

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
The RCIA Process

--by Vickie Shepherd

How Do I Become A Catholic?
The RCIA Process

"Rejoice O Mother Church!
The Risen Savior shines upon you!
Exult in glory!
Echoing the mighty song of all God's people!"

(from the Easter Proclamation)

When you finally hear these words proclaimed during the Easter Vigil, you will be reflecting back on the road that leads you to this wonderful night. This time in your journey has been long in arriving, the process called RCIA is not one with time limits or a specific amount of time in which you will finish and become a catholic. Usually the process takes a year, or a little more for those who have joined right after the Christmas season. It mainly depends on your circumstances, people with a marriage case to be annulled may take a bit longer. People with strong background in another faith and scripture *may not** take as long as others.

You may be wondering what is involved in the RCIA process, or the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. There are several periods in this process; the beginning period is called a time of Inquiry or the Pre-Catechuminate. This will be our focus this month. The other periods are called the, Catechumenate, Enlightenment and Purification, and Mystagogy. These periods of the process are all preceded by formal Rites with the assembly that will be your affirmation to the community as well as yourself that you are ready to move on in your journey towards the Easter Vigil, your initiation into our "Catholic Christian" community.

During the Pre-Catechumenate or Inquiry period you will make that decision to call and ask about the catholic faith. You have felt God's first stirrings in your heart and want to act on this need to be nearer to Him. During this call you will probably talk to the parish priest and he will find out your needs and make arrangements to have the RCIA Co-Ordinator call you when it is

most convenient for you. When the co-ordinator calls you he or she will need to make an appointment to meet with you in order to make the initial interview. This interview is the story of your life until this point in time; the co-ordinator will take notes or have a short form for you to fill out. If you are not baptized you are known as a Catechumen, during the Easter vigil mass you will be baptized and confirmed. If you are baptized already you will be a candidate for full communion into the catholic faith. At Easter vigil you will make a profession of faith with the community and be confirmed. The candidates and catechumens will both receive their first communion at this Mass.



The Pre-Catechumenate is a time for the inquirers (you) to ask questions. Most of the sessions will be based on the questions you ask and more than likely the person who meets with you will be able to share scripture readings with you that relate to the questions you ask. This period is a good time to start reading the Bible if you haven't started already. If you do not have a Bible just let the person meeting with you know. If you need assistance in using a Bible the team person will be glad to help you learn. This is also a time to tell your story, how your life has been guided by God to get here to this point. Your story will blend in with the others who are here with you. Each Sunday at mass you will hear a part of the story of God and how the story of His people have been added to a time in history. You will hear at Easter how from the very first day of creation we were a grand part of God's story and how we have made Him a part of our lives by telling this story over and over through the years. Through our telling of this story we have made it a part of our story, and we walk our journey keeping God's word in our minds, on our lips and in our hearts so that we may share it with the world.

Note*

this is based on the RCIA Rite Book # 473-504 · which mainly says that no greater burden than necessary is to be placed on Baptized catechized adults to establish communion and unity. The baptized person is to receive doctrinal and spiritual preparation adapted to individual pastoral requirements

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