



## RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS



### **What is the RCIA?**

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a process universally restored in the Roman Catholic Church in the 1970's to prepare unbaptised adults for membership in the Church.

Also called 'the catechumenate', this process of Christian initiation has several stages and ritual steps, leading up to the reception of all three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, usually at the Easter Vigil, and finishing with Pentecost. People undertaking this journey of initiation are called 'catechumens.'

Because the RCIA is such a rich process it is often adapted to include people already baptised into another Christian denomination who wish to become Catholics. We call this other group "candidates for full communion".



### **What happens in the RCIA?**

The RCIA consists of four time periods and three transitional rites celebrated in the midst of the worshipping assembly.

**First Stage:** Called the *Pre-catechumenate or Period of Evangelization*, this is the time in which the inquirer's own questions form the basis of formation.

**First Ritual Step:** Once initial conversion is experienced, the unbaptised inquirers are accepted into the Church as catechumens with a public rite called *Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens*.

**Second Stage:** The longest period of formation or catechesis now takes place. The catechumen participates in the life of the believing community particularly by celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word on Sundays.

**Second Ritual Step:** This is called the *Rite of Election or Enrolment of Names*. Through this Rite the Church acknowledges that God has selected the catechumen for full initiation at the Easter Vigil.

**The Third Stage:** This is called the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and takes place during Lent marked by three community celebrations called *Scrutinies* which ask God for healing and forgiveness for the elect (now the new title for the catechumens). These scrutinies coincide with the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent.

**Third Ritual Step:** Now comes the most important of all the transitional rites, when the elect are fully incorporated into Christ and the Church by *Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil*.

**Fourth Stage:** This is an important period of reflection by the newly initiated with their faith community during the season of Easter. They reflect on the significance of the Easter sacraments, especially by their weekly participation in the Eucharist, meditating on God's word and participating in the life and mission of the parish.



**Besides the catechumens (and the optional inclusion of baptised candidates wishing to become Catholics) who is to participate in the RCIA?**

The whole parish community has a part to play in the process of welcoming and forming catechumens and candidates for full communion. The RCIA is not a private process of initiation. It is **the community that initiates its new members** and so the community has an important part to play at every stage.

The **priest** has a special role in ministering to the pastoral and spiritual care of those on the journey and those accompanying them.

**Sponsors or godparents** are to take an active and supportive role as companions, witnesses and guides not only during the RCIA but beyond.

**Faith companions and catechists** are responsible for guiding the formation process of the inquirer towards a deeper reflection on the Word of God and a greater understanding of the faith of the Church

**Others in the parish community** who are not part of the RCIA team are called on to help, pray for, and support the catechumens and candidates throughout the process of initiation and ensure they are welcomed as members of the Parish community.

**Where does it take Place?**

1. Within the worshipping community.
2. Wherever people are prepared to welcome and support a newcomer.

**How long does it all take?**

It will depend from where participants are starting. In Upper Mt Gravatt Wishart Catholic Parish, people are welcomed as they make an enquiry and usually journey to the following Easter and enjoy Mystagogia up to and often beyond Pentecost. If anyone does not feel quite ready to take on the commitment asked of them by baptism this is honoured. Each person is unique and should only take each step as she or he is personally ready for it.

**For further information about the RCIA email:**  
[pa.umg@bne.catholic.net.au](mailto:pa.umg@bne.catholic.net.au)

**UPPER MT GRAVATT WISHART CATHOLIC PARISH**  
**Ph. 07 3849 7158**  
St Bernard's, Upper Mt Gravatt  
St Catherine's, Wishart  
St Martin's, Eight Mile Plains



**BECOMING A CATHOLIC  
THROUGH THE**

**RITE OF  
CHRISTIAN  
INITIATION OF  
ADULTS**



**UPPER MT GRAVATT WISHART  
CATHOLIC PARISH**

