

St. Pius X Catholic Church

Four Mile Markers on The RCIA Journey

The formal faith journey that leads to full communion into the Catholic Church is called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults or **RCIA**. The **RCIA** is a process of conversion. It is designed to be a journey of faith, to help one discern whether entering the Catholic Church is what is best for them. This is done through regular meetings with other inquirers to learn, pray and begin to see what life in this community is all about. In addition to these weekly meetings there are rites that take place to punctuate the stages of the person's faith walk.

1. Period of Inquiry (pre-catechumenate)

The Pre-Catechumenate is a preliminary step in the journey of faith. It begins when a person first becomes interested in the Church and then becomes more formalized when they join a RCIA program. It is a time for listening to the word and having initial questions about the faith answered. People in this stage of the process are called "**inquirers**"

Rite of Welcoming and Acceptance

The period of initial conversion ends with the ritual called the "*Rite of Welcoming and Acceptance*". This rite is generally offered at the beginning of advent and takes place in a Sunday liturgy so that the rest of the church community can participate. **Sponsors** also need to be identified by the end of this period. The sponsor is a Catholic who is willing to guide and support the convert during this process.

2. Period of the Catechumenate

The Period of the Catechumenate is a time of more formal training on doctrines of the Church and sacred Scriptures. In this phase of the RCIA cycle the inquirers are now referred to as "**catechumens**". The catechumen is an unbaptized person who is ready to live as a part of the community even though they are not yet full members. Other candidates for initiation are those who are already baptized, either in a Catholic or Protestant Church, but not fully initiated. At St. Pius X we encourage participation in the Sunday worship even though RCIA members may not yet be able to participate in the Eucharist (taking of the bread and wine). Sponsors are welcome to come with the catechumen (or candidate) to the classes and special events to be a source of personnel support.

Rite of Election

When the catechumen is ready to respond fully to God's call to faith through the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) they participate in the Rite of Election (offered at the beginning of Lent). This ritual is the official request on the part of the participant for entrance into the Church and usually takes place at the Cathedral.

3. Period of Purification & Enlightenment (Lent)

Now considered "members of the elect" (the elect), the RCIA participants will enter into a period that places a final focus on the deepening awareness of God through prayer. This period ends with candidates' entrance into the Church at the Easter vigil.

Scrutinies

Special penitential and reconciling rites called "Scrutinies" are performed for three Sundays at mass during the Period of Purification & Enlightenment. The Scrutinies include special prayers of healing offered by the community to give the elect strength on their final leg of their journey into the Church.

Easter Vigil

At the Easter Vigil mass all the catechumens (people seeking baptism) and candidates (already baptized, but seeking to be confirmed in the Catholic Church) reach this goal. The special Mass is punctuated with new life and the theme of light. Depending on each person's circumstance the seekers are baptized, confirmed and receive their first Eucharist.

4. Mystogogy

This period really involves the rest of the new Catholic's life in the Church as they find their special way of being active and committed members. Those who have been participating in the RCIA journey meet for several weeks after the Easter Vigil to reflect on what this new conversion means in their life.