

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)



The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults is usually referred to as the RCIA. It is the oldest *ordo*, or process, of the Roman Catholic Church. It was restored to prominence in the Church by the Second Vatican Council in 1965 and is now the normative way for any adult, or anyone over seven years of age, who wishes to become a Catholic.

The RCIA is a process ... an entering into the Catholic way of life ... which may continue for a period of nine months, or as long as three years. The time frame depends upon each person's faith needs who wants to "come and see" what it means to be a Catholic. Time is provided, without pressure, for the person to come *freely* to this most important decision in life.

The process begins with an informal meeting in which the person who is interested in the Catholic Church receives from the Director of the Catechumenate an explanation of what can be expected in the months to come.

FOUR STAGES IN THE RCIA PROCESS:

1. *Inquiry (or pre-catechumenate)*: Each person is free to question members of the RCIA Team about Catholic beliefs, issues, rituals, and practices in an informal setting with other adults who have these or other questions. The Inquiry Period lasts until the person is satisfied and chooses to move to the next stage. At the present time, this group has been meeting on Wednesday evenings.
2. *Catechumenate (Echoing/Listening to God's Word)*: In this second stage of the process, which may extend as long as is needed, one who is inquiring attends the first part of the 9:00 AM Sunday Mass, hears the Sunday Scriptures and, with the RCIA Team and other inquirers is dismissed to reflect on and be formed by the Word of God they have just heard. One can remain in this stage for as long as is necessary.

3. *Period of Purification and Enlightenment:* When a candidate or catechumen experiences a sincere desire to “take the plunge” and become Catholic, he or she is presented to the Bishop at the Cathedral on the first Sunday of Lent, entering into the Lenten Season (those weeks leading to Easter). During this time they are referred to as “the Elect.” In these last weeks of Lent they are prepared to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil.

If one who wishes to become a Catholic is already baptized, baptism is *not* repeated. He/she is received into full communion in the Catholic Church and is confirmed.

The Elect continue to attend 9:00 AM Mass on Sunday and meet to discuss the Scriptures with the other elect. At the Easter Vigil Service Catechumens are baptized and Candidates are received into full communion with the Catholic Church through their profession of faith. The both groups are confirmed.

4. *Period of Mystagogia,* or entering more deeply into the mystery of God and the Easter Sacraments of initiation. For the newly initiated into the faith, this is a period of reflection on what they have just experienced and a preparation time for the rest of their lives as Catholic. At this point in the process, new members of the church must meet with the RCIA Team after the 9:00 AM Sunday Mass for the next seven weeks. After that, they meet together on a monthly basis.

Anyone wishing to inquire about the Catholic Faith or wishing to begin the RCIA process may contact the Director of Religious Education at the Church Office at 318 687 5121. We will meet with them and begin the process.