

## HOW DOES MY CHILD BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?



The ordinary process of joining the Roman Catholic Church is known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. [R.C.I.A.] The Catechumenate, as it is often called, is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century restoration of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century process which prepared people for acceptance into the Christian faith. The R.C.I.A. is adapted for the formation of school age children and is sometimes referred to as (Christian Initiation of Children) (C.I.C.) The **Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults** adapted for children (C.I.C.) is a faith journey which consists of four distinct stages.

### Stage One Inquiry **PRE-CATECHUMENATE**

This is the time when a child begins to formally ask questions of the faith community: *What do Catholics believe? Why? Who is God? How is God active in my life? What are the sacraments? Who is Jesus and how can I be like him?* For children and their families this period consists of a series of family oriented sessions that are held twice monthly. The sessions begin at 6:30 PM with a half hour potluck which provides families the time to change gears from their busy day. From 7-8 PM children and adults focus on a story about or teaching of Jesus. During this period children or their parents/guardians sometimes realize that they are not ready or willing to belong to the Christian community. They leave with the blessing of their companions and catechists as they continue to search for spiritual meaning. Others find that they are attracted to our way of life and are drawn to the person of Christ. Like the disciples of old, they wish to follow Jesus and move to the next stage of the journey, which is known as the **Catechumenate**.

### Stage Two **CATECHUMENATE**

This stage begins with the **Rite of Acceptance**. Those who enter this stage are claimed for Christ and marked with the sign of the cross. The unbaptized are called **catechumens** from this point on. If they have already been baptized in another tradition OR have been baptized Catholic but have had no formal religious instruction before 3<sup>rd</sup>. Grade they are called **candidates**.

This period of the R.C.I.A. adapted for children (C.I.C.) is a time for the catechumens and candidates to deepen their faith and commitment to Christ. Although they are not yet able to share at the table of the Eucharist, they participate in the Liturgy of the Word each Sunday. When they are dismissed, they take the book of the Gospels with them to a separate meeting place where they continue to reflect with their catechists and each other upon the gospel message and how it affects their lives. This stage of the R.C.I.A. usually lasts a year or more. It includes a monthly formal family session on Catholic teaching and practice and is an opportunity for the child to grow in prayer and to mature in faith. With the support of family members, parish companions, godparents and catechists, the catechumens and candidates steadily conform their lives to Gospel values.

The children continue to deepen their relationship with Christ, and when they, with the guidance of their parents and catechists, discern that they are ready, enter into the next stage of the catechumenate, **Purification and Enlightenment**.

### Stage Three **PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT**

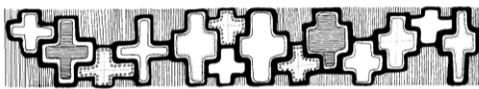
This stage begins on the first Sunday of Lent with the **Rite of Election** and the **Call to Continuing Conversion**. In local parishes, catechumens inscribe their name in a book which is presented to the Bishop in a ceremony at the cathedral later that day. At the Rite of Election, the Bishop elects (chooses) the catechumens in the name of Christ to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. The Bishop also calls (exhorts) the candidates to continue growing in their faith as they prepare for Confirmation and Eucharist. The next 40 days are intensive days of preparation to receive the sacraments at Easter. The local community accompanies the **Elect** (unbaptized) and **Candidates** (already baptized) by participating in the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Special rites of interior searching, known as the **scrutinies**, are celebrated with the elect and candidates. These take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent. There is a special time of retreat. This period of the R.C.I.A. culminates at the Easter Vigil with baptism by immersion for those children who are unbaptized, a profession of faith for those who are baptized, with confirmation, and the reception of Eucharist for all. This completes the third stage of the journey.



## Stage Four MYSTAGOGIA

This final phase of the R.C.I.A. adapted for children (C.I.C.) finds the *Neophytes* rejoicing in their awareness of God's presence in them and around them. Now, instead of leaving after the homily, they remain with the community to pray and eat at the banquet of the Eucharist. This period concludes with the Feast of Pentecost when the neophytes are sent to share their experience of Christ with others. The neophytes gather one more time to share prayer and community with one another. The hope is that they become more integrated into the faith community of the parish and the larger Church.

At the completion of this process, children are enrolled in the regular Sunday faith formation classes provided by the parish community.



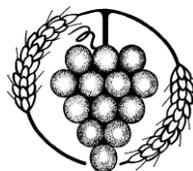
## HOW DO I KNOW IF THE R.C.I.A. (C.I.C.) PROCESS IS THE RIGHT ONE FOR MY CHILD?

The R.C.I.A. (C.I.C.) process is designed for youth *who are unbaptized* or *those who were baptized as infants but had little experience with regular church attendance*. Older children baptized in another Christian tradition who have little experience with the **Roman Catholic tradition** often find this process to be helpful in their transition to becoming Roman Catholic.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE R.C.I.A. (C.I.C.) PROCESS?

The best way is to simply begin. The annual series of **Inquiry sessions for children begin each Fall in October**. Sessions are held from 6:30 – 8:00 PM in the Brunsman Social Hall. These family oriented sessions focus on opportunities for the inquirer and her/his family to learn more about Jesus and to ask her/his questions about the Catholic faith. A team of staff and volunteer catechists from the parish community, are ready and willing to explore these questions with your family. **Registration by October 30 and an initial interview with the Director of the R.C.I.A. is required to participate in this program.**

**Format: Potluck Suppers are from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Sessions are from 7 to 8 p.m. At least one parent is expected to attend. During the Inquiry period, classes are on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month (total of 11 classes) Stage Two includes 10 sessions, a retreat and Sunday morning sessions after the Liturgy of the Word.**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
REGISTRATION FORMS, OR TO  
SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT  
PLEASE CONTACT**

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## *Baptism Process for Children 7-17 and Communion/Confirmation Process for Baptized Older (8 or above) Children Who Are Not Experienced or Educated in the Catholic Tradition.*



## C.I.C.

*Rite of Christian  
Initiation of Adults  
adapted for Children*