

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Becoming a Catholic RCIA

What is it?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the process by which a person becomes a member of the Catholic Church. Persons participating in the process come from a variety of backgrounds:

- Some are unbaptized
- Others have been baptized in another Christian church
- Some have been baptized Catholic, but have not received Eucharist or Confirmation

What are the highlights of the RCIA process?

The First Period consists of inquiry on the part of the candidates. Those who wish to know more about the church are called *Enquirers*. They meet together to get to know one another and to ask questions about faith, God, and the Church.

The Inquiry Period ends with the Rite of Acceptance or Rite of Enrollment. At this point the candidates enter into a new phase of the process which is called the Catechumenate. Persons in this period are called either Catechumens (unbaptized) or Candidates (baptized in another Christian tradition).

During the Second Period, regular sessions are held to lead the members to a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and to guide them in their spiritual journey. Members are also encouraged to take part in *dismissal* during one of the weekend liturgies. After the Liturgy of the Word, catechumens and candidates go to the meeting room of church with members of the RCIA Team to reflect on the word that has been proclaimed and preached within the larger assembly (this is called the dismissal).

The Catechumenate ends with the Rite of Election which takes place early in Lent at the Cathedral in Albany. After this rite, catechumens are no longer referred to catechumens, but as the Elect.

The third period, called the Period of Enlightenment, coincides with Lent and is a time of intense preparation for the Easter celebration and the sacrament of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist). This period offers a challenge to all members of the parish to enter into the pascal mystery with the elect. Parishioners are called on to be supportive witnesses of the elect.

On the third, fourth, and fifth Sunday of Lent special rites called scrutinies take place during Sunday Liturgies. The scrutinies are special readings and prayers which celebrate healing and strengthening. The entire parish community joins the elect in asking for the spirit of repentance and understanding of sin. The scrutinies help to uncover and heal that which is sinful as well as to strengthen all that is good in each of our lives.

The period of Enlightenment ends with the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

The Final Period extends through the whole Easter season and concludes with the celebration of Pentecost. Persons in this stage, called Mystagogy, are referred to as **Neophytes**. It is a time for deepening the Christian experience and for entering more fully into the life of the church community.

SUMMARY

| <u>Period</u> | <u>What Happens</u> | <u>Concluding Rite</u> |
|---------------|---|---|
| Inquiry | Prayer, Discussion, Questions | Rite of Acceptance |
| Catechumenate | Prayer, Instruction, Faith Sharing | Rite of Election |
| Enlightenment | Lenten time for prayer, reflection & preparation for Easter Vigil | Easter Vigil (sacraments of initiation or Full Communion). |
| Mystagogy | Prayer, Reflection, Involvement in The ministry of the church | Pentecost |

For Additional information or
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