

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR ADULTS (RCIA) AT ST. JOHN VIANNEY

OVERVIEW

The RCIA program at St. John Vianney is a systematic teaching of the Catholic faith based upon the four pillars of the .Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Profession of Faith (as stated in the Nicene Creed), The Celebration of the Christian Mystery, Life in Christ, and Christian Prayer.

Sessions are currently held every Thursday night from 7:00 PM-9:00 PM in the Columbus Room of the Church basement. See the last page of this report for a schedule of this year's sessions and topics.

AGENDA FOR EACH SESSION

Opening song related to topic of the evening
Opening prayer
Announcements
Topic presentation by a team member
Questions and Answers
Break with light refreshments
Gather with theme song
Scripture reading from next Sunday (usual Gospel reading)
Small group discussions
Large group sharing
Closing prayer

HISTORY OF RCIA IN GENERAL

In years past, people who wanted to investigate being received into the Church were normally prepared in individual or small group private sessions by a priest. They also entered the Church at any time of the year.

The process of becoming a Christian in the Early Church was a journey of conversion which emphasized a participation in the "paschal mystery" - the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. This journey of conversion also emphasized the role of the praying, witnessing, and teaching Body of Christ in giving support to that journey.

In 1971, in response to Second Vatican Council, the Church dramatically revised the process of becoming Catholic and promulgated the RCIA program. The intent of the RCIA program was a re-creation of this spirit of the Early Church.

HISTORY OF RCIA AT SJV

Our SJV parish started using the RCIA program in the early 1980's. Many parishioners have either led or participated in this program as team members or sponsors or simply as persons walking the journey with us.

As the years passed, many persons who entered the Church through the SJV RCIA program returned to the program as sponsors and eventually team members.

DESCRIPTION OF RCIA

RCIA is an acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. (Some churches call it OCIA or Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.)

The acronym RCIA can be broken down as follows:

Rite = formal procedure or ceremony

Christian = concerns the Christian faith

Initiation = being or commence something

Adults ~ not a children or teen program, but geared for adults

There are four stages in RCIA. All of these stages are marked by distinct liturgical Rites. A sponsor is assigned to each participant before the first Rite. The sponsor walks the journey 'with the participant to support him or her and also participates in each of the Rites.

1) The Precatechumenate

This is also called the "inquiry stage". Those who are thinking about possibly joining the Catholic Church are called inquirers. In this stage, inquirers have made first contact with the Parish and start attending inquiry sessions. During this stage, RCIA journey covers the search for God, how God reveals Him self to us through Scripture, Tradition, and reason, and the basics tenets of the Catholic Faith as outlined in the Creed.

2) *THE CATECHUMENATE*

During this period of the Catechumenate, the participants will be brought into a deeper understanding of the faith, and a deeper commitment to live the Christian life. In this stage, the SJV RCIA journey continues the final tenets of the Creed, discusses public and private prayer, private morality and sin, the Ten Commandments and the Virtues, and begins covering the Sacraments.

3) *PERJODOF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT*

This stage of RCIA begins with the Rite of Sending, which occurs at the 9:30AM Mass on the First Sunday of Lent. This is where our parish prays for and sends off our catechumens, candidates, and confirmands to the next Rite, the Rite of Election. The catechumens' names are also inscribed in the parish's Book of the Elect at the Rite of Sending.

At the Rite of Election, catechumens and candidates are presented to the bishop of the diocese at the cathedral. In the Archdiocese of Washington this rite occurs at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception near Catholic University in Washington, DC. The parish's Book of the Elect accompanies us to the Rite of the Elect. At the Rite of the Elect, the catechumens are officially welcomed by the Archbishop. Even though catechumens are not baptized yet, they are now become part of the Church.

Also during this Rite of the Elect, the candidates and confirmands commit to continuing conversion. Candidates and confirmands are already considered part of the Church by right of their Christian baptism.

During this stage of RCIA, our session topics cover the rest of the Sacraments.

The Scrutinies

Also during this stage, catechumens, candidates, and confirmands will all participate in several smaller rites during three Sunday parish liturgies. These are called "The Scrutinies". The Scrutinies occur on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent and include special readings which are sometimes different than the normal readings of that Sunday. The readings are selected to encourage those on the journey to take a closer look at, or "scrutinize", their commitment to the faith. During the rite that accompanies the Scrutinies; special prayers are offered by Fr. Daly and the whole assembly for the catechumens, candidates, and confirmands. One of these Scrutinies occurs during our RCIA retreat.

The RCIA Retreat

Each RCIA year includes a 3-day retreat that starts on a Friday evening and ends on Sunday afternoon. The retreat is an integral part of the whole RCIA program. The theme is always "The Paschal Mystery"- or the passion, death, and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

This retreat may seem an excessive part of the journey, especially given the increasing expense. However, it is important to remember that this retreat is where all that we have learned and discussed during the year crystallizes and becomes real for those on the journey.

The presentations on the retreat are more witness talks than teaching. These talks are very personal and show how faith has influenced and even saved lives. Through the talks and other activities during the retreat participants are taken through their own personal paschal mystery and learn how we all can participate in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ throughout our lives. Those on the journey go into the retreat as still unsure individuals but come out as a cohesive community of faith.

We have had years where some on the journey have not been able to make the retreat. We can honestly say that they are not in the same state of conversion at the Easter Vigil as those who attended the retreat. This retreat makes a huge difference.

This is evidenced by the large number of leaders and volunteer in all the various SJV ministries who have gone from attending the RCIA journey in faith to becoming active parishioners. This journey does make a difference!

Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

At the end of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment we celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. In the Early Church, the Easter Vigil was the only liturgy of the year in which people joined the Church. This was because at Easter we celebrate Christ's victory over death and our sharing in that victory through baptism. This was an all night vigil that was a journey from darkness to light, from life to death. This is the journey that the new Christians share, as they descend and rise from the waters of baptism, in which they are reborn.

At the Easter Vigil, the catechumens are baptized and confirmed; candidates and confirmands are confirmed. The new Catholics then complete their initiation by approaching the Lord's Table for the first time to receive His Body, as full members of His Body.

4) MYSTAGOGY

The final period of Christian initiation is called "Mystagogy" (from the Greek meaning "interpretation of mystery"). This period continues through the Easter season, up until Pentecost

During this period, the new Catholics (or "neophytes") are "deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity." (RCIA no. 244) In keeping with this, we also participate in a group work of charity during this period of the RCIA program.

During this stage, our topics cover social morality and the Church's social justice teachings, the Gospel of Life, evangelization and ecumenism, Catholic sacramentals and devotions, and how to actively live out the Catholic faith in the world.

PURPOSE OF RCIA

In conclusion, the purpose of RCIA is not to make new Catholics, although that is what occurs. Rather, RCIA is a journey - a transformative process of conversion. We are all on a journey to Christ. It does not end when one becomes a member of the Church. It is a life-long process that leads us to know, love, and serve God.

But to reach an understanding of what it means to know, love, and serve God is more than an intellectual understanding. It has to be an understanding of the heart - a conversion of heart - as well. Our entire RCIA schedule is arranged for this purpose. And hopefully, this journey will not only lead our participants to know, love, and serve God more fully, but to also become disciples of Jesus Christ - true disciples of the heart.

STATISTICS FOR RCIA PROGRAM

Over 130 persons have come into the Catholic Church through the RCIA program. A few do seem to disappear shortly after the program is over; however, a much greater proportion of RCIA participants become active members of our parish to live and practice their new faith.

| RCIA YEAR | CATECHUME NS | CANDIDATE S | CONFIRMAN DS | TOTAL |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1997-1998 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 11 |
| 1998-1999 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 14 |
| 1999-2000 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 14 |
| 2000-2001 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| 2001-2002 | ? | ? | ? | ? |
| 2002-2003 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 12 |
| 2003-2004 | 1 | 11 | 1 | 13 |
| 2003-2004 | | | | |
| Spanish Class | 1 | 6 | 0 | 7 |
| 2004-2005 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 8 |
| 2005-2006 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 14 |
| 2006-2007 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| 2007-2008 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| 2008-2009 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| 2009-2010 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| 2010 - 2011 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 2011-2012 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 9 |

FUTURE OF SJV RCIA PROGRAM

Review and Selection of Appropriate Topics

The topics presented each year should always be reviewed and refined. Basic topics such as articles of the Creed and the seven Sacraments must always be included in the schedule. Also, there are some "floating" topics that could be covered, such as How to Use the Catechism. If there are not enough weeks in the year we can sometimes weave these topics into other presentations.

However, there are also new topics that could be covered. For example, the new Theology of the Body brought to us by our previous and prolific pontiff, John Paul II, is an important topic that is intertwined with the all of the Sacraments, most notably the Sacraments of Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Eucharist. This can also be the foundation for any discussion on the Gospel of Life or social teachings of the Church.

Or, topics could be tweaked depending upon an advance notice of the background of the inquirers. For example, for those years where we have candidates from Protestant (especially evangelical) backgrounds, we could include topics on justification, grace and salvation since the Catholic teaching on these issues is much different than the Protestant

understanding.

NOTE: The biggest obstacle in presenting the Catholic faith through the RCIA program is the limited amount of time we have to do so. The program runs for 32-34 weeks or so, depending upon when Easter falls in the schedule. In addition, only one night is afforded to each topic with only 30-40 minutes or so devoted to that topic. Thus, we can really only "scratch the surface" while a much deeper exploration is really needed on almost all topics.

One can understand why in some countries RCIA runs over a 2-3 year period rather than the short 9 months we have for our program. However, now that we have an Adult Education program at SJV, we are hopeful that this will "pick up the slack" and offer an opportunity for those who have completed RCIA to develop a deeper understanding of the faith.

The Archdiocese has promulgated new norms for RCIA which encourages a longer program broken into a period of preparation for catechumens who would be merged later with a candidate program, and a separate program for confirmands. Given the few volunteers we have to organize and participate in RCIA this may be difficult for SJV. At the least consideration should be given to a 3-6 month introductory period of perhaps monthly or bi-monthly meetings in the spring or summer for new catechumens. This will help keep the interest of those that want to start earlier than the normal RCIA program begins.

Formal Follow-up Process

We should have a more formal process for follow-up with those who have come into the Church through RCIA. This does not necessarily include formal teaching sessions; the idea is just to be able to stay in touch and help the new parishioners if they have any difficulty.

We currently do not have this type of follow-up and have usually relied to seeing the new faith members at Mass or other parish activities. However, it seems probable that new members of the parish may have new questions, doubts that need to be addressed, or issues with family members who may not be supportive of their conversion.

Sponsors should keep in touch with the person to whom they were assigned, but this may not always be the case. Therefore, we feel that we should develop a more structured method of following up with past RCIA participants.

January 18, 2012

Father Daly, Parish Council and Volunteers,

I would like to take this time to thank you for allowing me to be the coordinator for God's Gifts. But it is with a lot of consideration that I've decided at the end of the year to resign my position.

I would like to get involved with some other ministries. And feel I can't give one hundred percent to the shop.

I would suggest you start trying to find a replacement by mid June so I can help the new coordinator get settled in.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Antoinette Johnson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely".

God's Gifts Annual Report
Submitted by Antoinette Johnson
February 2012

List of Volunteer's

Nancy Hughes

Maureen Yuill

Sharon Robinson

Jeanne Prochownick

Michelle Cleveland

Toni Johnson

Jane Head

Flo Ford

Christine Dement (Sub)

(Each volunteer is in the shop one Sunday per month. We have two volunteers together at each time for safety reasons.)

We are open every Sunday from 9:00AM – 1:00PM (16 hours per month). The gift shop averages about \$50.00 per week with the exception of Christmas, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Open House and First Sunday Breakfast.

We have sent bulletin notices to all the Catholic Churches in the area. We send out flyers for students during the month of First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Open House. We have attached is a copy of each one of these flyers. We also have a weekly bulletin notice.

Catalogs used to buy merchandise:

Autom

Milagros

Printry House

Gifts of Faith

Donated items. (Father Daly)

Inventory list available upon request.

Wish List:

Storm door for back door

Storm door spring in front of the shop needs fixed.

Paint the door white that leads into the gift shop.

Trim the shrubs out front.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Antoinette F. Johnson". The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Antoinette F. Johnson