

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Process

“In the sacraments of Christian initiation, we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire chosen people of God in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord’s death and resurrection. Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God’s people. Far superior to the [prescribed and ritualistic] purifications of the Old Law, [uniting us by the power of the mystery of the Lord’s passion and resurrection] the celebration of baptism should therefore reflect the joy of the resurrection, especially when the celebration takes place during the Easter Vigil.” (RCIA General Introduction #1, 2, 6)

The RCIA Process (not a RCIA Program) involves a myriad of gradual steps and periods that are meant to guide a person (7 years of age or older (the age of reason), who has expressed a desire to enter into the Catholic Church) on their journey toward becoming a Catholic in accord with the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Depending on their current status of life (i.e., prior Christian baptismal status or previous marriages), the RCIA process and entry into the Church may differ in length for each individual. For those who have not yet been baptized in a Christian denomination, they will be asked to participate in the entire RCIA catechetical and liturgical process. For those who have already been baptized in another recognized Christian denomination, they may be asked to participate in an abbreviated or the entire RCIA catechetical and liturgical process, based upon individual catechetical or spiritual needs, etc.

The Full RCIA Process

Inquiry - In this first phase, when someone first expresses a desire to become a member of the Catholic Church, they are known as an *inquirer*. After a time of prayer and discernment, if they desire, they may continue on to formally enter the RCIA catechetical (instruction) process. At this point, they participate in a liturgical *Rite of Acceptance* and enter into the Order of the *Catechuminate* (unbaptized) or a *Candidate* (baptized).

Rite of Acceptance / Catechuminate - During this second phase for the *Catechumen* or *Candidate* is the primary “learning” or instructional phase of the RCIA process. People may simply “go through the motions” to complete this phase, however, if participated in fully can be a time of tremendous growth. All are encouraged to spend time in study, prayer, and scriptures.

Rite of Election - At this stage, the *Catechumen* (unbaptized) are gathered around the Bishop during a special Mass to express their formal desire to enter into the Catholic Church via the Sacraments of Initiation. Once they are received by the Bishop (and their names enrolled in the Book of the Elect), they henceforth are known as a member of the *Elect*. From this point forward, the *Elect* and *Candidates* enter the final phase before their sacramental entry into the Catholic Church (the Roman Rite).

Sacraments of Initiation - Celebrated at the Easter Vigil, the *Elect* (unbaptized) receive the Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation for the first time and become members of the Catholic Church. The RCIA advises that *Candidates* (those already baptized) should receive their Sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation at a time other than the Easter Vigil (usually the Sunday following Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)).

Additionally, the Diocese of Colorado Springs’ Guidelines for the RCIA and Children of Catechetical Age (dtd 09.01.10), states: #1. [for Catechumens] The parish priest is to administer all the Sacraments of Initiation – ordinarily at the Easter Vigil. #2 [for Candidates] It is most desirable that candidates be received into the Catholic Church on a day (Sunday) other than the Easter Vigil.

Mystagogy - This final stage is a period of continuing catechetical and spiritual growth. As new members of the Roman Catholic Church, they are strongly urged to strengthen their faith and learn how to apply it to their daily lives. Often forgotten, this phase is just as important as the earlier phases.

(SR: <http://www.wakingupcatholic.com/waking-up-your-faith/rcia-rite-of-christian-initiation-of-adults/rcia-process.html> and Diocese of Colorado Springs Guidelines for RCIA (09.01.2010))