



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Introduction to the Process of Initiation

An Encounter with Christ

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is an encounter with Christ. Seekers who come to the Church have been guided by the Holy Spirit to discover what it means to follow Christ as a Catholic. Those entrusted to journey with these seekers give witness to the Faith. These witnesses are also called to deepen their own faith as they experience the Holy Spirit working in the lives of those seeking initiation.

Conversion

In the **Introduction** to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, we find the basic theology of the Rite which lies in the conversion of the heart. The conversion of heart comes from the proclamation of the Gospel.¹

The Process

In the **Introduction** we also find out more about the process itself. The principles of the process are set out in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the rite. The initiation of catechumens:

1. **is a gradual process** (There is no “one size fits all” program as the process is led by the Holy Spirit.)
2. **takes place within the community of the faithful** (The parish community is not only the place, but the means of catechesis. It is important to include as many members of the parish in the process as possible and to invite the seekers to experience all aspects of parish life.)
3. **is always an occasion to reflect upon the Paschal mystery** (We tell the story of Jesus. We share our personal stories - the joys, the moments when we experience the life of the risen Christ, but also, the demands, the moments when we are called to die to self for Christ. We share the complete story of our Christian faith as lived out in our lifelong

CONVERSION

“The constant turning of the individual and the community more and more towards the face of Christ and his Church.

Conversion is a lifelong journey of growing more loving and compassionate, growing in our ability to take on the mind and heart of Christ, of learning to become the hands and feet of Christ in a world that needs this presence and his message.”

- *On Good Soil #28*

¹ For more of a theological reflection on the RCIA see: The Theology of RCIA leaflet in this series.



journey to become more faithful disciples. We listen to the stories of those who seek Him and help them to find the Paschal mystery in their lives.)

4. **renews the faithful as they offer an example that will help seekers to obey the Holy Spirit more fully** (The whole Christian community is called to witness to the life of Christ by constantly turning more and more towards Him and His Church as they follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit in their own hearts.)
5. **is suited to the spiritual journey of adults and demands an adult approach to formation** (unless it is adapted for young people). (Adults learn in a variety of ways. It is good to be aware of this and to change the way the message is shared.² It is also important to use best practices when dealing with adults and small groups.³)
6. varies according to:
 - ❖ how God leads the seeker,
 - ❖ how the seeker responds,
 - ❖ the work and prayers of the Church, and
 - ❖ the circumstances of time and place.

Even though the parish may have a formalized process that runs from September to May or June, it is important that there is at least one person in the parish who is able to journey with the seekers whenever they are inspired by the Holy Spirit to inquire about the Faith. Some suggestions for including year-round seekers include:

- ❖ inviting the seekers to attend the Sunday liturgy and making arrangements to sit with them or to meet them after the liturgy to discuss what they have experienced;
- ❖ inviting the seeker to social and/or spiritual activities taking place in the parish and introducing them to other members of the faith community;
- ❖ scheduling regular meetings with the RCIA coordinator or the priest in order to get to know more about the seeker's faith journey and marital status.

² For more information about varying the approach, see RCIA leaflet on Summary of Gifts of the Spirit: Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education

³ For more information about facilitating a small group see RCIA leaflet Practical tips for facilitating a small group