

From the Deacon's Desk

RCIA – How to become Catholic:

When you were baptized you became part of a wonderful community learning to love and serve God. You can share that beautiful gift with a friend, neighbor, or relative by sharing your faith with them. Have you noticed someone who is a bit curious about “those Catholics”? Perhaps you know someone, a baptized Catholic, who has drifted away, or isn't quite sure what to think about the Church anymore? The opportunity has arrived for you to extend that personal invitation to those adults and children to come and explore, ask questions, and perhaps begin their faith journey through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

All of us, even the best known people of the Church, began their faith journey because someone cared enough to respond to their spiritual needs and concerns. The RCIA doesn't happen by itself. It's a community event, and YOU are that community. Be aware of someone around you who may be open to God in their life. Ask someone who may be interested in the Catholic faith to come and see what we're all about. Plant the seed of Christ in someone's heart, or share the joy of your own experience of finding Jesus.

RCIA is a process for adults who are interested in coming into the Roman Catholic Church, or who simply want to inquire more. It can be for those who have never been baptized, or for those who may have been baptized in another faith tradition/denomination but not catechized. It may also be helpful to some Catholics who have been away from the practice of the faith for a while, and may consider themselves inactive or alienated. The RCIA is meant to resemble the journey of faith, and it is a process where people ask questions and share their desire to know more about Catholicism.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the normal way in which adults (and children over age 7) become full, active, participating members of the Catholic Church. The RCIA is not just a “convert class” with a new name. Special liturgical rites for those not baptized, are celebrated during the Sunday liturgies at various times through the year.

The RCIA involves the whole parish – in prayer as the rites are celebrated, in hospitality as new members are welcomed, and in specific ministries like sponsors or team members.

The most important thing to keep in mind about the RCIA is this: it is not merely a new way to prepare adults for baptism; baptism is only one step. The goal of the process is full communion which means “full, conscious, and active participation” in the Eucharist and in the whole life of the Catholic faith community.

If you or someone you know might be interested in becoming or returning to Catholicism, give them this invitation or talk to them yourself. You can also have them contact Deacon Jerry at the parish office, and we will be happy to explain further the initiation process called the RCIA.

Today's Gospel:

Let us be extravagant in sharing the word of God with others. Two images dominate our Scriptures this Sunday, both from the world of nature – rain and the sowing of seeds. Together they are used to describe not just the kingdom of God, but more importantly, how that kingdom is part of who we are as disciples of Christ. In our reading from Isaiah, the Word of God is compared to the rain from heavens, pouring down, soaking the earth, softening it and nourishing it so that it produces its many fruits. Rain is essential to growth; without it, the land is unable to release its potential. So, too, for the Christian! The Word is essential for our spiritual growth. Like the rain, the meaning, imagery and teachings of God's word are meant to soak into our hearts, permeate our lives and so release our spiritual potential to be faithful disciples and heirs to the kingdom.

This word of God, contained in both the New and Old Testaments, is the story of the Church and God's faithful interaction with his people. Like a family gathered around the table to celebrate a joyful occasion, so the Church invites us to hear the telling of that interaction and God's promises to all. So when God promises in our first reading that his word shall not return void but will achieve its end, that promise is as real for us as it was for the people at the time of Isaiah. So what is that promise? This is where today's passage from Romans is so helpful, for here Paul sets out the promise, once the unique preserve of Israel but now open to all nations, namely, that we shall be liberated from slavery to corruption and we will share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

The power of the word of God is equally laid out for us in the parable Jesus tells in the Gospel, using the imagery of sowing seed. Like all parables, it teaches by means of what is common and known. On the face of it, Jesus is telling the story of a farmer sowing seeds – very familiar and very simple. Yet beneath this ordinary story is a metaphor of the Christian vocation – a story that Jesus hopes will provoke some response in his audience and some personal application in each of our lives.

This parable is not simply about the soil on which the seed falls – it is about the process of growing in our faith, for it is here that we truly find the kingdom. Responding to and faithfully living out the Gospel message are key here. In the same way that the farmer can never expect a 100 percent yield, so we are not able to choose the time and place in which we are to bear witness to the Gospel in a generous and faithful way. But we must be ready. What is important is that like the sower in today's Gospel parable, we are extravagant in sowing that seed and sharing that word.

Summer Planning:

Summer tends to be a little more relaxed around the parish, although it is a time I use for catching up on reading, and planning for next year's programs. Some things that are in the planning process would be:

- Alpha and Alpha for teens (If we have enough for at least one group, ages 12 through high school).
- Whole Community Catechesis which will happen on the first Sunday of each month starting October 1st. Right after Mass everyone and of all ages will be invited to the parish hall for a sit down breakfast, followed by age-appropriate catechesis for adults, teens, and children from 10:45 am until 11:15, followed by adult or children's catechesis from 11:15 to 12:15.
I'll have refrigerator magnets with the dates, times, and topics ready for you by the end of summer.
- An 8 week adult faith program called Mass Matters: A small course on the Holy Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- We will also need to find a practical way to start reaching out to former members of our parish who still live in the area but no longer attend regularly on Sundays. We need to connect with them and let them know we care about them. Months ago I met with Fr. Bert Gohm who gave me a program he used for reaching inactive Catholics at his former parish, and we need to consider that approach here.

Parish Picture Directory:

After six years since our last Picture Directory, it's time for a new one! Judi Degruise has agreed to coordinate this project with the help of Mary Lou Willoughby, Joyce and Larry Noyes, Pat Daniels, Dave Spindler, Pat Trudell, and Louanna Burch.

Look for weekly information in the gathering area of the church and in the bulletin. There are a number of flyers you can pick up in the back of church and we will start scheduling people for photos July 22 and 23. Photos will be taken at the parish on Monday August 28, Tuesday August 29, Wednesday September 6, Thursday September 7, Friday September 8, and Saturday September 9. We are also looking at having people visit the homebound to take in-home pictures.