

Becoming a Catholic

Adults who are interested in exploring Catholic beliefs and practices are invited to participate in the **RCIA** (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). This is a process of prayer, reflection and study spread over several months during which the inquirer participates in Catholic life and worship. The focus of the RCIA process is Christian conversion - a change of heart in which the individual turns toward God and away from whatever is in the way of living a full Christian life.

Once one has decided to become a baptized Christian, the next question becomes, *'Is the Catholic Church the faith tradition within which I can best live out my Christian life?'* The Christian faith is lived out in community and so the RCIA process will explore what Catholics believe and the implications of accepting those beliefs.

The RCIA is a journey, marked by rites (ceremonies) that lead to the reception of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist on the night before Easter (the Easter Vigil). These are called the sacraments of initiation.

The process begins with a period of **Inquiry**. Stories are shared, questions are asked and the basics of Christianity are explored. The inquirer is invited to get to know the community and hopefully to see in that community an example of the Christian life. Each inquirer has a sponsor, a person who serves as a companion, a guide, an advocate. At the end of the Inquiry the first Rite takes place. In the **Rite of Welcome** participants ask to be formally enrolled into the **Catechumenate**. The word comes from the Greek term meaning *to teach by word of mouth* and suggests instruction in the faith.

During the Catechumenate phase, participants prepare for the sacraments, attend Mass regularly with the community, share discussion on the Sunday scriptures and continue to learn and reflect on Catholic beliefs. They participate in the ministry and social life of the parish.

On the first Sunday of Lent, the Catechumenate period ends and the **Rite of Election** is celebrated. The church calls participants to the Easter sacraments and to deeper relationship with God.

Lent, the forty days before Easter, is a special time in the Catholic Church. It focuses on nurturing spirituality, a personal relationship with God, with a community emphasis on prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We are called to examine our lives to see what is standing in the way of living a full Christian life. The Catholic tradition regards conversion as a lifetime process which begins at baptism and ends with death. Lent is a time for recommitting ourselves to conversion.

During the period of Lent, participants are now called the Elect, and are led into a deeper prayer life and understanding of what it means to be followers of Christ. A retreat, or time apart for prayer and reflection, is part of the experience. On the second, third and fourth Sunday of Lent, the Elect participate in rites called "**Scrutinies**." This is not a public examination of worthiness. The community prays for and with the Elect, reminding us that we all still need God's saving power in the process of ongoing conversion.

At the **Easter Vigil**, the Church invites those who have not been baptized to enter the waters of baptism, from which they emerge as new creations, sharing the life of the Risen Christ. All of the Elect then receive the sacrament of Confirmation to empower them in the Spirit. All are nourished at the Table of the Lord as they take communion for the first time. Their new way of life has begun!

Post-Easter gatherings are held to reflect on the sacramental experience and to discern ministry in the community. Christian initiation through RCIA is now complete; the Christian journey of life is just beginning!

Frequently Asked Questions

Will there be pressure on me to join the Church if I attend the inquiry classes?

Not at all. The purpose of the process is to provide information and experiences needed to decide whether God is calling you to the Catholic way of life. Our role as leaders and teachers in RCIA is to help you discern for yourself. Worship with us, explore our beliefs and practices, spend a year among us participating in the community, and then decide if you are called by God to this way of life.

What if I just want to learn about the Catholic Church without joining?

We welcome those who just want to understand what being a Catholic really means. It is not unusual for people who are engaged or married to a Catholic to participate so that they will understand their spouse's religion. This is also true of parents whose children are being raised Catholic - they want to know how to answer the questions posed by their children. All are welcome.

Why does it have to be so long and so public with all the rites and ceremonies at Mass?

Although the decision to embrace the Catholic faith is deeply personal, it also has a community dimension. Catholics believe that we encounter the Risen Christ in the community of believers, in the Word of God and in the Sacraments, especially so in the Breaking of the Bread (Luke 24:13-35). Faith is lived out within the context of community. Baptism invests us with bringing the mission of Christ to the world. Those standing before us during these rites are evidence that the Church is doing its work. The presence of those in RCIA is an occasion of celebration and gratitude.

As for the length, this is an important decision, not to be rushed. It is not at all unusual for former participants who had this concern to gratefully acknowledge that they would not have missed this experience for the world.

What about my children? If I become Catholic, can they do it too?

Of course! Everyone is welcome. If neither parent is a practicing Catholic we defer baptism of children until the Easter Vigil. Infants and young children do not require additional preparation as they will grow in the faith just as any other person baptized as a young child. School aged children or teens will be instructed in a process similar to the RCIA, adapted to be appropriate to their age. The older the person is, the more he or she will participate in the decision.

What do I do if I want to enroll or know more?

Contact Jim Hughes at 360-629-4425 or cecilia2@catholicweb.com



St. Cecilia Catholic Church

RCIA 2008-2009 Schedule of Meetings and other RCIA events

as of August 21 2008

Please Note: RCIA Meetings are on Tuesday evenings in the Social Hall 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

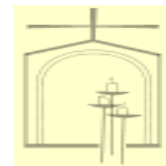
The **Dismissals are on Sundays**, we gather at 10:50 in the Social Hall and will be dismissed to the Portable (Knights of Columbus Meeting Room) meeting through 12 noon.

Period of Inquiry

- Sep 16 Tue RCIA Team meeting Mapping and Planning
- Sep 21 Sun 100th Anniversary of our Parish, 11:00 Mass, picnic following.
- Sep 23 Tue RCIA Meeting Orientation ~ Getting Acquainted
Dessert Social, overview of RCIA
- Sep 28 SUN Catechetical Sunday ~ Blessing of Catechists and others involved in Faith Formation efforts within the Parish
- Sep 30 Tue Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Creed (with Compendium)
Explanation of RCIA Rites
- Oct 5 SUN Rite of Welcoming 9:00 AM Mass, all invited to attend and observe
- Oct 7 Tue Who's Who in the Catholic Church, Journey of Faith sharing, discussion
- Oct 14 Tue The Bible and Tradition, bring your favorite edition
- Oct 21 Tue Ways of coming to know God
The Revelation of God

Period of the Catechumenate

- Oct 28 Tue What are Holy Days of Obligation? All Saints Day/All Souls Day explained
Discussion on Communion of Saints, personal faith sharing.
- Nov 4 Tue Prayer, the Importance of
- Nov 11 Tue Veteran's Day ~ The Mass, why, how, history of
- Nov 18 Tue The Trinity
- Nov 23 Sun Profession of Faith 5:00 PM Mass
- Nov 25 Tue Liturgical year, Church Seasons, Advent
- Nov 27 Thr Thanksgiving 10:00 AM Mass



Advent Begins

- Nov 30 **Sun** 1st Dismissal 11:00 AM Mass Scripture discussion and how it applies to us
- Dec 2 Tue Our Lady of Guadalupe and other Marian devotions explained
- Dec 7 **Sun** 2nd Dismissal 11:00 AM Mass Scripture and personal application
- Dec 9 Tue Apostolic Tradition and the Magisterium explained
- Dec 14 **Sun** 3rd Dismissal 11:00 am Mass Scripture broke open to our hearts
- Dec 16 Tue Who is Jesus Christ?
- Dec 21 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 AM Mass, scripture review, what is the difference in the Nativity narratives and why?
- Dec 23 Tue **NO CLASS**
- Dec 24 Wed Christmas Eve Services, Children's Gospel Pageant
- Dec 25 Thr Christmas Day
- Dec 30 Tue **NO CLASS**



2009

- Jan 6 Tue The Sacraments, overview. Team members explain, speak of favorites.
- Jan 11 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 Mass
- Jan 13 Tue Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Source and Summit of our Faith
- Jan 18 **Sun** MLK ~ Dismissal 11:00 Mass
- Jan 20 Tue Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders
- Jan 25 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 Mass
- Jan 27 Tue Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing
- Feb 1 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 Mass, What is Sin, Mortal and Venial Sin
- Feb 3 Tue Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation, the Holy Spirit within us
- Feb 8 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 Mass
- Feb 10 Tue What is Lent? Lenten customs and traditions, Fasting and Abstinence explained
- Feb 15 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 Mass
- Feb 17 Tue MWB Lenten Devotions, personal sacrifice, Last Things (Heaven and Hell)
- Feb 22 **Sun** Dismissal 11:00 Mass ~ What is Ash Wednesday?
- Feb 24 Tue No Meeting ~ Come to Ash Wednesday Services, brief meeting afterwards

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

Feb 25 Wed Ash Wednesday ~ Lent Begins

Mar 1 Sun **Dismissal 11:00 Mass** Explanation of Rite of Election & Continuing Conversion

Mar 3 Tue **No Meeting**

Mar 4 Wed *Rite of Election at St. James Cathedral, 7:30 PM*

arrive at Parish 5:00 PM, car pool departure at 5:15 PM with dinner enroute (no host).

Mar 8 Sun **Dismissal 11:00 Mass**

Mar 10 Tue The Mass; video, and the Commandments

Mar 15 Sun **1st Scrutiny and dismissal at Saturday 5:00 PM Mass**

Mar 17 Tue Presentation of the Lord's Prayer, discussion of

Mar 22 Sun **2nd Scrutiny and dismissal at Sunday 9:00 Mass**

Mar 24 Tue Presentation of the Creed, discussion. Apostle's Creed

Mar 29 Sun **3rd Scrutiny and dismissal at Sunday 5:00 PM Mass, Breaking Bread together**

Mar 31 Tue What is Holy Week? The Triduum explained



Apr 5 Sun **Palm Sunday, Candidates and Catechumens with Sponsors arrive at 10:40 am for Entrance Procession**

Apr 7 Tue Further discussion on Holy Week, practice session for Vigil Service

Apr 9 Thr Holy Thursday Evening Service

Apr 10 Fri Good Friday

Apr 11 Sat Morning Retreat, Reflection Period 9 – 12 Noon Candidates and Catechumens and Sponsors attend.

Evening Easter Vigil Services, Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, Reception follows in Social Hall

Apr 12 Sun **Easter Sunday, no RCIA**

Period of Mystagogy

Apr 14 Tue Reflections of the Vigil and “Afterglow” discussion, photo exchange

Apr 21 Tue Social Justice and the Church

Apr 28 Tue Doubting Thomas – Touching the Risen Lord in our broken world

May 5 Tue Being Chosen in Christ through our Baptism ~ checking out the Gift

May 12 Tue How do we Profess Our Faith?

May 19 Tue Last meeting, review, critique, wrap up

Jul 8 Wed **First of the six Summer RC ~ RCIA Sessions**

Jul 15 Wed Second of the six sessions

Jul 22 Wed Third of the six sessions

Jul 29 Wed Fourth of the six sessions

Aug 5 Wed Fifth of the six sessions

Aug 12 Wed Six of the six sessions

