

# THE R.C.I.A. PROCESS

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF PARTICIPANTS?

### *Overview of the R.C.I.A. Process*

It is always a joyful time when a person wants to become a Catholic Christian. It is a sign that the Father continues to draw people to Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through Jesus alone that we are saved and through Jesus that we are meant to enter into eternal life. All of this is sheer gift to us! God generously bestows abundant graces on us all, and we ... well, our task is to respond appropriately to the invitation to grow extended to us by our ever-loving God.

In God's plan, we are meant to grow as individuals in the midst of the community called together by God. We ordinarily call this community a "church." There are many other names by which this believing community may accurately be described.

*The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)* is the ordinary process in the Catholic Church for initiating adults into our believing community. There are several periods and steps in becoming a Catholic. Usually this process is completed in a year or so. However, this process may take several years if the spiritual good of the individual calls for a longer time for growth in the faith.

### *Who is the RCIA for?*

In the Catholic Church there are *three sacraments* of initiation. To be fully initiated into the Church, a person must have received all three sacraments, namely: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

The R.C.I.A. process is designed primarily for the unbaptized who are seeking entrance into the Catholic Church. At St. Pius V, we also include the following persons in the RCIA process for their sacramental preparation.

- (1) Those validly baptized in other Christian denominations who are seeking to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church, and
- (2) Baptized Catholics who are seeking both 1<sup>st</sup> Communion as well as Confirmation in the Church.

### *How long does the RCIA Process take?*

Within the general periods of the Rite, each person will progress at his / her own pace. "The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place."

This spiritual journey is not just a question of putting in so much time or attending a fixed number of meetings. It is a question of going on a spiritual journey that goes on for the rest of your life. It never ends. A person progresses from one period to another when the things that are to happen interiorly (spiritually) have sufficiently taken place. We are very clearly looking for interior growth and development in the spiritual life.

When a person is ready to go to the next period, and only then, will he / she go forward. How long this takes will vary from person to person.

**What are the different periods and steps?**

<p><b><u>1<sup>st</sup> Period</u> <i>The period of Evangelization and Pre-catechumenate - (Inquiry):</i></b> “This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.”</p>	<p><b><u>1<sup>st</sup> Step</u> <i>Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens:</i></b> “This liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the Catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God’s Call to follow the way of Christ.”</p>
<p><b><u>2<sup>nd</sup> Period</u> <i>The period of the Catechumenate:</i></b> “This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens’ faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.”</p>	<p><b><u>2<sup>nd</sup> Step</u> <i>Election or Enrollment of Names:</i></b> “This liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens’ readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.”</p>
<p><b><u>3<sup>rd</sup> Period</u> <i>The period of Purification and Enlightenment:</i></b> “This is the time immediately preceding the elects’ initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.”</p>	<p><b><u>3<sup>rd</sup> Step</u> <i>Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation:</i></b> “This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect are initiated through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.”</p>
<p><b><u>4<sup>th</sup> Period</u> <i>Post baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy:</i></b> “This is the time following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.”</p>	

(All of the quotations above describing the periods and steps come from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.)

## **EXPECTATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOUR (4) PERIODS**

In each of the periods it is expected that the each individual will be willing to share in the meetings, both with the team and other participants. We recognize that this will be easier for some than others. Communication is very important.

**THE 1<sup>ST</sup> PERIOD** (*Inquiry*): This is a period for asking questions. It is hoped that you will by the action of the Holy Spirit come to believe in Jesus, be freely converted to the Lord, and commit yourself freely to him.

Expectations include coming with open hearts and minds – a reality brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. We will be looking for growth, indeed maturation in the genuine “will to follow Christ and seek baptism.”

Initially you are free to come and go to these sessions, as you will. However, as you mature in this period, and as you become more sure you want to pursue a faith commitment within the Catholic Church, it is expected that your attendance will become a very regular, indeed ordinarily a *weekly*, commitment on your part.

**THE 2<sup>ND</sup> PERIOD** (*Catechumenate*): In the catechumenate period, a person continues the commitment to growth in the Lord Jesus Christ. Weekly attendance at the Wednesday meetings and Mass on Sundays, which involves dismissal and meeting as a group, is expected.

On most of this part of your journey, there will be a sponsor who accompanies you. In your individual talks with this sponsor, there will be conversations about how things are going for you, how your faith is developing, how you are doing with your struggles (we all have them).

Again, continuing spiritual growth is expected. Through your discussions with the team, and your sponsor, and meeting with the priest, we will monitor your progress as best we can.

**THE 3<sup>RD</sup> PERIOD** (*Purification & Enlightenment*): This six or seven week period ordinarily coincides with Lent. Especially during this time of intense spiritual growth in preparation for Easter, it is expected to that *everyone will be at all meetings* whether on Wednesdays or the Sunday Mass and dismissals. Remember, the initiation process is primarily about conversion of life. Outwardly, in part, being present and participating in Mass and meetings shows this.

During this period there will be a number of liturgical rituals. These rituals are group activities, and need to be experienced together with **all** who are advancing in this process. Your participation is both vital and necessary, not only for your self, but also for others.

This is a time for intense turning to the Lord.

**THE 4<sup>TH</sup> PERIOD** (*Mystagogy*): This is a time of tremendous joy and celebration flowing from the Easter celebrations. The initial euphoria is to give way to a reflective time of introspection. Going within ourselves, we are to seek to grow in the understanding of what has taken place in us by the grace of God. What has the Lord done for us? How can we make a return of praise and service for all the Lord in his love has done?

In the Diocese of Orange, this period extends until Pentecost. However, the meetings will be every other Wednesday. Again, your presence and participation in these meetings is expected.

This is a time of mutual support as you seek to integrate fully into the community, participate fully in the community, and commit yourself to some initial service to the community. It is not always easy to make the transition to being fully initiated into the Catholic Church. Being supported in this way is positively indicated, that is, it is in your best interest.

### **Service Commitment:**

The 1992 American Bishops pastoral letter, titled “**Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response**”, describes a Christian steward as:

*“One who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.”*

Christian Stewardship is an integral part of the Catholic faith, therefore, it is included in the sacramental preparation process. Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe. It is not about our generosity, it is about our grateful response to God’s generosity. It is an attitude of mind and heart that is carried out in action, producing good works as an outward sign of one’s faith.

Putting the theology of Stewardship into practice is the basis for the Christian Service component of the program. You will be provided with opportunities, activities and sharing exercises that will help you identify your unique gifts and challenge you to see the world through the eyes of a grateful steward.

The details and specific service requirements are attached.

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### **Costs & Expenses:**

There are expenses incurred for each individual during the course of the RCIA process. We ask you, *if possible*, to help defray the cost of the materials. No one will be denied sacraments because of inability to make a contribution towards the cost of the process.

We ask for a donation of **\$70.00** to offset the cost of books and materials.

There is a required *weekend retreat* that takes place before the Easter Vigil (the usual time to receive the sacraments). Over the past few years, the cost of this retreat has been approximately **\$170.00** per person. Again, if you are able to pay for your own retreat, it would be expected. However, the partial or full cost of the retreat may be subsidized *if* that expense works a *real* hardship on you.