



Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults with Brother Ronald McClosky, PBSF

The RCIA is not just a “convert class” with a new name. It’s different. A special rite is celebrated during the Sunday liturgies at various times throughout the year and at times this will involve the entire parish in prayer as these rites are being celebrated. We welcome our new members in our hospitality and specific ministries.

The goal of our process is to bring adults who are not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, into full communion which means “full, conscious, and active participation” in the Eucharist and in the whole life of the Catholic faith community. It is our goal that the RCIA candidate grows in relationship with God, becoming familiar with Catholic teachings and practices, get acquainted with people of the parish, and get involved in service within the parish or the wider community.

Many persons who want to join the Catholic Church **have already been baptized in another Christian Church.** **They will not be re-baptized** and are **considered candidates** to the Holy Roman Catholic Church. They will follow a form **outside** of the four steps adapted to others’ particular needs and concerns as a Christian from another faith tradition.

Here are the four steps which the *un-baptized will follow:

1st Step ~ Period of Inquiry:

This is where someone comes to consider joining the Catholic Church which is unique to each individual. It may be as a result of being married to a Catholic spouse, or the parent of a Catholic child, conversations with a Catholic friend or coworker, or even something written or viewed in the media can move an adult toward membership in the Catholic Church. Informally, this can go on for years. However, at some point, a person may contact a Catholic parish and begin to meet with other adults who are also inquiring about the Catholic faith. These adults, with members of the RCIA team, will take time to tell their own stories and connect them with the faith stories found in scripture.

2nd Step ~ Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Period of Catechumenate:

This step is when an inquirer becomes firm in their desire for initiation and decides that he or she would like to begin a more formal study of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. The inquirer is then admitted into this next step through a special ceremony call the Rite of Acceptance into the order of Catechumens. Through this rite, the Church symbolically claims the man or woman for Christ by signing them with the cross. The inquirer publicly declares his or her faith before the parish community. Don’t worry, you don’t do this by yourself, you’ll be accompanied by a sponsor. You may choose your sponsor by yourself. If you desire, the Church will assist you by providing a parishioner for you.

3rd Step ~ Rite of Election and the Period of Purification and Enlightenment:

This is the period in time when the Catechumenate ends and when the catechumens discern, with the help of your sponsor and the parish RCIA director, that God is calling you to

receive the sacraments of initiation which may be baptism, confirmation and your first Eucharist with the Holy Roman Catholic Church, at the next Easter Vigil. This process starts when you are officially called to the sacraments by the bishop or someone designated by him. The Rite of Election is often celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent at the diocesan cathedral. This will mark the end of your formal study and the catechumen is now called the *elect*.

4th Step ~ The Initiation and Mystagogia:

On Holy Saturday, the parish assembles for the Easter Vigil. The Church has always recognized that in baptism we die to sin in Christ's death so that we may rise to a new life with him. The Easter Vigil is the primary celebration of the Lord's resurrection and is therefore, the most appropriate occasion for the elect to celebrate the receipt of your sacraments and First Eucharist as a Roman Catholic.

For those who are newly initiated, they are now called neophytes, which is the time between Easter and Pentecost which is also a special opportunity to reflect on the commitment which you have made to the Lord, to the Church and our parish community. This is a time of unfolding the meaning of the initiation sacraments which is called mystagogia. The Sunday scripture readings which explain the meaning of the resurrection and of baptism have special meaning for the new Catholic. There is a possibility that the bishop may gather the neophytes for a special Eucharistic celebration called the Mass of the Neophytes.

Your journey of faith will last you a lifetime. The weeks after Easter are a time for all new Catholics to seek out your place in the parish community. Just ask and we'll be there for you. We will be meeting on **Sunday(s) from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.** Our first gathering will be on **September 21st** in the meeting room at Saint Anthony's Church. Please feel free to call on me at any time with questions.

I pray you God's Peace,
Ronald E. McClosky, P.B.S.F.
RCIA Director