

## **RCIA Glossary of Terms**

Since the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) was developed in the early centuries in the life of the Church, many of the original Greek terms are still used. The following is meant to be help for participants in the RCIA process.



### **Baptism**

Baptism is the primary sacrament of the Church and is the gateway to membership in the Church and participation in all of the other sacraments. Through this sacrament, a person enters into a covenant with God, is forgiven all sin, and becomes a new creation in Christ. The symbol for Baptism is water.

### **Bishop**

A bishop is a priest who has been ordained to be the religious leader of a diocese. He is ultimately responsible for all the souls in his jurisdiction. That is why all catechumens and candidates are called to celebrate the Rite of Election with the bishop on the First Sunday of Lent.

We belong to a large diocese and so it is called the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Our Bishop is Cardinal Archbishop Justin Rigali.

### **Candidate for Full Communion**

A person who has been baptized in another faith tradition with the Trinitarian formula and either immersed in water or had it poured over his/her head does not need to be baptized again.

This person, who seeks Full Communion in the Church, supplies a copy of the original baptismal certificate and, at the Rite of Welcoming, the person seeks Full Communion with the Catholic Church.

### **Catechesis**

Catechesis is the term given to the work of the church that helps those in the RCIA process come to know about the Catholic religion and grow in knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. It differs from teaching or instruction in that it has as its goal communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ, rather than just knowledge of Jesus Christ and his Church.

**Catechumen**

A person preparing for baptism is known as a catechumen.

**Catechumenate**

The catechumenate is the time between the Rite of Welcoming and the Rite of Election. It is a time devoted to helping both catechumens and candidates for Full Communion get to know Jesus Christ and his church.

**Communion** (see Eucharist)**Confession** (see Sacrament of Penance)**Conversion**

This is a gradual process of learning to live Christ in one's daily life. Conversion is a lifelong process and applies to all who are seeking a life of faith.

**Confirmation**

Confirmation is the second Sacrament of Initiation. The person is confirmed in their faith and receives gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to live the faith and share it with others by the witness of life.

**Easter Vigil**

This is the night before Easter Sunday when the Church commemorates Jesus' rising from the dead. This is also the night that the Church traditionally celebrates the Sacraments of Initiation with adults and children who have reached catechetical age.

**Elect**

On the First Sunday of Lent the catechumens are called by the Bishop of the Diocese to begin a special period of purification and enlightenment prior to the reception of the Easter Sacraments of Initiation.

## **Eucharist**

Eucharist is the term given to the third Sacrament of Initiation. People also use the term Communion. This is the sacrament that the initiated can return to receive at least weekly. This is the sacrament of the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ given to us by Jesus himself at the Last Supper, the night before he died. He gave us this sacrament so that we can be constantly nourished in our life in Christ.

The term *eucharist* actually comes from a Greek word meaning *thanksgiving*. The early church chose the term because those who became members of the church lived the rest of their lives in thanksgiving to God for the great gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

## **Faith**

Faith is the assent made by a person in response to the goodness of God in their lives.

## **Full Communion** (see Candidate for Full Communion)

## **Godparent**

A catechumen may choose to ask someone who is a fully-initiated, practicing Catholic to be a godparent during their time of Election and at the Easter Vigil. This godparent supplies a letter of eligibility from the parish where the person is registered and participates.

## **Letter of Eligibility**

A Letter of Eligibility is a document obtained by a person's parish that states that they:

- Are at least 16 years of age
- Fully initiated in the Catholic Church (have received Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)
- Are living a sacramental life (living a moral life and participating regularly at Sunday worship).

## **Liturgy**

Liturgy is the term given to the official public worship of the Church. It includes the way that sacraments are celebrated, the structure of Mass, and the way that the Liturgy of the Hours are prayed. The term comes from the Greek word, which mean the official work of the

people. The Early Church used the word to mean the official way that the people of God give praise and worship to God.

### **Inquiry**

This is the initial period in the process of RCIA where both the Inquirer and the Church get to know one another. It is also known as the time of pre-catechumenate.

### **Mass**

This is the primary, public act of worship in the Church. Mass is celebrated daily, but all are expected to participate at Mass each Sunday. In the church, special days begin the evening prior to the day. That is why the Church also has Mass on Saturday evening so that persons can begin the special day of Sunday the evening before Sunday.

Mass times are listed on the main page of this website. A person can participate at any Roman Catholic Church to fulfill the obligation for Sunday worship.

### **Mystagogy**

This is the time after the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. It usually ends by Pentecost Sunday, which is fifty days after Easter.

### **Parish**

The Catholic Church has regional division within the diocese known as parishes. Each parish offers its people the sacraments, worship opportunities, guidance, community, and opportunities to help others.

Each Catholic is expected to register in the parish where he/she lives.

### **Period of Enlightenment**

The time between the First Sunday of Lent and Easter is known as the Period of Enlightenment for those catechumens preparing for Baptism. It is a time of special prayer and spiritual growth.

### **Profession of Faith**

Those who are preparing to come into the Catholic Church but are already baptized, make a profession of faith stating that they believe and accept all that the Church believes and teaches.

## **RCIA**

This is the normative process for adults and children of catechetical age to become members of the Catholic Church.

## **RCIA Team**

The RCIA is the work of the whole parish. Those seeking entrance into the church need to know members who mirror what it means to *be* church. Members of the RCIA team have responded to a call to share their gifts with those in the RCIA process. They do that by reflection on the Gospel readings, helping with hospitality, answering questions, facilitating discussions, assisting at the various rites, and by sharing their faith.

## **Religion**

Faith is a person's assent to God in his/her life. Religion is the way of life that includes beliefs, ways of worship, morality, and spirituality.

## **Retreat**

This is a time to step back from the business of life and give specific prayer time to the Lord. A retreat is held for Candidates and the Elect some time before the celebration of the sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

## **Rite**

A rite is the particular way that things are done in liturgy.

## **Rite of Election**

This Rite takes place on the First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. Catechumens and Candidates for Full Communion participate in this Rite with Cardinal Archbishop Justin Rigali.

## **Rite of Sending**

Before the Rite of Election, members of the catechumenate are presented to the pastor of the parish. Sponsors and team members, as well as the

catechumens and candidates themselves, attest to their desire to celebrate the Easter sacraments.

### **Rite of Welcoming**

This is the first rite in the RCIA process. This is when those who have been inquiring about membership in the Catholic church express their desire and are welcomed into the time of the Catechumenate. This rite may be celebrated at Sunday Mass periodically during the year.

### **Sacraments**

The whole life of the Church revolves around the sacraments. There are seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders.

Through the sacraments a person receives the grace (power of God) to live a Christian life. The sacraments are part of the official liturgy of the church.

### **Sacrament of Penance**

This sacrament is an opportunity for a person to admit their sin before God in the person of the priest to seek forgiveness and healing from the effects of sin in their lives. This sacrament offers peace from God.

This sacrament also goes by the name of the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession. It may be celebrated whenever the person is in need of this healing forgiveness and is a requirement for the first reception of Eucharist or any other time when a person knowingly commits serious sin.

### **Sacraments of Initiation**

There are three Sacraments of Initiation:

- Baptism: a person becomes a member of the church, is reborn in Christ, forgiven all previous sin and receives grace and gifts from the Holy Spirit to live a life of faith.
- Confirmation: a baptized person is confirmed in their faith and receives grace to use their gifts to share faith with others. Parents do this by bringing children to baptism and living a moral, faith-filled life. Single people do this by living witness to Jesus Christ in their personal as well as professional lives.

- Eucharist: the Sacrament of Initiation that may be received more than once in order to nurture the spiritual life of the person with the Body of Christ in order to live life in Christ.

### **Scrutinies**

The Rites of Scrutiny are held on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent for the Elect who are preparing for Baptism at Easter. Each of the Scrutinies is derived from the Gospel proclaimed Mass. The purpose of these Rites of Scrutiny is to help the Elect be as ready as humanly possible to celebrate Baptism.

The whole community gathered at Mass prays for the Elect so that they may always thirst for the living waters, be freed from sin, and be ready to live a new life in Christ.

### **Sponsor**

A sponsor is usually a member of the parish community who journeys with a catechumen or candidate for Full Communion from the Rite of Welcoming/Acceptance through Mystagogy.

### **Triduum**

The three days at the end of Lent are referred to as the Triduum. This includes:

- Holy Thursday: Jesus celebrate his last supper with his disciples and gives them the gift of the Eucharist.
- Good Friday: Jesus suffers and dies on the cross
- Holy Saturday: After sundown, we celebrate Jesus risen from the dead.

Because of the solemnity of these three days they are considered one unit. Those preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil are encouraged to participate in each of these liturgies.

### **Worship** (see Liturgy)

Worship is the name given to our responsibility to praise God as individuals and as a community. We worship by participating in Sunday liturgy and by giving praise and thanks to God in our prayer.