



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

RCIA

What is the RCIA?

The RCIA, which stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, is a process through which non-baptized men and women enter the Catholic Church. It includes several stages marked by study, prayer and rites at Mass. Participants in the RCIA are known as catechumens. They undergo a process of conversion as they study the Gospel, profess faith in Jesus and the Catholic Church, and receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Holy Eucharist. The RCIA process follows the ancient practice of the Church and was restored by the Second Vatican Council as the normal way adults prepare for baptism. In 1974 the Rite for Christian Initiation for Adults was formally approved for use in the United States.

What are the steps of RCIA?

Prior to formally beginning the RCIA process, an individual comes to some knowledge of Jesus Christ, considers his or her relationship with Jesus Christ and is usually attracted in some way to the Catholic Church. This time period is known as the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate. For some people, this process involves a long period of searching; for others, it is a shorter time.

After conversation with an advisor, the person, known as an "inquirer," may decide to continue the process and seek acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. The inquirer

stands in the midst of the parish community and states that he or she wants to continue the process and become a baptized member of the Catholic Church. The local parish assembly affirms his or her wish and the inquirer then becomes a "catechumen."

The period of the catechumenate can last for as long as several years or for a much shorter time. It depends on how the person is growing in faith, what questions and obstacles they encounter along the way, and how God leads them on this faith journey. During this time the catechumens consider what God is saying to them in the Scriptures, what changes in their life they want to make to respond to God's inspiration, and what membership in the Catholic Church involves. Catechumens have a special connection to the Church and even though they are not yet baptized, they also have certain rights in the Church.

When a catechumen and the parish team working with him or her believes the person is ready to make a faith commitment to Jesus in the Catholic Church, the next step is the request for baptism and the celebration of the Rite of Election. This rite includes the official enrollment of names of all those seeking baptism at the coming Easter Vigil. In the beginning of Lent the catechumens and their sponsors and families and members of the parish gather as a diocese and

the catechumens publicly request baptism. Their names are then recorded in a special book and they are then no longer called catechumens, but "the elect." The days of Lent are the final period of purification and enlightenment leading up to the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil. This Lenten season is a period of intense preparation marked by prayer, study, and spiritual direction for the elect, and special prayers for them by the parish communities.

The third formal step is the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, which takes place during the Easter Vigil Liturgy on Holy Saturday night when the catechumen receives the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Holy Eucharist. Now the person is a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church and will continue to live out his or her response to God as a member of this faith community.

After the person is initiated at the Vigil, another period of formation and education continues in the period of the post-baptismal catechesis which is called "mystagogy." This period continues at least until Pentecost and often longer. During the period of mystagogy the newly baptized members reflect on their experiences at the Easter Vigil and continue to learn more about the Scriptures, the sacraments, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In addition they reflect on how they will

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Things to talk about:

- Do you know anyone who has gone through RCIA?
- Do you know anyone who might be interested in RCIA?

serve Christ and help in the Church's mission and outreach activities.

What is meant when people refer to men and women coming into "full communion with the Church"

Coming into full communion with the Catholic Church describes the process for entrance into the Catholic Church for men and women who are baptized Christians but not Roman Catholics. These individuals make a profession of faith but they are not baptized again.

To prepare for this reception, the people, who are called "candidates," usually participate in a formation program to help them understand and experience the specific teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. Some of their formation and preparation may be with catechumens preparing for baptism

Taken from the USCCB



S Saint of the Day: St. John Chrysostom (d. 407)

On Saturday, September 13, the Church remembers St John Chrysostom.

The ambiguity and intrigue surrounding John, the great preacher (his name means "golden-mouthed") from Antioch, are characteristic of the life of any great man in a capital city. Brought to Constantinople after a dozen years of priestly service in Syria, John found himself the reluctant victim of an imperial ruse to make him bishop in the greatest city of the empire. Ascetic, unimposing but dignified, and troubled by stomach ailments from his desert days as a monk, John began his episcopate under the cloud of imperial politics.

If his body was weak, his tongue was powerful. The content of his sermons, his exegesis of Scripture, were never without a point. Sometimes the point stung the high and mighty. Some sermons lasted up to two hours.

His life-style at the imperial court was not appreciated by some courtiers. He offered a modest table to episcopal

sycophants hanging around for imperial and ecclesiastical favors. John deplored the court protocol that accorded him precedence before the highest state officials. He would not be a kept man.

His zeal led him to decisive action. Bishops who bribed their way into their office were deposed. Many of his sermons called for concrete steps to share wealth with the poor. The rich did not appreciate hearing from John that private property existed because of Adam's fall from grace any more than married men liked to hear that they were bound to marital fidelity just as much as their wives. When it came to justice and charity, John acknowledged no double standards.

Aloof, energetic, outspoken, especially when he became excited in the pulpit, John was a sure target for criticism and personal trouble. He was accused of gorging himself secretly on rich wines and fine foods. His faithfulness as spiritual director to the rich widow, Olym-

pia, provoked much gossip attempting to prove him a hypocrite where wealth and chastity were concerned. His action taken against unworthy bishops in Asia Minor was viewed by other ecclesiastics as a greedy, uncanonical extension of his authority.

Two prominent personages who personally undertook to discredit John were Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, and Empress Eudoxia. Theophilus feared the growth in importance of the Bishop of Constantinople and took occasion to charge John with fostering heresy. Theophilus and other angered bishops were supported by Eudoxia. The empress resented his sermons contrasting gospel values with the excesses of imperial court life. Whether intended or not, sermons mentioning the lurid Jezebel and impious Herodias were associated with the empress, who finally did manage to have John exiled. He died in exile in 407

From www.americancatholic.org



RCIA History In A Nutshell

Early Church (first to third centuries): Persons wanting to become Christian live with a small Christian community to learn their way of life. The structured "apprenticeship" of the Christian in training becomes known as the catechumenate.

Fifth Century: The catechumenate begins to dissolve because Christianity had been legalized in 315 A.D. and now large numbers of people are becoming Christians. Infant Baptism becomes the norm.

Twentieth Century: Revival of catechumenate in Africa and France. Second Vatican Council, 1963-65; Council calls for reinstating the catechumenate. Post-Vatican Council II: 1966-Provisional ritual distributed by Rome; 1972-Official promulgation of the RCIA; 1974-Provisional English translation available; 1988-U.S. bishops mandate implementation of RCIA

From: Institute Resource Packet, North American Forum on the Catechumenate, 2000

Interested in knowing more about RCIA?
Then contact Marie Fischette at 394-1220, ext 37.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.