



## *St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church*

*5323 East County Road 462*

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*(352) 330-0220*

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## **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is RCIA?**

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a restoration of an ancient process for incorporating unbaptized persons into Jesus Christ through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The process was restored after the Second Vatican Council, but did not become widely available in the United States until late in the 1980s. The local Catholic bishop determines how RCIA will be administered in the parishes under his care. For more information, download the RCIA introductory and descriptive material on our parish website: <http://www.sumtercatholic.org/rcia.html>

### **Who needs to attend RCIA?**

People who have not received the sacrament of Baptism must attend RCIA for an extended period — ideally, a year, and even longer. The length of the process depends greatly on your readiness for the reception of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

### **I'm already baptized in another denomination. Do I need to attend RCIA?**

That depends. The Catholic Church doesn't re-baptize people who are already baptized. If you are baptized but never received any instruction in the Catholic faith, you should receive instruction now and finish any sacraments you didn't complete. We strongly recommend RCIA, even if you have been well instructed in another faith tradition, since you will need to learn how the beliefs and practices you grew up with differ from the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. If you are a baptized and confirmed Catholic returning to the practice of the faith, you should talk to the pastor or one of the deacons of the parish about how to proceed. We recommend that Catholics who have been away from the Church for many years (say, 10 or more) go through RCIA for the instruction.

### **I think I was baptized, but am not sure. What kind of information do I need to join RCIA?**

If your church or congregation kept records, you'll need to obtain a copy of your baptismal record — a certificate or a letter from the pastor there. Because locating records can be difficult or time-consuming, you should try to obtain these records as early in the process as possible. We must see these records to confirm your baptismal status before you're received into the Church. If your church or congregation did *not* keep records or no longer exists, we can make other arrangements. Please contact Celines Sanchez at the parish office at 330-0220.

### **I've been divorced but am not remarried. Can I become Catholic?**

Certainly. Unless you plan to marry, you do not need to obtain an annulment.

### **I've been divorced and am remarried, and my spouse is divorced and remarried. Can I become Catholic?**

You and your current spouse need to begin the annulment process with regard to your earlier marriages, and you should begin it as soon as possible *even if your spouse is not considering entry into the Church*. Please contact Celines Sanchez at the parish office (330-0220) for information on how to proceed.

Of course, you can attend RCIA sessions during the annulment process, but reception into the Church must wait until the annulment process has been completed.

### **What's the cutoff date for joining RCIA?**

This year (2007-08) RCIA starts on Sunday, September 16, and continues through the weekend of Pentecost (about 8 months later). Unbaptized persons who have had no previous religious instruction should join as early as possible, and are encouraged to take more than the 8-month period. If such people join too late, they may be asked to wait until Easter of the following year. For others, the "cutoff date" depends on your faith level and readiness to receive the sacraments. Please speak with Deacon Walter Thomas, the RCIA director.

### **When do you meet?**

RCIA at St. Vincent de Paul meets on Sunday afternoons at 4:30. The opening session lasts approximately one hour, after which we attend the beginning of the 5:45 Mass together. We are then dismissed immediately after the homily to meet again and discuss the readings and their impact on our lives. We are finished by 6:30 p.m.

### **How long does the RCIA process last?**

Inquiry sessions (also known as Pre-Catechumenate) take place throughout the year. Inquiry is designed to help you decide whether you want to continue, since RCIA is a serious commitment. For information on meeting times and dates, consult the parish bulletin.

This year (2007-2008) RCIA proper begins at St. Vincent de Paul on Sunday, September 16, and meets weekly until Pentecost Sunday, about six weeks after Easter. Please note that Baptism and reception into the Church occur at the Easter Vigil, *but RCIA does not end until Pentecost*.

The Neophyte year is a "soak-in" period for new Catholics. Sessions meet monthly for a complete year after your reception into the Church. This is a time for you to consolidate what you have learned, and to explore more about life in the Catholic Church. All new Catholics who complete RCIA are urged to attend Neophyte year sessions.

### **My schedule doesn't permit me to attend your sessions. What should I do?**

There are a several options. We may be able to arrange catechesis in a private setting with a deacon or qualified parishioner. Or if a nearby parish meets at a different time,

you may be able to attend RCIA there. We can provide information on when and where other parishes in the area offer instruction.

**I heard I need a sponsor in order to become Catholic. What is that, and how do I get one?**

A sponsor is a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church who accompanies you on your journey through RCIA. The sponsor has the job of helping you through the process, and of verifying at the main rites that you are ready to take the next step. For baptism, the sponsor is called a "godparent," with more serious responsibilities toward the catechumen being sponsored.

At St. Vincent de Paul Parish, sponsors are expected to attend at least some of the sessions with their candidate. If you know someone who meets these criteria, you can simply ask them to sponsor you. If you don't know anyone, the parish will provide a sponsor for you.

**I know who I want my sponsor to be, but that person doesn't live locally and can't attend sessions. Can that person still be my sponsor?**

Yes. However, we will provide someone locally to represent that sponsor, accompany you on an ongoing basis and instructions and the rites with you. At the Easter Vigil, the sponsor you prefer will then stand in the local person's place as your official sponsor.

**I have children. Do you provide child care?**

Unfortunately, no. If you need child care, you should arrange your own or, if your children are well behaved, you can bring them to instructional sessions. If you and your spouse are attending RCIA together, you might try alternating attendance. If childcare is still a difficulty, please contact one of the RCIA team members.

**How old should a person be to attend RCIA?**

Technically, old enough to understand what is being taught. For children of catechetical age (ages seven to 14), we can provide catechists for their grade level. Depending on their level of maturity and interests, older teens (age 15 or above) would join the adult group

**What texts do you use and how do I get them?**

Our texts will include the Scriptures, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and a small text: *We Believe... A Survey of the Catholic Faith*. This year (2007-08) we also hope to include the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

If you have a Bible of your own, please bring it. We would like you to own a Catholic edition of Scripture, so we will provide one. We also provide the text and a Catechism. We provide other materials — a syllabus of subjects covered, handouts, and occasionally printed materials, as well.