

# The Christian Initiation Of Adults

## *Church of the Holy Cross*

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R.C.I.A. stands for the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults and is shorthand for the prescribed way in which a person is formed and initiated into the Catholic faith. Becoming Roman Catholic is a lifelong faith journey, which takes into consideration each individual's previous religious background and present needs. Adult Initiation at the Church of the Holy Cross takes place in the midst of the Catholic community, whose prayers and support are continually asked for and given. Along with receiving the Sacraments of Initiation, there are four periods of formation and three major liturgical rites in which a person participates. The entire process generally lasts nine months to one year.

### **Inquiry**

This is the first step in the process of joining the Catholic Church and usually begins in September. Each weekly session provides *Inquirers* with basic information about a Catholic life of faith as well as an opportunity to ask questions in a safe and supportive atmosphere. Inquiry sessions are held on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 10:45 a.m. Inquirers are encouraged to begin attending Mass if they are not already doing so. This period of Inquiry normally ends around mid-November. Those wishing to explore the Catholic faith more deeply now enroll in the *Catechumenate*. This transition is marked by a person's participation in the *Rite of Acceptance & Welcome*, which is celebrated during the 11:00 a.m. Mass.

### **Catechumenate**

This is a time of continued formation in what it means to be a Catholic Christian. Catechumens and Candidates join the parish community for Sunday worship during the 11:00 a.m. Mass. *Catechumens* are men & women who are preparing for baptism. *Candidates* are adults, baptized in another Christian denomination, who are now preparing to enter into the fullness of the Catholic faith through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.



Catechumens and Candidates continue to participate in weekly **Catechetical Sessions** on Sunday mornings. These educational meetings are designed to explain in more depth the major beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church, particularly the Church's sacramental and moral life.

The prayers and companionship of a **Sponsor** support each Catechumen & Candidate on his or her spiritual journey. Sponsors attend the catechetical sessions, pray for the person whom they are sponsoring, and introduce the person to the ordinary rhythms of parish life.

The Catechumenate normally concludes in late winter or early spring. The parish sends those catechumens who are free and willing to join the Catholic Church to the **Rite of Election** with Archbishop Joseph Naumann on the first Sunday of Lent. Candidates are also sent to Archbishop Naumann to celebrate the **Call to Continuing Conversion**.

## **Spiritual Preparation for the Easter Sacraments**

This time of formation normally takes place during the season of Lent, which is the six weeks leading to Easter. It is a time of prayer, repentance and renewal in preparation for the great feast of Easter.

Baptized Candidates, called to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church, celebrate the **Penitential Rite** on the second Sunday of Lent during the 11:00 a.m. Mass. During this brief prayer ritual, the candidates acknowledge their need for spiritual purification and enlightenment. The Church community prays that they and, indeed all of us, will be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and draw strength from the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, which is celebrated either communally or individually during Lent.

Catechumens, now called the **Elect**, celebrate the **Scrutinies** on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent during the 11:00 a.m. Mass. The Scrutinies are simple ritual prayers meant to uncover then heal all that is weak in one's life and to strengthen all that is upright, strong and good.

*There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
One God, the Father of all*

The Elect & Candidates also participate in three **Penitential Prayers** held on Sunday mornings in place of the catechetical sessions. These scriptural prayer services focus on the gospel accounts of *The Woman at the Well* (John 4: 5-42), *The Man Born Blind* (John 9:1-41) and *The Raising of Lazarus* (John 11:1-45) and lead to a reflection on the presence of sin in our lives and our need for God's gracious mercy.

This time of spiritual preparation concludes with a **Day of Reflection** in anticipation of the great feast of Easter.

## Sacraments of Initiation

Lent concludes with our parish observances of Holy Week and the *Three Great Days* leading up to Easter, called **The Triduum** – Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

The Elect receive the **Sacraments of Initiation** – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist – during the celebration of the Easter Vigil, the evening before Easter Sunday. Candidates for Full Communion renew their baptismal promises and make a Profession of Faith and receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

## Reflecting on the Mysteries of Our Faith

During this final time of formation, our new Catholics, or **Neophytes**, and their sponsors gather a few more times on Sunday mornings to reflect on their beginning life of faith in the Catholic Church. They also worship together during the 11:00 a.m. Mass, participating fully in the Eucharistic banquet prepared by Christ for the Church. The initiation process formally comes to an end on **Pentecost Sunday** with a luncheon hosted in the honor of our newest members!

For more information about Adult Initiation at Holy Cross Church, call or email **Fr. Mike Stubbs** at (913) 381-2755, Extension 11 or [MStubbs@HolyCrossOPKS.org](mailto:MStubbs@HolyCrossOPKS.org).

