



Saint Philip Neri Catholic Church

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Wednesdays, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., St Augustine Room

2017– 2018

RCIA Team Members

Coordinators:	Father Fuller	Jim Tucker	
Catechists:	Father Fuller Mike Chavez	Deacon Norm Mejsrik Deacon Rick Painter	Jim Tucker
Hospitality:	Linda Tucker	Ed and Sharon Smith	Melinda Herman

About the RCIA

The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** (RCIA) is the process by which individuals prepare to enter the Catholic Church and receive the **Sacraments of Initiation**: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This involves the parish community as it prepares and welcomes new people into the Church. The *Rite* speaks of conversion, a “spiritual journey.” Centered on fostering a deep relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church He founded, this journey takes place through distinct stages over time suitable to bring about a thorough *catechesis* (an “echoing back” of what is taught), experience with the parish community, and commitment to the liturgical and moral life of the Catholic faithful. The process is a restoration of the ancient *catechumenate*, which took shape within the first centuries following the era of the apostles. It was the early Church’s way of bringing Christ to the pagan Roman Empire and beyond. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) called for the restoration and use of this venerable and powerful method of initiation for the sake of the worldwide Church.

Most participants are adults over the age of 18. Unbaptized children aged seven and up take part in RCIA adapted for their own particular needs (the *Children’s Catechumenate*), so long as they are students enrolled at either a Catholic school or the Saint Philip Neri Parish Religious Education Program. Adults who are baptized Catholics seeking the Confirmation will receive formation for this sacrament through another process, *Catholicism 101*.

Objectives

A participant who fully engages in the theological, spiritual, moral and liturgical formation that the RCIA offers will be able to:

- Understand and explain the fundamentals of Catholic teaching.
- Understand the differences and the similarities between Roman Catholic belief and practices and those of other Christian traditions.
- Experience the beginnings of spiritual life.
- Manifest this “conversion experience” with sincere intention to change their life and enter into a deeper relationship with God in Christ.
- Develop the practice of calling upon God in prayer, individually and in a gathered assembly.
- Personally identify what is known as a “sense of Church.”
- Experience the company of Catholics through contact with members of the parish community.

General Expectations

Participation

The Pre-Catechumenate

In reality, the RCIA begins when a person calls the Parish Office and says something like, “I want to be baptized,” or, “I’d like to know more about the Catholic Church.” When one puts words to that desire, they have entered the first stage of initiation, the **Period of Evangelization**. It’s also known as the **Inquiry Period**. This has usually begun long before anyone calls the Parish Office. It begins when the person is first *evangelized* - when they first hear the good news of Jesus from a friend, a co-worker, a neighbor, a spouse, a parent, a stranger. Someone or something has drawn them to the parish and they want to find out more. During this first period, the parish community helps inquirers to discover just what it is they are seeking. Inquiry sessions take place year-round on two Wednesday evenings a month, for those who ask about the Church at any time during the year. The Inquiry Period begins in late summer, and continues through October.

Discernment

Interviews are asked of those inquiring about the Catholic Church at least twice during the year, in the Fall and the Spring. Additional interviews may be called for by candidates or requested by the RCIA Coordinator.

These discernment interviews are opportunities for one-on-one discussions with the Pastor, the Deacon, the Director or another RCIA team member to enhance the candidate’s experience and to offer assistance with any difficulties they may be experiencing, or answer questions yet unanswered.

Acceptance and Welcome

Once the inquirers have experienced an initial conversion to Jesus Christ, they celebrate the first major public ritual of the initiation process. This first ritual is the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*.

During this rite, usually celebrated at Sunday Mass, the new candidates for initiation are publicly welcomed for the first time. They “declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn...accepts them as persons who intend to become its members” (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 41). The *Rite* completes the first stage or period of the initiation process, and opens the door to the second period of the process.

Those who are already baptized as Christians in another faith tradition, or even those baptized in the Catholic Church but who have not yet received all of the Sacraments of Initiation, take part in a similar ritual called the *Rite of Welcome*. The church and the parish community recognize their oneness with these *Candidates*, as they are called, even though they may not yet be ready to share the Eucharist until the Easter Vigil. They are always considered as distinct from the unbaptized.

Catechumenate

This second stage of the initiation process is the extended period of time when those to be initiated receive their more formal training in the Christian way of life. There are two groups: **Catechumens** are those who are unbaptized, and **Candidates** who are already baptized.

During the Catechumenate, all learn more about the Scriptures and the doctrines of the Church. They meet weekly at Mass to hear the Word of God proclaimed. In addition to the study of the Scriptures, the candidates participate in sessions to help them to understand the doctrinal teachings and practices of the Church. The Catechumens and Candidates also learn about the prayer and worship life of the Church. They learn how to live and serve others in apostolic witness. They develop their relationship with the Catholic community. When they have experienced a true conversion to the Christian way of life (which the Church says is *at least one year* for the unbaptized), they celebrate the second major ritual in the process of initiation.

Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion

This second ritual of the RCIA occurs on the First Sunday of Lent, immediately following *Ash Wednesday*. The Catechumens have been elected (in other words, *chosen*) by God to receive the Sacraments of Initiation. The Church gives voice to God’s election and calls each one of the catechumens by name to sign the *Book of the Elect*. This is an archdiocesan celebration and the presider is the Archbishop – the head of the local Church.

The celebration takes place at the Cathedral, though in many dioceses there are multiple celebrations and sometimes at multiple locations. Earlier that day, the local parish celebrates a **Rite of Sending** as a way of celebrating the candidates' upcoming election and sending them on to the Archbishop for their admission to the final period of preparation.

Period of Purification & Enlightenment

This final period of preparation is one of intense spiritual recollection that coincides with the season of Lent. It is a time for reflection and prayer more than teaching. The Catechumens, now called **The Elect**, purify their minds and hearts by celebrating several rituals. The three purifying rituals, known as the **Scrutinies**, take place on the Third, Fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent and strengthen the Elect and help to complete their conversion.

The *Presentation of the Creed* and the *Presentation of the Lord's Prayer* enlighten the minds of the Elect in the final weeks of their preparation for the sacraments, and help the Candidates to strengthen their own baptismal commitment. Lent ends when the sacred **Triduum** – the “three days” of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter - begins at sunset of Thursday of Holy Week. Finally, *Preparatory Rites* on Holy Saturday morning serve as the Elect's immediate preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation, which will be celebrated that night at the Vigil.

Sacraments of Initiation

At some time after sunset on Holy Saturday, the Elect and Candidates celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism (for the Elect), Confirmation and Eucharist. The Elect are plunged into the waters of new birth and come out of those waters reborn in Christ. They are then configured to be more like Christ through the Sacred Chrism (consecrated oil) of Confirmation. Finally, the culmination of their initiation happens when they taste the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. So, too, many of the Candidates will make a Profession of Faith, be confirmed and receive the Eucharist in this most holy of all the Church's liturgies.

Period of Mystagogia

The process of initiation continues even after the Easter celebration, during the Eastertide period of *Mystagogia*. The word comes from an ancient Greek word signifying a deepening understanding of the mysteries of our faith. During the Easter season, the **neophytes** (newly initiated) gather occasionally to deepen their grasp of the great *Paschal Mystery* into which they have just been incorporated.

These Christians have received the Body of Christ and have indeed become part of the Body of Christ through their Baptism. The Church uses the period of Mystagogia to help the neophytes understand and live out their new lives as part of the Body of Christ. Furthermore, Mystagogia is about mission. The new Christians, now part of Christ's body, must now go forth with us to continue the mission of Christ. That's where the whole parish, indeed the entire Church, comes in again. We celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation to make us more like Christ and “to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world” (*Rite*, General Intro, 2). Through the RCIA we participate in the mission of the Church. We make new disciples and we renew the older, faithful ones. When we commit ourselves, our energy and our resources to the RCIA, we commit the parish to continuing the mission of Jesus in the world.

Above text adapted from The RCIA: A Step-by-Step Look by Rita Burns Senseman, North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

Sponsors

A **sponsor** is a Catholic in good standing who is willing to be a companion to a Candidate or Catechumen. As they get acquainted they listen, answer questions, pray together, and connect with the parish. Sponsors find their role to be one that enriches and deepens their own faith as well. It is a very rewarding experience. Sponsors are not meant to have all the answers - in fact, it's better if they don't! Their main role is to be a friend and “fellow traveler.”

Here at St. Philip Neri, a registered, active parishioner who is at least 18 years of age and has received all Sacraments of Initiation may sponsor another person in R.C.I.A., so long as the candidate is *not* the sponsor's child, fiancé/e or spouse. Baptized non-Catholics may be sponsored by their Catholic spouses on a case-by-case basis, as permitted by the Director of Religious Education. Fitness to serve as a Sponsor is ultimately determined by the Director, together with the Pastor.

Commitment to the Process

Inquiry is, of course, a voluntary, question-driven phase, with no obligations. Once a participant has taken part in the *Rite of Acceptance*, the public recognition of readiness to enter into the **Catechumenate**, there is a long-term commitment. The duration of

the individual's progress can be as long as a year or more, depending on individual circumstances and exposure to religious discipline and a lived faith.

All participants (Catechumens and Candidates) will be expected to:

- Attend Sunday Mass, as it is a basic requirement of all Catholics and the most fundamental way to come to know what it means to be a Catholic, and to become active in the life of the parish.
- Attend all sessions and Rites as scheduled. We miss you when you're not there! If a situation occurs where multiple absences occur, the Director and the individual participant will need to evaluate what's happening and what can be done to help move forward.

Once they are assigned a Candidate or Catechumen, Sponsors are encouraged to:

- Attend all RCIA sessions, as well as practices and rites.
- Accompany their Candidate or Catechumen to Sunday Mass.
- Be available to support their Candidate or Catechumen along his/her journey.

Child Care

We gladly provide childcare during sessions for RCIA Team Members, Candidates and Sponsors. Our volunteer helpers are trained in First Aid and *Safe Environment* certified. Child Care is provided in our School, on the first floor, Room 111. Please be sure to sign children in a few minutes prior to the start of sessions, and provide any materials (diapers, wipes, baby food, etc.) to our helpers at that time.

August 23, 2017	INQUIRY BEGINS Welcome and Introduction / What is RCIA (Father Fuller) <i>Syllabus</i>
August 30, 2017	The Journey of Faith (Jim Tucker) <i>Symbolon #1</i>
September 6, 2017	Divine Revelation (Jim Tucker) <i>Symbolon #2</i>
September 13, 2017	The Creed (Father Fuller)
September 20, 2017	The Bible (Deacon Rick) <i>(Symbolon #3)</i>
September 27, 2017	The Story of Salvation (Deacon Rick) <i>(Symbolon #4)</i>
October 4, 2017	Who is Jesus? (Deacon Norm) <i>(Symbolon #5)</i>
October 11, 2017	The Paschal Mystery (Deacon Rick) <i>(Symbolon #6)</i>
October 18, 2017	FALL BREAK....NO CLASS

October 25, 2017	The Holy Spirit (Deacon Norm) <i>(Symbolon #7)</i>
November 1, 2017	ALL SAINTS DAY NO CLASS – ATTEND MASS
November 8, 2017	Why Do I Need the Church? (Jim Tucker) <i>(Symbolon #8)</i>
November 15, 2017	Mary and the Saints (Mike Chavez) <i>(Symbolon #9)</i>
November 22, 2016	NO CLASS....THANKSGIVING BREAK
November 29, 2017	The Last Things (Father Fuller) <i>(Symbolon #10)</i>
December 3, 2017 (Sunday)	CATECHUMENATE BEGINS at 11:00 a.m. Mass <i>**Sponsors**</i> <i>Rites of Acceptance & Welcome</i> <i>First Sunday of Advent</i>
December 6, 2017	Church History Part 1 (Mike Chavez)
December 13, 2017	Church History Part 2 (Mike Chavez)
December 20, 2017	Church History Part 3 (Mike Chavez) <i>Last class until January 3, 2018</i>
December 27, 2017	NO CLASS UNTIL JANUARY 3, 2018
January 3, 2018	The Sacraments Overview Baptism & Confirmation (Jim Tucker) <i>(Symbolon #1)</i>
January 10, 2018	The Eucharist (Jim Tucker) <i>(Symbolon #2)</i>
January 17, 2018	Church Tour/Sacramentals (Deacon Norm)
January 24, 2018	A Walk Through the Mass (Father Fuller) <i>(Symbolon #3)</i>
January 31, 2018	Penance and Anointing of the Sick (Father Fuller) <i>(Symbolon #4)</i>
February 7, 2018	Penance (Father Fuller)
February 14, 2018	ASH WEDNESDAY NO CLASS - ATTEND MASS

February 18, 2018 (Sunday)	<i>Rite of Sending: 11 a.m. Mass at St. Philip Neri</i> **Sponsors** <i>Rite of Election: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cathedral, OKC: TBA</i> **Sponsors** <i>1st Sunday of Lent</i>
February 21, 2018	Matrimony and Holy Orders (Father Fuller) <i>(Symbolon #5)</i>
February 25, 2018 (Sunday)	Mass 11 a.m. 2nd Sunday of Lent Line up: Catechumens first, then Candidates **Sponsors**
February 28, 2018	A Love That Lasts (Deacon Rick) <i>(Symbolon #7 & 8)</i>
March 4, 2018 (Sunday)	11 a.m. Mass 3rd Sunday of Lent 1st Scrutiny Line up: Catechumens first, then Candidates **Sponsors**
March 7, 2018	A Catholic Moral Vision (Mike Chavez) <i>(Symbolon #6)</i>
March 11, 2018 (Sunday)	Mass 11 a.m. 4th Sunday of Lent 2nd Scrutiny Line up: Catechumens first, then Candidates **Sponsors**
March 14, 2018	Catholic Social Teaching (Mike Chavez) <i>(Symbolon#9 & #10)</i>
March 18, 2018 (Sunday)	11 a.m. Mass 5th Sunday of Lent 3rd Scrutiny Line up: Catechumens first, then Candidates **Sponsors**
March 21, 2018	Last Class Holy Week/The Sacred Triduum (Father Fuller)
March 25, 2018 (Sunday)	PALM SUNDAY
March 27, 2018 (Tuesday)	Holy Chrism Mass OLPH Cathedral, Time TBA
March 29, 2018	Holy Thursday <i>Mass of the Lord's Supper 6:30pm</i>
March 30, 2018	Good Friday <i>Service of the Lord's Passion 6:30pm</i>
March 31, 2018	Holy Saturday <i>Vigil of the Resurrection of the Lord 8:00pm</i> <i>Arrive with sponsors no later than 7:30pm</i> Mystagogy Begins
	Archdiocesan Recognition of the Newly Baptized and Newly Received Mass with the Archbishop TBA