



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Church of the Assumption
Broadview Heights, OH

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

A PARISH STATEMENT...

We, the faith filled community of the **Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, affirmed the response of the Blessed Virgin by proclaiming “[We are] the Lord’s servant!” (Luke 1:38)

through **Worship, Spiritual Development, Education and Outreach.**

We **Worship** through:

- † Participation in the liturgy and sacraments,
- † Personal and communal prayer
- † Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration

We **Educate** through:

- † A Catholic elementary school and Parish School of Religion
- † Continuing education
- † Special programs and presentations

We **Develop Spiritually** through:

- † Living and passing on our faith and values
- † Encouraging the full and active participation of all members in parish life
- † Fostering compassion and reconciliation
- † Programs which promote Christian discipleship

We **Outreach** through:

- † Human care and social justice
- † Ecumenical collaboration
- † Evangelization
- † Welcoming and hospitality

Assumption Church is most happy to participate in a process for welcoming new members into the Roman Catholic Church called the **“RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS”**, or the **R.C.I.A.** In doing so, we enter into a spiritual journey – during which formation in the whole Christian Life takes place. We believe that the catechumenal process is not the private concern of a few, but is rather synonymous with the Church’s very life. Underlying this process is the conviction that each member has a unique gift to contribute to our journey. We, as a parish, are called to bring persons to Christ, and to bring Christ to those who have been touched with the gift of faith.

PRE-CATECHUMENATE

Our Journey to God
Salvation History
The Gift of Scripture
Jesus, the Messiah
Images of the Church
Our Prayer Life
Overview of the Sacraments
Eucharist: Source of Summit
Sacraments of Initiation

CATECHUMENATE

Rite of Becoming a Catechumen
Anointing of the Sick
Christian Morality 1 & 2
Sacrament of Reconciliation
Ministry: Holy Orders
Religious & Single Life
Matrimony
Ministry: Called to Serve
Mary and the Saints

ENLIGHTENMENT

Rite of Election
Growth & Change in the Church
Scrutinies
Communal Penance Service
Liturgical Year
EASTER VIGIL MASS
MYSTAGOGIA
Meaning of Pentecost
Neophyte Mass/ Bishop Lennon

PROCESS—NOT “ANOTHER PROGRAM”

The first essential aspect of the new Rite is that it treats Christian Initiation as an ongoing process which occurs over time. The catechumenal process is a spiritual journey which varies according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of the individuals involved, and the circumstances of time and place.



CATECHESIS

During the gradual conversion journey it is important to keep in mind that the RCIA is much more than convert classes. It is, as the Rite is called an *Initiation*. It can never be reduced to a series of classes, since the experience of conversion is essential to its growth process. Remember, faith is a personal relationship with Jesus, not just knowledge of doctrine or the creed.

Catechesis, therefore, needs to be understood more as reflection on and experience of that gradual journey of faith, rather than merely assimilating information. The latter does occur, but within the wider context of growing in that relationship with Jesus through the stages of the RCIA.

COMMUNITY

“The gift you have received, give as a gift.” (Matthew 10-8)

God’s gift of faith is like a treasure. Once found, few want to give it up! A person of faith wakes up in the morning with a hope that God will be present that day. A person of faith finds comfort and consolation when a family member dies. Unlike a treasure that rots or decays, faith grows in hope and inspires a love which lasts forever.

What the RCIA brings out so forcefully is that adult initiation can only really occur in a community which is ready to transcend itself. The Catechumenate is a mutual task on the part of the catechumen and the community. Only a community which is ready to look at itself in terms of the still unexplored and unaccepted implications of its own faith will qualify to be the soil in which the faith life of a new Christian can take root and grow. We at Assumption parish hope to be such a community!

Initiation, then, is a gradual journey where our newcomers mature in faith, and our Assumption community welcomes these inquirers in an open and living manner. In the process, it is our community which is renewed by the Catechumenate process, because it is our parish community which is challenged to conversion and given new life by the faith of the new believers.



PROCESS – CATECHESIS – COMMUNITY

STAGES OF THE RCIA

The new Rite of Christian Initiation divides this process into four distinct stages:

PRE-CATECHUMENATE: This a period of evangelization lasting from a few weeks to many months (here at Assumption Parish it will extend from September to Advent). During this period INQUIRERS are invited to ask questions, share their stories, hear the Good News and reflect on the place of God in their lives.

CATECHUMENATE: During this period, extending from many months to a year or more (here at Assumption Parish it will extend from November to the First Sunday of Lent), a time for a complete and elementary catechesis takes place. The CATECHUMAN expresses the desire to become a member of the church as he or she enters this stage.

ENLIGHTENMENT: This third stage is a period of intense preparation (lasting through Lent) as a time for deeper conversion and prayer. The ELECT will reflect upon the paschal mystery and its place in their daily lives.

MYSTAGOGIA: The final stage coincides with the Paschal (Easter) Season and is a time for the NEOPHYTE to reflect upon the “mysteries” of the faith. It is a time of the first sacramental experiences of the newly initiated.

LITURGICAL STAGES

The four stages of the RCIA Process have their own proper liturgies which take place in the assembly of the Parish Community during the celebration of Mass. Each of the stages concludes with a rite which links the completion of one state with the beginning of the next.

WHERE DID THE RCIA ORIGINATE?

The RCIA is a rite that dates back to the earliest days of the Church. During Apostolic times (1st and 2nd Centuries) individuals shared the Good News and incorporated people into faith communities. During the 2nd to the 5th century, local churches conducted extensive initiation periods. New converts were received into the church only after much study, prayer, and community support. Easter was the great feast to welcome all new members. We have excellent accounts of these catechetical instructions from such authors as St. Augustine, St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Ambrose.

The decline of adult converts, the delay of adult baptism, and the growing practice of infant baptism eventually led to the neglect of serious catechesis. The Middle Ages, the barbarian invasions, and changing social conditions saw the decline of the Catechumenate as a formal process. Were it not for certain later missionary efforts, this gift might have been lost forever.

Interest in the Catechumenate was revived by the great missionary ventures to Asia, the Americas, and Africa. St. Ignatius of Loyola planned catechumenal communities in India in the 16th century. Dominican and Augustinian missionaries established catechumenates in Mexico and Peru. The famous Cardinal Lavigerie, founder of the White Fathers, is credited with restoring the stages of the RCIA to the missions of Africa—stages that respect the development of faith, and progress in learning and conversion.

Today the Church is asking us to return to the ancient practice, wherein the importance of time, ritual and communal support in the conversion process is emphasized. In 1972 the Council Fathers of Vatican II called for a modern Catechumenate in the spirit of the ancient Christian traditions. The new RCIA was issued, giving Catholics valuable guidelines for welcoming persons into the Church.