along the way in places like history, tradition, saints, love, grace, mercy, sacraments, Mary, Eucharist, and life everlasting. Seven months later, as I prepare for the Easter Vigil, I am proud to be received into Christ's Church, our Church... the Catholic Church. To be one with Christ is so precious and so very special.*

I will treasure the time spent and friendships started with other candidates and sponsors. RCIA has helped me form closer and more meaningful relationships with God, my family, and my friends. Even though the program has ended, I continue my journey because I see that my spirituality is and always will be a work in progress."

Monsignor Linster refers to the RCIA Team, Sue Seraphin, Paul & Mary Mayer, Deb Schaeffer, Debbie Hutchison, Kip & Jan Weller and Ken Konetzki, as the "Community of Faithful." According to Monsignor, "they are truly faithful to this ministry." If you are interested in becoming part of RCIA as a candidate or sponsor, please call Sue Seraphin at 630-584-8434.