

CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST. JAMES THE GREATER
49 CROSSWINDS
CHARLES TOWN, WV 25414

The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults or, RCIA**, is the process for welcoming new members into the Roman Catholic Church. Christian Initiation is a community journey that leads one to an opening of mind and spirit. Guided by the Gospel and by the example of parishioners, newcomers (**Inquirers**) can find a place in the community of believers. In turn, Inquirers and, later, **Catechumens** inspire the parishioners as each candidate proceeds in entering the Church community.

Christian Initiation is both a personal and communal journey for the newcomers in examining one's relationship with God. The enthusiastic and joyous response of candidates to the discovery of Christ in their lives sparks renewed faith in the lives of the present parishioners. The resulting energy causes members to re-examine their own relationships with God.

WHAT IS THE R.C.I.A. OR CATECHUMENATE?

The letters **RCIA** stand for the entire formation process that is provided for those who wish to join the Catholic Church. **CATECHUMENATE** refers to the second phase of formation within the initiation process. It involves the teaching and discussion of the Good News (Gospels), prayer, and spiritual growth. The process includes various rites that the Parish celebrates along the journey to full membership in the Church. The term is sometimes used to mean all four stages of the process.

INQUIRY

The **INQUIRY** is a period of evangelization, lasting from a few weeks to as many months as needed, when individuals hear the Gospel, ask their questions, share their stories, and reflect on the place of God in their lives. They are not asked to make a commitment during this time. At the conclusion of the period, candidates celebrate the **RITE OF BECOMING A CATECHUMEN**, also called the **RITE OF ACCEPTANCE**. They request membership in the Church. If a longer time is needed, it is provided for that individual. An Inquirer requests entrance into the second stage (the **CATECHUMENATE**.) During the special rite, that request is granted and one is formally brought into the Community with all of the Community privileges except the rites of the Sacraments.

CATECHUMENATE

Upon request, the person is welcomed into the parish for a period of time that is devoted to formal preparation for full initiation into the Church. This period usually begins in the fall at St. James, but may occur several times during the year as needed. The "Catechumens" grow in faith by developing an understanding of Church teachings, interacting with members of the community, participation in liturgical rites, and learning about Christian service. The period is, at least six weeks, sometimes a year or two as long as is needed.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

At the beginning of Lent, the Church calls those who are ready to begin the final preparation for initiation into the Church with the **RITE OF ELECTION**. The Bishop of the Diocese accepts the signatures of those seeking entrance into the Church and **ELECTS** each person into the final preparation for the sacraments. The members of the **Elect** reflect on their personal religious experience and faith during the Lenten season and pray for guidance. This period includes the

Scrutinies (readings and prayers to help the Candidates overcome personal weaknesses and build strengths). The “**Elect**” are presented with blessings and symbols of the faith during this special time set apart to prepare for the Easter Sacraments. This period ends with the **EASTER VIGIL**.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION (BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, HOLY EUCHARIST)

The **Elect** (unbaptized) are **Baptized, Confirmed**, and given the **Holy Eucharist** at the **Easter Vigil**. **Candidates**, who are already Baptized in other Christian traditions, make an Adult **Profession of Faith** and are received into full communion with the Church. They are confirmed, and partake of the **Holy Eucharist** for the first time.

MYSTAGOGIA (POST-INITIATION CATECHESIS)

MYSTAGOGIA is the final and on-going phase of the Initiation process. From Easter until Pentecost, the ongoing period center around the “Breaking open” of the Easter, Sacramental Experience and the Sunday liturgies for the newly initiated. During this final period of initiation, the newly received (**NEOPHYTES**) share in the Eucharist, read and study the Scriptures, perform acts of Christian service, experience new forms of prayer, discern personal gifts in preparation for ministries of choice, and live the Gospel in their daily lives. After Pentecost, the process becomes ongoing for all Catholics.

WHO NEEDS THE PROCESS OF INITIATION?

The initiation process is provided for adults who wish to join the Roman Catholic Church. The first stage of the Catechumate. (INQUIRY) is open to anyone interested in the Church, even those who do not wish to join or who are not ready to make a commitment (Inquirer) to the Church process.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

You may take the initial step by by sending an email to rcia@stjameswv.org or by contacting the parish office at 725-5558. If no answer, be sure to leave your name and phone number and you will be contacted. You may also use the request sheet below for the information.

Roman Catholic Parish of St. James the Greater
49 Crosswinds Drive
Charles Town, WV 25414
304-725-5558

I am interested in knowing more about the Roman Catholic Faith and would like to be contacted about the Initiation of Adults into the Catholic Church.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____