

## **What is RCIA?**

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults as a process in which participants "undergo...conversion as they study the Gospel, profess faith in Jesus and the Catholic Church, and receive the sacraments...The RCIA process follows the ancient practice of the Church and was restored by the Second Vatican Council as the normal way adults prepare for baptism."

Likewise, the language used in the RCIA process is that of the early Church formation programs. Catechumens are those people who are seeking full initiation into the Catholic Church through all of the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Candidates are people who have been baptized in a Christian tradition but are seeking initiation into the Catholic Church through Eucharist and Confirmation.

## **All are Welcome!**

RCIA is a process of study, exploration, faith-sharing, and faith formation with specific liturgical rites for seekers and inquirers. Seekers and inquirers are non-baptized adults who desire to be fully initiated into the Roman Catholic Church and/or baptized adult Christians who desire full communion in the Roman Catholic Church.

Adults or older children who have not been baptized and desire to join the Church are invited into the ancient celebration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. During this process, which is marked by regular ritual acts, participants are introduced to the liturgy, the teachings, and the life of the Catholic Church.

Adults or older children who were baptized in another Christian denomination prepare in a similar way for the sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist during their reception into the Catholic Church.

## **RCIA is a Journey**

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults is a process that proceeds over weeks and months. It has several steps:

### **Pre-Catechumenate**

This is the earliest phase in the process; it is also known as the Period of Inquiry. Catechumens and Candidates acknowledge that Christ is calling them into the Church through the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is a time for seeking and reflection.

### **Rite of Initiation**

The first Rite in the RCIA process, the Rite of Initiation accepts new members into the worshipping community.

## **Catechumenate**

The longest part of the process, the Catechumenate is a time of learning and formation in the traditions and doctrine of the Catholic Church. This is a time for sharing stories, reading scripture, and studying the Church customs, traditions and doctrine. Participants also participate in worship services and various Church rituals.

## **Rite of Election**

Catechumens and Candidates are chosen to be received by the bishop and the community and to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

## **Sacraments of Initiation**

At the Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday), all newly elected members of the community who have been journeying through the RCIA process are welcomed formally into the community of believers through receiving the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

## **Mystagogy**

This is a time of reflection and celebration after the formal reception into the Catholic Church. Mystagogia means “leading into the mystery” and it is a time to explore the deep mystery of our faith and go forth to help build the reign of God on Earth as new members of the faithful.

## **RCIA Team**

People journeying through the RCIA process need sponsors and community support to help them grow in faith. The RCIA team of sponsors help guide, support and instruct those discerning whether to become members of our Catholic community. Team members share their faith with inquiring adults who are seeking more information about the Catholic Church, many of whom seek to celebrate one or more of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.