

RCIA HIGHLIGHTS



RCIA, an acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, is a thriving and ongoing ministry of St. Francis by the Sea. The beginnings of this program can be traced to the early Church, but the revival came in the early 1970's after the revisions of Vatican II. Prior to the establishment of RCIA, adults seeking full communion in the Catholic faith consulted a priest and were instructed on a private one to one basis. With the advent of RCIA, the focus shifted to a communal one, with the group, instructors and other volunteers forming a community within the main body of the Church.

Participants in the program fall into two categories. The first are **catechumens** - those who have not been baptized. They will receive the rite of baptism prior to confirmation at the Easter Vigil or other appropriate time. The catechumens have godparents/sponsors who support them on their faith journey. Adults who have been baptized in other Christian denominations, whose baptism is recognized as valid, are **candidates**. These individuals have sponsors who serve the same function as godparents.

RCIA is a series of rites interspersed with teaching and formation through which adults can enter into full communion in the Catholic Church. There are four stages in the RCIA: the Precatechumenate, or period of inquiry and evangelization; the Catechumenate, which is a time of serious and dedicated formation; the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, which coincides with Lent; and Mystagogy, which lasts from Easter to Pentecost. All of these stages are marked by distinct liturgical rites (Rite of Welcoming, Rite of Election and the Easter Vigil Mass).

Anyone interested in joining the program may enter at any time of the year. The program is open to inquiry throughout the year. The program is extremely flexible; there is no pressure from the instructors or sponsors to commit to joining the Church. The Holy Spirit is the guiding presence for all involved in RCIA. Priests, deacons and lay leaders attend classes and instruct the candidates in a variety of areas. There are many others who contribute to the program, both individuals and church ministries: Core Team members, Sponsors, Prayer Partners, the Prayer Shawl ministry who made prayer shawls for each catechumen and candidate. As the candidates participate in the Scrutinies during Lent, they need the prayers of each of us in the parish and parishioners can volunteer as a prayer partner for a candidate.

Candidates can range in various stages of life – from a teenager to a 90-year-old. No matter what the age or circumstances of the individual, each becomes a part of the RCIA community and shares a very special faith journey and deserve our prayers and support.