

All Are Welcome!

BASIC CONCEPTS OF THE RCIA

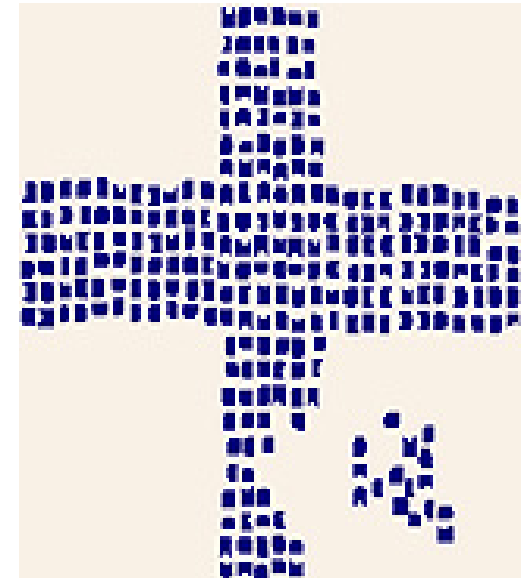
- Conversion is a process.
- Becoming a Catholic means coming into a community of believers.
- The RCIA takes place in an experience of community.
- The stages of RCIA are celebrated in community with appropriate liturgical rites.
- The RCIA experience follows the flow of the liturgical seasons.
- The RCIA process encourages authentic Catholicity.

The Church today supports and encourages the spiritual journey of each of us. The RCIA is an ongoing four-step process within parish life. It is primarily a *process*, but one that is filled with *rites*, ceremonies, and celebrations that have prescribed words and focus.

RCIA focuses on the Christian Initiation of adults through the reception of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, usually celebrated in a single *liturgy* during the *Easter Vigil*. All are welcome to participate in the parish RCIA, no matter what your background might be. If you have never been baptized and have little or no acquaintance with the Church, you are welcome. If you are already a Christian baptized into another denomination, you are welcome. If you were baptized Catholic as an infant but never educated in the Faith, you are welcome.

RCIA

A JOURNEY IN FAITH



Welcoming New Catholics
Holy Family
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THE RCIA PROCESS

PHASE ONE Getting Acquainted

Pre-Catechumenate, Inquiry, Pre-evangelization

Individuals who seek to know more about the Church are called *inquirers*. Phase one begins when an adult comes to the Church to inquire about Catholic beliefs and practices.

TRANSITION TO PHASE TWO

Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate

Those not baptized are called “Catechumens.” Baptized Christians seeking full communion with the Catholic Church are called “Candidates.” The first of two retreats is held before the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate. This rite celebrates the inquirers’ intention to become Catholic and seriously continue the journey of faith toward baptism or full communion with the Church.

PHASE TWO Making a Decision

Catechumenate

Catechumens and candidates begin formal instruction in the Catholic faith. They learn the basics of the faith and how to live the Catholic way of life, that focuses on Jesus, his teachings, the Church, and the

sacraments. A sponsor, a member of the faith community, encourages and supports the catechumen or candidate on this journey.

During this phase, the catechumens and candidates join the parishioners at each Sunday Mass to pray and listen to God’s Word. After the homily, they are formally dismissed to continue to explore the meaning of the Scripture readings (breaking open of the Word.) The public presence of the catechumens and candidates at Mass and their dismissal are powerful reminders to all us that faith is a precious gift.

TRANSITION TO PHASE THREE

Rite of Election

In a ceremony called the *Rite of Election*, the bishop welcomes and blesses the catechumens and candidates, calling them to the Easter sacraments of initiation. Catechumens entering the Purification and Enlightenment Phase are called the *elect*.

PHASE THREE Deepening the Commitment

*Period of Purification and Enlightenment
(Lenten Period)*

The elect engage in the Lenten season, a time of reconciliation, prayer and spiritual renewal for the whole Church. On the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent,

the elect celebrate the scrutinies with the faith community. In each scrutiny, the community prays that the elect will be enlightened and purified. They pray that any evil influences within their hearts will be removed by the grace of God as the gospel stories promise. The second retreat is held before the end of this phase.

TRANSITION TO PHASE FOUR

Initiation at the Easter Vigil

The celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection at the Easter Vigil is the climax of the liturgical year. At this liturgy, the elect and candidates formally enter into full membership in the Catholic Church. Once initiated into the church, the elect are known as *neophytes* for the first year.

PHASE FOUR Celebrating the Gift

Mystagogy- Entering into the Mysteries

Mystagogy, literally means, “entering more deeply into the mystery.” New Catholics use this time to reflect on the mysteries of membership in the Catholic Church. The parish community invites them to actively participate in parish *ministry*.