

OUR LADY OF PEACE PARISH
Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

Thinking about joining the Catholic Church? Want to learn more about the Catholic Faith? Is your child making their First Communion next year and you want to be more involved in their faith life?

Consider participating in the parish's R.C.I.A. program.

What is R.C.I.A.?

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.) is rooted in the ancient traditions of the early Church that formed new believers in Jesus as members of the Christian community. Today, the R.C.I.A. continues in the Church's "family tradition" of welcoming, supporting, and nurturing new brothers and sisters in faith. R.C.I.A. forms today's inquirers into tomorrow's faithful, welcomes baptized persons of other faith communities as gifts to enrich our Church, and serves as a sign of the on-going need for conversion and renewal in the our faith community.

Who is R.C.I.A. for?

R.C.I.A. is for any adult interested in learning about the church or becoming a Catholic Christian. Those just starting the process are called inquirers. When they become ready to commit to become members of the Church, they move on to the next steps of the process. If they have not been baptized, they are called Catechumens. If they have already been baptized, they are called Candidates. If they are baptized Catholics who are preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation, they are called Confirmandi. R.C.I.A. is also for any Catholic Christian who wants to learn more about the Church and his or her Catholic faith.

When is the "right" time to participate?

Becoming a Catholic is an important decision in your life, a decision that should be made after careful thought and prayer. We believe that your decision to look into the Catholic Church is your response to an invitation made by Jesus to come to know him through this community. In other words, Jesus is inviting you into a personal relationship with him. Conversion describes the process of coming to know Him more deeply. The Catholic community wishes to serve as an instrument to help you to grow in your relationship with the Lord.

How does R.C.I.A. work?

R.C.I.A. is a process of ever-deepening growth and commitment -- a process that continues long after you are initiated into the Catholic Church. We will try to help you discover your readiness to make that commitment to Christ in and through the Church. To assist participants in their journey, our parish's R.C.I.A. program meets on Thursdays (September through April) for approximately one and one-half hours. Sessions include a combination of lecture, discussion, multi-media presentations, prayer, and reflection. Finally, we will celebrate your journey to Christ in various rituals.

How do I sign-up or learn more?

R.C.I.A. begins with the first session in September. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact one of the R.C.I.A. team members: Sister Barbara Kolesar (263-4271) or Deacon Jeffrey Fortkamp (246-0174).

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The R.C.I.A. program follows the following process:

The first stage: The Period of Inquiry.

This first stage of R.C.I.A. is a time of unhurried reflection and discovery, whereby a person begins to search out God's call to enter more fully into the life of the Church. Helping the inquirer in this process are members of our own parish family who form the R.C.I.A. team. Team members meet weekly (Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.) with the inquirers, helping them to discern God's calling through prayer, encouragement and the sharing of their own faith stories. The participants also receive introductory instruction on the Catholic faith.

The second Stage: The Catechumenate.

Once the inquirer decides to enter into the process that will lead to full initiation into the life of the Church, he or she moves into the next stage of formation through the Rite of Acceptance in early December. In this stage, an inquirer is now called either a catechumen or a candidate. A catechumen is a previously unbaptized person who is seeking membership in the Catholic Church. A candidate, on the other hand, is a person who was baptized in a Christian, non-Catholic denomination. During this period of formation, the level of and expectation for participation is increased. The faith of the catechumen or candidate is deepened through prayer and reflection upon God's word at weekly Sunday meetings. We first gather during the 10:00 AM Mass and then we are dismissed after the homily in order to further reflect upon the word of God. In addition to our Sunday meetings, we will continue to meet on Thursdays in order to grow in our knowledge of the faith. During this stage, both catechumens and candidates are given the assistance of a parish sponsor, a member of the parish community who is committed to help them in the process of becoming a full member of the Church.

The third phase: Period of Lenten Purification Leading to the Easter Vigil.

On the first Sunday of Lent, the catechumens and candidates are sent from the parish through the Rite of Sending and then presented to the Bishop in the Rite of Election. The period which follows these rites is one of purification for the catechumen, the candidate, and indeed for the entire parish community. We are all called to reform our lives according to the demands of the gospel. At the conclusion of this period, the catechumens and the candidates are initiated into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil. For the catechumen, this means the reception of all three sacraments of initiation--Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. For the candidates, it means full reception into the Church through Eucharist and Confirmation.

The fourth stage: Mystagogy.

The Greek word mystagogy means "entering into the mystery." This phase which occurs after Easter marks a time when those who have become full members of the Church now have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the mystery of the faith. This period reminds everyone that growth in the faith is ongoing and lifelong.

"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." [Ephesians 2:19-22]