



***"Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."
(John 8:12)***

What is RCIA?

RCIA stands for the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**. This method of Christian formation dates back to the primitive Church and was restored by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). RCIA is not a program, but a *gradual process* in which one who, after hearing the mystery of Christ explained, freely chooses to follow Christ by entering the way of faith in the Catholic Church.

RCIA consists of four periods: the period of Inquiry, the *Catechumenate*, Purification & Enlightenment, and *Mystagogy*.

The first period, the period of **Inquiry**, usually starts in early September. During this time individuals are introduced to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. The period of inquiry focuses on the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which reveal the true face of the Christ. While the period of inquiry can last any length of time, it normally lasts about three months. There is *absolutely no commitment expected* at this time. It is simply a time for listening and asking questions.

After this introductory period you may decide to take the first, important step in becoming Catholic. During this period you will learn about Catholic beliefs and practice with a view toward making a firm commitment to Christ and his Church. This period is called the **Catechumenate**. Like the period of Inquiry, the *Catechumenate* can last any length of time, but it usually lasts about three or four months.

The next step begins the period of **Purification & Enlightenment**. This period coincides with the season of Lent (early spring). It is a time of strengthening one's commitment through prayer, fasting and careful reflection on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This period culminates at the Easter Vigil* with the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion.

Once a person has received the sacraments of initiation he or she becomes a "neophyte," which means "beginner" or "novice." The fourth and final period is called **Mystagogy**, which lasts for seven weeks and ends at Pentecost (around June 1). During this period the meaning of God's Word, the sacraments, Christian life and prayer is experienced and reflected upon more deeply. It is a time of growth as one's faith matures through worship, study and prayer.

* The date of Easter changes from year to year. In 2010 Easter falls on **April 4**.