

## ADULT FAITH FORMATION AND RCIA



### What is RCIA?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the process established for the universal Church for individuals to become Catholic and receive the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

This initiation process also involves a parish community experiencing a renewal in faith as it prepares and welcomes new members into the Church. The Rite speaks of conversion as a “spiritual journey.” Centered on fostering a deep relationship with Jesus and the Church he founded, this journey takes place through distinct stages over a period of time suitable to bring about a thorough catechesis, significant experience of the parish community, and commitment to the liturgical and moral life of the Catholic faithful.

The RCIA process is a restoration of the ancient catechumenate, arising within the first three centuries following the era of the apostles. It was the early Church’s way of Christianizing the pagan Roman Empire. The Second Vatican Council called for the restoration and use of this venerable and powerful method of initiation for the worldwide Church.

### Who is RCIA for?

1. Persons in need of Baptism.
2. Persons baptized in another Christian tradition who desire to become Catholic.
3. Persons baptized Catholic in need of First Communion and/or Confirmation.

### How did a person become Catholic before RCIA?

At most parishes, the person was given individual instruction by the parish priest, or someone delegated by him.

### Why the change?

There were a number of limitations to private instruction. The priest was the only member of the Catholic community with whom the inquirer had contact, apart from any supporting family and friends. Private instruction did not ensure that the inquirer had a lived experience of the Catholic faith, or was exposed to authentic Christian charity as lived in a parish community.

### How long is the RCIA process?

The time varies, but is rarely shorter than six months or longer than three years. The Church greatly respects the time each person needs for conversion and decision. The RCIA text gives guides for discerning this on a case-by-case basis.

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## **RITES OF RCIA**

### Rite of Welcoming and Acceptance

The first Rite is the Rite of Welcoming and Acceptance. These Rites, which are typically celebrated in a combined ceremony in the presence of the community, mark the end of the Period of Evangelization and the beginning of the Catechumenate.

For those who have not been baptized, this rite declares their desire to learn more about the Catholic Faith and intent to be baptized into the Faith Community. The community accepts them and they are considered catechumens.

For those who have been baptized and are seeking confirmation and Eucharist, this rite acknowledges them as members of the Faithful by virtue of the baptism. The community welcomes them as candidates for Confirmation.

### Rite of Sending

The Rite of Sending is celebrated either the week before or the day of the Rite of Election. In this rite the Catechumens and Candidates are brought before their faith community where their sponsors affirm their desire to join with the Church. The community then offers their blessing and prayers as they send the participants to go before the Bishop in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion.

### Rite of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion

These rites mark the end of the Catechumenate and the beginning of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment. Celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, these rites take place at a predetermined location where the participants are presented to the Bishop.

For the Catechumens, the Bishop greets them and then signs the Book of the Elect. Upon hearing their sponsors' affirmation, the Bishop acknowledges them as the Elect of God and gives them his blessing to continue the process towards full initiation into the Church.

For Candidates, the Bishop also greets them and their sponsors affirm them as well. Upon hearing this, the Bishop invites the Candidates to join with the Church in a spirit of repentance and to hear the Lord's call to Continuing Conversion.

### The Penitential Rite and The Scrutinies

The Penitential Rite is celebrated on the 2nd Sunday of Lent and is for Candidates only.

The Scrutinies are celebrated on the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent and are for the Elect. There is one scrutiny for each sacrament the members of the Elect seek: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

All celebrations are to assist the participants in their Lenten journey towards purification and enlightenment.

### Rite of Christian Initiation

The Rite of Christian Initiation occurs at the Easter Vigil, which is the most Holy and solemn celebrations of our Catholic Faith. At this celebration, the Elect is baptized and all participants are confirmed and receive First Holy Communion.

After this, they are considered Neophytes for the first year as fully initiated Catholics. We strive to continue to provide ongoing formation and community support throughout this first year.

### RCIA FOR CHILDREN (RCIC)

RCIC is very similar to RCIA. The process is essentially the same and it is open to children over the age of seven (7) who have not been baptized and those over the age of ten (10) who have not received first communion (to include children from protestant backgrounds who wish to become Catholic).

The children of RCIC will attend weekly religious education classes with other children in their grade level and then attend a monthly RCIC class with all children in the RCIC program. We also ask parents to attend the monthly class as well.



The children will then participate in the rites along side the adults as well as receive their sacraments on the Easter Vigil. For more information, please contact Stephanie Kristek at the church office.