

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

The RCIA Process begins with the Inquiry sessions, which are meant for persons from a variety of backgrounds. The RCIA Process is intended and adapted to meet the needs of adults and children over the age of seven who are:

- ◇ not baptized - Catechumens
- ◇ baptized in the Roman Catholic Church but not evangelized or completely initiated – unevangelized Catholics
- ◇ baptized in another Christian church, but in need of further instruction and initiation – Candidates
- ❖ The RCIA is also intended for children from the age of seven for the same reasons as listed above, and is adapted to meet their needs.

The Inquiry sessions usually last for an hour and are held whenever it is convenient for all those participating. If you are interested or know anybody who fits the above criteria, please call Shirley Schmidt at 563-381-2872.

The RCIA is a community journey that leads to transformation of mind and spirit.

Guided by the Gospel and examples set by church members, newcomers can find their place in the community of believers.

It is a personal journey in which church members reexamine their own relationship with God, and share it with the joyous response of newcomers to the discovery of Christ in their lives.

We, as church members assist the newcomers by welcoming them into our community, praying for and with them, by acting as a sponsor who will provide encouragement, answer questions, introduce them to other members of the community and participate in as many sessions as possible.

We also invite those who we think may be searching for faith and a church community.

We invite those who have been attending Church with his/her Catholic spouse and may have questions about the Catholic religion. She or he might benefit from the Inquiry sessions with those questions being addressed. One is never forced to continue on and become a Catholic. It is always his or her choice to move forward, but it is our responsibility to always invite them and make them feel welcome and support them on their journey.

The RCIA is broken into four periods:

1. Evangelization and precatechumenate – a period lasting from a few weeks to several months, when inquirers hear the preaching of the Gospel and are invited to ask questions and reflect on the place of God in their lives. At the end of this period the inquirers make a decision to request membership in the Church through the Rite of Becoming a Catechumen.
2. Catechumenate- a period lasting from a few months to a year or more, devoted to preparation for full initiation. The Catechumens and Candidates grow in faith by understanding Church teachings, by praying alone and with the faith community. They participate in the Liturgy of the Word and discuss what they have heard. They learn about Christian service and about sharing the Christian faith. This period ends with the Rite of Election, usually on the first Sunday of Lent. The Rite celebrates God's call to receive the Initiation Sacraments. The Catechumens celebrate the Rite of Elect with other Catechumens in the diocese and the Candidates, who are already among the Elect express their desire to continue on their journey of faith.
3. Purification and Enlightenment – a period lasting through Lent for reflection on religious experience and faith. It includes the Scrutinies on the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent. The Scrutinies are celebrated during Mass so that the congregation are enabled to discern their own strengths and weaknesses, and to ask for their prayers for the candidates and for one another. They include readings, prayers, discussions, and reflections, which were held during the RCIA sessions, to assist the newcomers overcome their weaknesses and build their strength. They are presented with the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father and prepare for reception into the Church on Holy Saturday.
4. Mystagogia – is the final period of initiation. The newly initiated, along with the rest of the community, develop a deeper understanding of Jesus' death and resurrection by celebrating Mass and sharing in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, by reading and studying Scriptures, by performing acts of Christian service and by praying and living the Gospel in their daily lives.