

**RCIA—Rites of Christian Initiation
Scrutinies, and Sponsors**

Angels -- Explanation of Catholic Images

Meditation: Canticle of Daniel 3:57-87

Deacon:

Gospel Reading and Reflection

Tonight, I would like to explain the RCIA process.

RCIA --- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

The RCIA process has several distinct stages: Inquiry, Catechumenate, Purification and Preparation, Initiation, and Mystagogy.

You will hear us refer to “Journey” many times through out this class.

Journey: is where you are at in your faith life. There are no two people here who are at the same place of their faith journey. We are all at different places on our journey --- your journey started the day you were born and will continue into your after-life with God.

Inquiry: the initial period before you decide to enter into the Catholic Church. You haven't yet committed, but are asking questions and checking out the Church.

In this stage you explore and develop your faith enough so you can make an informed decision about entering the Catholic Church --- this stage could and probably will continue in it's own way through out your whole RCIA journey right up to receiving the Sacraments.

Some questions to ask during your inquiry and journey are: What is life?
Who is God? Who am I?

Listen and look for the answers and then ponder them in you heart.

Once you are satisfied with the answers, you will know that you have fallen in love with Christ --- and that is what this whole process is about --- falling in love with Jesus.

Catechumenate: When you have decided to enter the Church and are learning about living a life with Christ --- you are now called a

Catechumen, this is an ancient name from the early Church that was given to people who were preparing to be received into the Church. In this stage you are learning about your faith and developing it --- your faith begins to grow.

Your job now is to come into closer contact with the Living God and to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

Most of you here are in this stage because you have made a commitment to attend these classes.

You are under no obligation to receive your Sacraments at any time during this process --- for you to receive the Sacraments, you must know in your heart that this is the right thing to do and you must want to receive them.

You will learn that Sacraments are a gift from God --- they cannot be earned or bought --- They are gifts given freely from God.

Purification and Preparation: during this time the Church helps you focus and intensify your faith as you prepare to commit your life to Christ and prepare to be received into the Church at Easter.

This time frame occurs during the Lenten season.

This stage of intense reflection calls you to a deeper conversion in preparation to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

The season of Lent will become very special time to you as you prepare for Easter.

You will participate in three Scrutinies where you will hear and meditate on three profound and beautiful passages from Saint John's Gospel that will help you focus on your preparation to enter the Church.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults describes the Scrutinies as: *“rites for self-searching and repentance.....to uncover all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the heart of the Elect, and to bring out and strengthen all that is upright, strong and good.”*

The Scrutinies are very simple----each Scrutiny consists of General Intercessions that include a prayer of exorcism and the laying on of hands by the Celebrant of the Mass on the Elect.

In the 4th through the 7th Centuries, the Scrutinies were real tests to determine whether the Candidates were worthy to be received into the Church.

If they didn't pass the Scrutiny, they could not be baptized at the Easter Vigil.

It is probably a good thing that the Scrutinies are no longer tests----I doubt than anyone of us doing the testing could pass the tests ourselves. However, it would be a good thing for each one of us to scrutinize ourselves so that we can see how unworthy we really are and to meditate on where our faith is leading us.

Initiation: this is the culmination of the whole process. You will be received into the Church during the Easter Vigil Mass, where you will receive the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

The Easter Vigil Mass is the most important Mass of the year --- this Mass with its beautiful liturgy is the “Mother of all Masses”.

This is a very special time for everyone --- to both you and to your instructors.

If you have been baptized already, in either the Catholic Church or another faith recognized by the Catholic Church, you will not be baptized again --- you can only be baptized once --- you will learn more about this in later classes.

Mystagogy: after you have been received into the Church, this period lets you reflect and learn more about the mysteries of the Mass and the Sacraments that you are now able to participate in fully.

You will learn how you can become more active in your faith in your lives and in the community of Church.

Your journey does not end here --- this is just the beginning --- your faith continues to grow and gets better as time goes on.

Sponsors:

Each one of you must have a Sponsor to walk with you on your journey through RCIA --- this person should be someone that you are comfortable with and someone you can look to for his/her example --- perhaps your sponsor could be the very person who invited you or who is responsible for you attending these classes --- someone you know whose faith is strong and one who lives their faith in their daily life.

Sponsors don't need to know everything about our Catholic Faith, but both you and your sponsor need to know a few things about being a sponsor.

The primary job of a sponsor or a godparent is to be a spiritual friend --- one who is able to share his or her own faith and one who is a person of prayer.

A sponsor is not a catechist and isn't expected to know any more about church teachings than the average adult Catholic --- you may raise many questions that your sponsor will not be able to answer immediately --- but he does need to know who to call on to find the answer to your questions.

Your sponsor should have a desire to be your friend and companion during this important time of your life --- he or she must be able to make a commitment to the RCIA community and to your journey --- many times your sponsor will become a life long friend.

Your sponsor should have an eagerness to learn more about their faith which will enable them to assist you as your faith grows.

Your sponsor must be a confirmed Catholic who regularly practices their faith and one who leads a life in harmony with the Church and one who values their Catholic Faith and is willing to share that faith with others.

It is generally not advisable that a spouse or close family member serve as your sponsor --- you should be free to discuss things of a sensitive nature with your sponsor and you can't always do that with a family member.

Your sponsor is required to attend our weekly sessions, attend Mass with you, and be able to meet with you on a regular basis.

Being an RCIA sponsor is a big commitment that offers big rewards --- besides helping you on your journey to join the Church, they will make new friends, have some fun, and learn more about their faith.

So now is the time to choose a sponsor and if you cannot think of anyone who meets these requirements, please see one of the team members after class and we will help find you a sponsor.

Angels: What are they?

Sacred Images of the Catholic Church? Handout

Closing Prayer

