

Outline of the RCIA Stages

Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

This is also known as the Period of Inquiry. During this period, information sessions are held for people who are interested in learning more about the Catholic Faith. These sessions cover basic information about the Faith. There is no obligation involved in attending these meetings -- they are intended to help a person decide whether they want to continue learning about the Faith. Attendees at this stage are known as Inquirers.

Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

The Inquirers who wish to continue now move onto the next stage, which is known as the Catechumenate (Study) Period. This Rite marks the transition between the Period of Inquiry into the Period of the Catechumenate. The Rite takes place when the members of the local Church (parish) are gathered together to celebrate Mass.

Period of the Catechumenate

The Inquirers are now referred to as Catechumens [for those who are unbaptized] and Candidates [for those who have already been baptized]. During this period the Candidates and Catechumens spend time studying the Bible and the fundamental teachings of the Church. Meetings are held more regularly. The aim is for the Candidates and Catechumens to establish a spiritual and intellectual understanding of the Catholic Faith.

The Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names

This is a very significant and important step in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent at the local Cathedral, led by the local Bishop. All of the Catechumens and Candidates, their Sponsors gather together on this day. The Church formally ratifies the Catechumens' readiness for the Sacraments of Initiation, and the Candidates' readiness to be received into full Communion with the Catholic Church. In turn the Catechumens - from now on known as the Elect - publicly acknowledge their desire to receive the Sacraments of Initiation and to be received into the Catholic Church.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This period tends to correspond with Lent and is intended to be a period of increased reflection and coming closer to God. The aim of this period is to eliminate what is weak and sinful; and affirm what is holy. During this period a number of Rites take place, including the Scrutinies and Presentations, in the local parish.

Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

At the Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday night), the candidates are baptized and are then considered full members of the Catholic Church.

Period of Post-Baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

This period of unspecified duration involves the local parish community in providing opportunities for development and growth of the person's faith - as well as that of the entire community, through study and prayer.