

**Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults**  
**The RCIA Process**

*--by Vickie Shepherd*

**The Mystagogy-Part I**  
**God's Mysteries Unfolding**  
**The RCIA Process**

*“Come you who are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom that has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me into your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me. I tell you whenever you did this for the least of my brothers and sisters, You did it for me!”*

Matthew 25:34-37,40

***New Life***

Wow! These are some mighty challenging commands we receive here from Jesus. There is nothing left to wonder about, this is the lifestyle you will live by, now that you are a new portion of the Body of Christ, born again through the waters of Baptism and the fire of the Spirit through Confirmation.

***Easter Morning and the Empty Tomb***

In our parish, we have been blessed to be able to have baptisms by immersion. The baptismal font in its cove near the sanctuary is visible to the people who have assembled to witness the miracle of our risen Lord. We see the baptismal font, where the catechumens stepped into the tomb in which they would bury the darkness of their past lives, and arise to a new life, shedding the shrouds which covered them in their iniquities. These shrouds lying near the tomb, are reminders of a life they left behind, as they now walk forward into the light of Christ.

## *Glory, Glory, Glory...*

The most powerful part of the Easter Morning mass is about to take place; for me this is a twofold event for our newly baptized and the whole church as we celebrate this Holy day. The first most powerful and spiritually moving occurrence in this Liturgy is when Father asks us to make a profession of faith and a renewal of our baptismal promises. Then we are called forward (in our parish we come forward to the baptismal font) to bless ourselves with the life giving waters of baptism. Just to be able to watch the neophytes (the newly baptized) approach the font and bless themselves with the water in which they were baptized, is an awe inspiring experience for me. The second most moving experience for me is when the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins, knowing that our newly initiated members will be able to share at the table with us! *We are the Body of Christ!*

The newest *members* of our Catholic family now approach the banquet table, and hold out their hands in anticipation of receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ once more in our Easter Feast. They proclaim their belief in His presence by saying *Amen!*

The Alleluia has risen from its tomb as the Church sings out with joyful praises to our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

## *Exploring the Mysteries*

The first week after Easter you will probably have your regular meeting on the night or day you ordinarily gather together. There is an immediate need to share your experiences and who better to share them with, than the people who have journeyed with you along this path?

Mystery surrounds the sacraments, now they have been opened up to you through a unique experience. It is an experience many of you participated in, but no one can have the exact same relationship with God that you do, and no one had the exact same feelings as you did. Now is the time to actually explore the mysteries of the sacraments as they have been revealed to you this past weekend.

This Easter weekend was not a graduation ceremony; it was your initiation into the beginning of the longest part of your spiritual journey-the rest of your life! It was you who chose to be a part of this assembly, and it is your choice to continue on this road. All I can say here is that I feel very strongly about you (the neophytes) continuing to gather through the Pentecost weekend. This is a goal you have set, and now we will gather together to learn more about the first people to go through this "initiation", the Apostles! They learned from the Master, Himself, and all through the Easter season you will continue to learn, from the readings in the Liturgy of the Word each week until Pentecost. The Bible is one of the most powerful learning tools we have. It was written that we might believe, composed by the first neophytes who relate their experiences in the written word for us.

### ***Anticipating Pentecost***

The days leading up to Pentecost prepare you for life in the Spirit. They prepare you to deal with the daily ordeals that assault you from all sides. We gather daily or weekly to feed our needs, we desire to be with people who believe what we believe. Our inner spirit craves to know others who can worship and glorify God in a satisfying and uplifting tradition that makes you feel comfortable. You can leave this Liturgy with a feeling of fulfillment as you are sent forth to “love and serve the Lord”. Each part of the “Body of Christ” makes a whole body when we are gathered together in communion with one another.

### ***Our Pentecost Celebration***

This year as a special treat for our neophytes, we decided to celebrate with a home Mass. We gathered at the home of one of our team members. We all shared in a very unique experience with each other as we broke bread and thanked God for this opportunity to be with one another. This spiritual meal would feed us on our journey till we met again for Mass on Sunday. We partook in another meal to feed our physical needs after Mass; we each brought something from home. This was the most satisfying conclusion to our gatherings in which I would be involved. The group would now be going on in the process with another team member. She will be helping the neophytes to learn more about the “mechanics” of our faith, the customs, traditions and practices that we all continue to learn throughout our lifetimes. The people who have been involved in the RCIA in past years are also invited. We invite the whole Catholic community through parish bulletins (we have a city wide column that is put together and distributed to each parish to print in their bulletins).

### ***Mystagogy is Forever and Ever...***

Mystagogy is literally a part of each of our lives; it is a continuing adult education for those who wish to explore our faith more deeply. A team member will usually let the people who come, choose a topic to explore and discuss. Many of the topics that have been covered are topics that you might feel need more explanation. Maybe more of the mechanics on how to do something needs to be covered, such as Reconciliation or saying the rosary. Whatever your need may be, the team will try their best to assist you and find the answer to your questions.

One point I would like to make here is that *Mystagogy is for everyone and it is forever and ever...*

There is nothing in our lives or our faith that is not a daily experience. And if we are lucky God gives us the knowledge that He has given us a spiritual gift through this experience, and He also gives us the grace to cope with our trials in life. Hopefully you feel the same way. He is already working in your life if you are reading this, God has brought you to this article for a reason. I hope that you may fulfill the desire to find where God is astir in your life and that you ask Him

to guide you where He needs you the most. May the Peace and Love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

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