

THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA) AT ST. JEROME AND ST. JAMES PARISH

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the Church's method of journeying in faith through a process of discerning and ritualizing stages of gradual conversion. Initiation of adults belongs to all the baptized. The process is about fostering a relationship over time with both God and the Catholic community through formation and information. It is the catechetical and liturgical means for individuals to become Catholic through the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, namely Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This initiation process is served by the Pastor, the Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation, the Director of Liturgy, the Catechetical Team, and Sponsors. The process also involves the parish community who, through their own renewal of faith, prepares and welcomes new members into the Church. The Rite speaks of conversion as a "spiritual journey" centered on nurturing a relationship with Jesus through the Church, the People of God, infused by the workings of the Holy Spirit.

This journey takes place through distinct stages over a period of time suitable to bring about transformation along with a basic understanding of Catholic Identity through catechesis, interaction with 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 called for by the Second Vatican Council.

The RCIA process is designed for those who are 7 years old through adulthood, who have never been baptized. Outside of the actual RCIA process are those individual who were baptized in another faith tradition, or were baptized Catholic but have not completed initiation through the usual catechetical process. The time varies, but is rarely shorter than 6 months or longer than 3 years. We respect the time each person needs for conversion and decision. The RCIA text gives guides for discerning this on a case by case basis.

Expectations of Catechumens (the unbaptized): 1. Participation in the Rites and Rituals of the process. 2. Commitment to weekly dismissal and catechetical sessions. 3. Participation in a retreat experience. 4. Development of a prayer discipline. 5. Interaction within the parish community. 6. Discernment of gifts of stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. 7. Participation of spouses and/or fiancés in weekly catechetical sessions. 8. At least one liturgical year of participation.

Expectations of Sponsors: 1. Active parishioners who are appointed to serve throughout the process. 2. Participation in the Rites and Rituals of the process. 3. Commitment to participate in weekly catechetical sessions. 4. Walk with their Catechumen or Candidate as a Mentor/Companion.

The process begins with an initial interview with the Pastor and the Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation. Discernment of readiness to progress throughout the process is determined by the Pastor in consultation with the Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation in conjunction with the RCIA Catechists and Sponsors. Those catechumens and candidates who are working through the annulment process may begin the RCIA process with the understanding that the annulment process must be completed before reception of the Sacraments of Initiation can be received.

The more the Church becomes reacquainted with the RCIA the more we will understand faith formation as ongoing, as belonging to cradle Catholics and those who are initiated during later seasons of their lives. The process of initiation is never ending. The more the Church participates, the more we deepen our grasp of our participation in the paschal mysteries of Christ. Initiation is only the beginning of a lifetime of formation for new initiates and the all the baptized to derive new perceptions of faith, of the Church, and the world. Initiation is about life after baptism. It is vital to all the baptized people of God.

The Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation is responsible for all faith formation processes. She may be reached at the Parish Office, 667-6571 Ext. 13, or through email