



“I am the light of the world; 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**. RCIA is not a program, but a *process* in which one who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seeks God with a sincere heart and enters the way of faith in the Catholic Church.

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

The first stage, the period of **Inquiry**, can last any length of time. In some cases it may last as long as several years. (It’s kind of like dating, when you’re getting acquainted with someone). During this time individuals are introduced to Jesus Christ, the Church and God’s plan for the world. 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 required* at this time. It is a time for listening, learning and asking questions.

After this introductory period you may decide you want to learn more about the Catholic faith with a view toward making a commitment to Christ and his Church. This period is called the ***Catechumenate***. (It’s like ‘going steady’ when you’re serious about one person). This is the time for instruction in Catholic beliefs and practice, Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Like the period of Inquiry, the Catechumenate can last any length of time depending on one’s spiritual maturity and understanding, but it usually lasts about four months.

The third period is called **Purification & Enlightenment** and lasts for six weeks, coinciding with the season of Lent (early Spring). Lent is a period of prayer, fasting and deep, personal reflection on what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. (It’s like being engaged, when you’re intending on making a firm commitment). This period culminates at the Easter Vigil* with the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion (which is like a wedding. In fact, the early church called Baptism the “nuptial bath”).

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 *Mystagogia*, which lasts for seven weeks concluding at Pentecost (around June 1). During this time the meaning of the sacraments, the Christian life and prayer is experienced and reflected upon more deeply. It is a time of growth as one’s understanding and faith matures so that he or she can participate more fully in the Mass and in the life of the Church.

**To find out about RCIA at a parish near you,
Please call the Office of Evangelization at 303-715-3260.**

* The date of Easter changes from year to year. In 2009 Easter is on April 12.