



Saint John Neumann Catholic Church

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

2017 - 2018 Guide

Session Times: Sundays, 8:30 – 10:45 a.m., Rooms 9 & 10 (Lower Level), SJN Faith & Family Center

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Visit RCIA Online: <http://saintjohnsunbury.org/rcia>

What is the RCIA?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the means by which those aged seven and older can enter the Catholic Church and receive the *Sacraments of Initiation*: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This involves the entire parish community, which prepares and welcomes people as disciples of Jesus Christ. The RCIA is not a “process,” or a “program” or a “class” - it is a *rite* of our Church.

The Rite itself speaks of a conversion, a “spiritual journey.” Centered on fostering a *deep encounter and ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ* and the Church He founded, this takes place through several distinct stages over time to bring about a *catechesis* (an “echoing back” of what is taught), an experience with the parish community, and a commitment to discipleship in our Roman Catholic tradition. The Rite is a restoration of the ancient *catechumenate* that took shape in the centuries following the time the Apostles were alive. It was the early Church’s way of bringing the message of Jesus to those in the pagan Roman Empire and the larger world. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) called for the restoration of this venerable and powerful method of “making disciples” for the worldwide Church; the revised Rite became official in 1988.

Most RCIA participants are over age of 18. Children between seven and sixteen years of age take part according to their own needs, known as the *RCIA Adapted for Children*. It is strongly encouraged that these children are simultaneously enrolled at either the St. John Neumann Parish School of Religion (PSR) or a Catholic school. Like their older peers, these children would receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil and if necessary, brought into full communion with the Catholic Church.



Outcomes

Our *spiritual, moral, liturgical and discipleship* formation (RCIA, n. 75) will help the participant:

- bring about a “conversion experience” with a sincere intention to change their life and enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ,
 - develop the practice of calling upon God in prayer, both individually and in the assembly,
 - experience the beginnings of spiritual life,
 - experience the Catholic Church through the parish community,
 - identify what is a personal “sense of Church,”
 - understand and explain the fundamentals of Catholic teaching, and
 - obtain a basic understanding of Roman Catholic belief.
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Requirements

The Inquiry period – the first part of RCIA - is a voluntary, question-driven phase, with no obligations. At SJN, participation in *The Alpha Course* counts as a thorough participation in Inquiry, although it is not required. Once an Inquirer or Sponsor has agreed to take part in the *Rite of Acceptance* - the public recognition of readiness to enter into the next phase, there is a commitment. The duration of the individual's progress can be as long as a year or more, depending on individual circumstances, exposure to religious discipline and a lived faith.

All participants (Catechumens, Candidates and Sponsors) are expected to:

- Attend all RCIA sessions and Rites as scheduled. *Prospective Sponsors should consider this obligation carefully before making the commitment for the duration of RCIA.* If a situation occurs where multiple absences result, the Director and the individual participant/Sponsor will need to evaluate what is happening and what needs be done.
- Attend Sunday Mass, as it is required of all Catholics and the most fundamental way to come to know what it means to be a Catholic.
- Attend all Retreats and Days of Reflection.
- Become active in the life of the parish.

Sponsors will, once they are assigned a Candidate or Catechumen, be also expected to:

- Attend the Sponsor Orientation and the occasional Sponsor-only sessions.
- Assist the RCIA Team as needed throughout the Rite.

Structure of RCIA

Inquiry: Where Everything Begins

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.” This has usually begun long before anyone calls the Parish Office. When one puts words to that desire, they have entered the first stage of initiation, the Period of Evangelization, also known as Inquiry. It also begins as the person is 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 initial period, the community helps inquirers to discover just what it is they are seeking.

Inquiry takes place *year-round*, for those who ask about the Church at any time. At SJN, this can happen in different ways:

- For those not baptized, and/or without any formal religious background, there is participation in *The Alpha Course*, a ten-week program of conversations of the basics of Christianity in a community format, held on Sundays and Mondays.
- For those with a certain level of religious formation, including baptized Catholics wanting to complete their initiation, there is a set of topical discussions on Sunday mornings that begins in late summer, continuing through December. *Participants and others are always welcome to join the Sunday morning sessions.* Even if these persons do not receive Sacraments at the Easter Vigil (based on where they are in their own religious formation) they would continue in RCIA until they are ready to enter the Church at a time appropriate for them and the community.



Discernment

Interviews of those inquiring about the Catholic Church happen at least twice during RCIA; additional interviews may be called for by candidates, or requested by the RCIA Director. These discernment interviews are opportunities for one-on-one discussions with the Pastor, 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 any lingering questions. This also includes ensuring that Inquirers understand their relationship with the laws of the Church regarding marriage; Inquirers with prior marriages *must* contact the RCIA Director for more information about how the Church can help.

Acceptance and Welcome

Once Inquirers have experienced their initial conversion to Jesus Christ, they celebrate the first public ritual of the RCIA, the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*. During this rite, celebrated at a Sunday Mass, the new candidates 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” (RCIA, n. 41). The Rite completes the first stage or period of the initiation process, and opens the door to the second.

Those already baptized as Christians in another faith tradition (or even those baptized Catholics who have not yet received all the Sacraments of Initiation) take part in a ritual called the *Rite of Welcome*. The church and the parish community recognize their oneness with these Candidates, even though they may not yet be ready to share the Eucharist until the Easter Vigil. Baptized Candidates are always considered distinct from the unbaptized, because of the “one baptism” we as Catholics profess to share with them.

Catechumenate

The second stage of initiation is an extended period that includes training in the Christian way of life. There are two groups at this point on the Rite: *Catechumens* who are unbaptized, and *Candidates* who are already baptized. They may be joined by those already baptized in the Catholic Church who are wanting to resume their own initiation after some time away.

During Catechumenate, everyone will learn more about the Scriptures and the doctrines of the Church. They meet weekly at Mass to hear the Word of God proclaimed. The Catechumens and Candidates are occasionally *dismissed* after the homily; that is, they are invited to leave the body of the Church and meet with a Catechist (a trained parish volunteer or member of the Parish Staff) to discuss the Scriptures they heard proclaimed at Mass (the readings for Mass are listed in the RCIA Schedule; see below). This study and reflection is an important part of their formation and helps to prepare for the day when they will receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

In addition to the study of the Scriptures, the candidates participate in teaching sessions to help them to understand the doctrine and practices of the Church. The Catechumens and Candidates also learn about Catholic prayer and worship. They learn how to live and serve others in apostolic witness. They develop their own particular relationship with the parish 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

The second ritual of the RCIA occurs on the First Sunday of Lent, immediately following Ash Wednesday (in 2018, Ash Wednesday is *February 14*). 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 a diocesan celebration, and the presider is the Bishop – the head of our local Church. The Catechumens are declared as *Elect* (that is, chosen) by God to receive the Sacraments of Initiation. This celebration usually takes place in a cathedral, though in many dioceses there are multiple celebrations and sometimes at multiple locations. Earlier that day we will celebrate a *Rite of Sending* as a way of publically recognizing the candidates' upcoming election and sending them on to the Bishop 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, which prepares us all for the mysteries of the Easter Season. It is a time for reflection and prayer more than teaching. The Catechumens, now properly called *The Elect*, purify their minds and hearts by celebrating several rituals. The three purifying rituals, known as the *Scrutinies*, happen on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, and strengthen the Elect and help them 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, the *Preparatory Rites* on Holy Saturday morning serve as the Elect’s immediate preparation for the Sacraments, which will be celebrated that night, at long last, at the *Easter Vigil*.

Only the Beginning: The Sacraments of Initiation

At some time after dark on Holy Saturday, the Elect and Candidates celebrate all 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. The Candidates affirm their desire to be received into full communion with the Church by making a Profession of Faith. Then all become configured to 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 for the first time in this most holy of all the Church’s liturgies.

What Happens Next: Mystagogy

The process of initiation continues even after the Easter celebration, during the period of *Mystagogy*. 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 twice a month 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*. These 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” (*RCIA*, 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.

The Ministry of Sponsors

A *Sponsor* is a Catholic in good standing who is willing to be a companion to an Inquirer, Candidate or Catechumen over the entire time the RCIA takes place. As they are acquainted they listen to one another, answer questions, pray together, and connect with the larger group and the parish community. Sponsors find their role to be one that enriches and deepens their own faith as well. They’re not meant to have all the answers, but show the Catholic faith as it is lived and encountered in the everyday.

A registered, active parishioner of St. John Neumann who is at least 18 years of age and has received all the Sacraments of Initiation may sponsor another person in R.C.I.A., so long as the candidate is not the sponsor's child. In some cases, a candidate's fiancé/e may be suitable as a Sponsor so long as the commitments to the RCIA are met and *not* secondary to the details of preparing for a wedding. Baptized non-Catholics may be sponsored by their Catholic spouses on a case-by-case basis. Fitness to serve as a Sponsor is ultimately determined by the Director with the help of the RCIA Team. Members of the RCIA Team cannot act as Sponsors, as their roles and responsibilities within the Rite are quite different.

Sponsors and candidates form a tight, supportive group over time and the partnership between candidate and Sponsor becomes critical as the time approaches for the rites leading up to Sacraments. So, it's a considerable commitment to be sure, and not for everybody. Life happens, of course, and an absence or two through the year can be made up. If a prospective sponsor feels their personal schedule or their habits will result in multiple times away, it's better that the person consider another role.

Prospective sponsors should contact the Director or a Team Member as soon as possible, to provide information about his or her background and relationship with the Church, and ask questions. Sponsors will occasionally meet to discuss their role and undergo training on how to help the people they are sponsoring and identify areas of challenge and growth.

RCIA for Younger Learners & Child Care

Those children who can follow the material in the larger group of participants are encouraged to do so. For younger children, the *RCIA Adapted for Children* provides an age-appropriate text and schedule. See the Director for details. Children involved in RCIA should be *also* be enrolled in either the SJN Parish School of Religion or a Catholic school. This will enable them to develop a sense of community and support as they are going through RCIA, and set them on a course of ongoing Christian formation after they have received the Initiation Sacraments...Confirmation *is never* graduation! Please contact the Director of Religious Education for PSR enrollment information.

Our Church considers a child at age seven to be “of catechetical age,” that is, someone who can begin to understand the basics of Christian faith. For this reason, unbaptized children seven years old and older will be prepared through RCIA to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil in the proper, historical sequence – Baptism, followed by Confirmation, followed by Eucharist (*Code of Canon Law* 97, 852 §1).

We gladly provide childcare during sessions for RCIA Team Members, Candidates and Sponsors. Our volunteer helpers are trained in First Aid and certified in *Protecting God's Children* as required. Child Care is located in our Faith & Family Center. 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.

Schedule

INQUIRY

- **Week 1: August 13, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)**
1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a/Rom 9:1-5/Mt 14:22-33 (*Lectionary for Mass*, 115)
Getting Started: Introductions – RCIA & Inquiry.
- **Week 2: August 20, 2017, 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Is 56:1, 6-7/Rom 11:13-15, 29-32/Mt 15:21-28 (118)
Getting Started: What is Inquiry?
- **Week 3: August 27, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Is 22:19-23/Rom 11:33-36/Mt 16:13-20 (121)
Getting Started: What About Tough Questions?
- ✚✚ **September 3 – No Session (Labor Day Weekend)**
- **Week 4: September 10, 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Ez 33:7-9/Rom 13:8-10/Mt 18:15-20 (127)
Who Is Jesus?
- **Week 5: September 17, 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Sir 27:30–28:7/Rom 14:7-9/Mt 18:21-35 (130)
Why Did Jesus Die?
- **Week 6: September 24, 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Is 55:6-9/Phil 1:20c-24, 27a/Mt 20:1-16a (133)
How Can I Have Faith?
- **Week 7: October 1, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Ez 18:25-28/Phil 2:1-11 or 2:1-5/Mt 21:28-32 (136)
Why and How Do I Pray?
- **Week 8: October 8, 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Is 5:1-7/Phil 4:6-9/Mt 21:33-43 (139)
Why and How Should I Read the Bible?
- ✚✚ **Saturday, October 14 – RETREAT FOR INQUIRERS AND SPONSORS.**
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Offsite.
- **Week 9: October 15, 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Is 25:6-10a/Phil 4:12-14, 19-20/Mt 22:1-14 or 22:1-10 (142)
How Does God Guide Us?

- Week 10: October 22, 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Is 45:1, 4-6/1 Thes 1:1-5b/Mt 22:15-21 (145)

How Can I Resist Evil?
INTERVIEW FORMS, SPONSOR FORMS & DOCUMENTATION OF BAPTISM (IF APPLICABLE)
to be submitted by those desiring Catechumenate.
- Week 11: Sunday, October 29, 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Ex 22:20-26/1 Thes 1:5c-10/Mt 22:34-40 (148)

Why and How Should I Tell Others?
INTERVIEW FORMS, SPONSOR FORMS & DOCUMENTATION OF BAPTISM (IF APPLICABLE)
to be submitted by those desiring Catechumenate
- Week 12: November 5, 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Mal 1:14b–2:2b, 8-10/1 Thes 2:7b-9, 13/Mt 23:1-12 (151)

How Does God Heal Today?
INTERVIEW FORMS, SPONSOR FORMS & DOCUMENTATION OF BAPTISM (IF APPLICABLE)
to be submitted by those desiring Catechumenate.
- Week 13: November 12, 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Wis 6:12-16/1 Thes 4:13-18 or 4:13-14/Mt 25:1-13 (154)

What About the Church?
INTERVIEW FORMS, SPONSOR FORMS & DOCUMENTATION OF BAPTISM (IF APPLICABLE)
to be submitted by those desiring Catechumenate.

CATECHUMENATE

- Week 1: November 19, 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**
Prv 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31/1 Thes 5:1-6/Mt 25:14-30 or 25:14-15, 19-21 (157)

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE (for those unbaptized) and RITE OF WELCOME (for those baptized),
9:00 a.m. Mass, with Dismissal

✠✠ November 26 – No Session (Thanksgiving Weekend)
- Week 2: December 3, Sunday I of Advent (Year B)**
Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7/1 Cor 1:3-9/Mk 13:33-37 (2)

Days of Grace: The Catholic Liturgical Year
- Week 3: December 10, Sunday II of Advent (B)**
Is 40:1-5, 9-11/2 Pt 3:8-14/Mk 1:1-8 (5)

God's People in Time: Church History, Part 1
- Week 4: December 17, Sunday III of Advent (B)**
Is 61:1-2a, 10-11/1 Thes 5:16-24/Jn 1:6-8, 19-28 (8)

God's People in Time: Church History, Part 2

✠✠ December 24 & 31 – No Sessions (Christmas Break)

- **Week 5: January 7, 2018, Feast of the Epiphany (B)**
Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12 (20)
The Church - Oneness and Holiness
- **Week 6: January 14, 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**
Sm 3:3b-10, 19/1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20/Jn 1:35-42 (65)
The Church – Catholicity and Apostolicity
- **Week 7: January 21, 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**
Jon 3:1-5, 10/1 Cor 7:29-31/Mk 1:14-20 (68)
Sacraments of Initiation
- **Week 8: January 28, 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**
Dt 18:15-20/1 Cor 7:32-35/Mk 1:21-28 (71)
Sacraments of Healing
- **Week 9: February 4, 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**
Jb 7:1-4, 6-7/1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23/Mk 1:29-39 (74)
Sacraments of Service

✠✠ Saturday, February 10 – RETREAT FOR CANDIDATES, CATECHUMENS & SPONSORS.
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., On SJN Campus.

PURIFICATION & ENLIGHTENMENT

- **February 14: ASH WEDNESDAY (B)**
Jl 2:12-18/2 Cor 5:20–6:2/ Mt 6:1-6, 16-18 (219)
7:00 p.m. Mass, w/Dismissal
- **Week 1: February 18, Sunday I of Lent (B)**
Gn 9:8-15/1 Pt 3:18-22/Mk 1:12-15 (23)
PARISH RITE OF SENDING: 9:00 a.m. Mass, w/Dismissal
Acts of Holiness: The Liturgy (after Dismissal)
DIOCESAN RITE OF ELECTION: 7:30 p.m., at Saint Paul Church, Westerville

Week 2: February 25, Sunday II of Lent (B)
Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18/Rom 8:31b-34/Mk 9:2-10 (26)
A Morally Complex World: Part I
ANointing OF THE ELECT: 11:00 a.m. Mass, w/Dismissal
- **Week 3: March 4, Sunday III of Lent**
Ex 17:3-7/Rom 5:1-2, 5-8/Jn 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42 (28, Year A)
A Morally Complex World – Part II
THE FIRST SCRUTINY & PRESENTATION OF THE CREED: 11:00 a.m. Mass, w/Dismissal

- **Week 4: March 11, Sunday IV of Lent**
1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a/Eph 5:8-14/Jn 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38 (31, Year A)
A Morally Complex World – Part III
THE SECOND SCRUTINY: 5:00 p.m. Mass, w/Dismissal
- **Week 5: March 18, Sunday V of Lent**
Ez 37:12-14/Rom 8:8-11/Jn 11:1-45 or 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45 (34, Year A)
THE THIRD SCRUTINY & PRESENTATION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER:
9:00 a.m. Mass, w/Dismissal
The Four Last Things (after Dismissal)
- **Week 6: March 25, Passion (Palm) Sunday (B)**
Mk 11:1-10 or Jn 12:12-16 (37)/Is 50:4-7/Phil 2:6-11/Mk 14:1–15:47 or 15:1-39 (38)
✠✠ No Session (Spring Break)

THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

- **HOLY THURSDAY, March 29**
Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper: Ex 12:1-8, 11-14/1 Cor 11:23-26/Jn 13:1-15 (39)
Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7:00 p.m. (No Dismissal)
- **GOOD FRIDAY, March 30**
Is 52:13–53:12/ Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9/Jn 18:1–19:42 (40)
Service of the Lord's Passion, 7:00 p.m. (No Dismissal)
- **HOLY SATURDAY, March 31**
Rehearsal for Easter Vigil, 10:00 a.m., in Church, followed by the Recitation of the Creed
All updated Inquirer's Forms, Baptismal records, Interview Forms, Patron Saint name choices and Letters of Good Standing (for Sponsors) MUST be on file before the Easter Vigil rehearsal.
VIGIL OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD: 9:00 p.m.:
Gn 1:1–2:2 or 1:1, 26-31a/ Gn 22:1-18 or 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18/
Ex 14:15–15:1/Is 54:5-14/ Is 55:1-11/Bar 3:9-15, 32–4:4/ Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28/
Rom 6:3-11/ Mk 16:1-7 (41)
All arrive (w/sponsors) no later than 8:00 p.m. Reception immediately follows the end of the Easter Vigil.

MYSTAGOGY (Sessions meet after 11:00 a.m. Mass)

- **Week 1: April 8, Sunday II of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday) (B)**
Acts 4:32-35/1 Jn 5:1-6/Jn 20:19-31 (44)
- **Week 2: April 22, Sunday IV of Easter (B)**
Acts 4:8-12/1 Jn 3:1-2/Jn 10:11-18 (50)
- **Week 3: May 6, Sunday VI of Easter (B)**
Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48/1 Jn 4:7-10/Jn 15:9-17 (56)
- **Week 4: May 20, PENTECOST SUNDAY (B)**
Acts 2:1-11/ 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Gal 5:16-25/ Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15 (63)