

# Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

## What is it?

**RCIA, which stands for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults**, is an extended period of evangelization (developing a relationship with Jesus Christ), catechesis (instruction in the faith), and spiritual formation (deepening in faith) in the Roman Catholic Church. Although it is primarily the process by which people become full members in the Roman Catholic Church, RCIA welcomes serious inquirers at all levels of knowledge, faith and intent--in other words, you do not need to feel like you're ready to become Catholic before you begin RCIA. Ultimately, though, the process culminates in the reception of one or more of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

## An Outline of the Stages of the RCIA Process

### Period of Inquiry, or Pre-catechumenate

Inquirers are invited to deepen their understanding of how God has been active in their lives, and begin to learn what the Catholic Church believes, teaches and proclaims to be revealed by God.

### Rites of Acceptance and Welcome (mid-November)

Inquirers are recognized by the Church as genuinely seeking greater instruction and formation. Dismissals begin, where RCIA participants depart Sunday Mass after the homily to go study the Word of God together.

### Period of the Catechumenate

The catechumens (non-baptized) and candidates (baptized) reflect more deeply on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His Church, and their personal journeys of faith.

### Rite of Election (mid-February)

The catechumens are welcomed by the bishop and declared "elect" in the sight of the Church—as legitimately seeking baptism. Candidates are also blessed by the bishop.

### Period of Purification and Enlightenment (Lent)

Those elected for Baptism together with the candidates deepen their prayer and examine their lives more closely as they prepare to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation.

### Rites of Initiation (Easter)

The elect and candidates profess their faith and receive their Sacraments of Initiation at the Great Vigil of Easter, welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church.

### Period of Mystagogy

The newly initiated persons reflect further on the mystery of the Easter Sacraments and become more integrated into the community of the Church as faith-filled and active disciples of the Lord.