

*Ask Fr James*

## **Why I should consider going through the RCIA**

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) offers anyone an opportunity to join the Catholic Church through adult baptism usually conferred at Easter vigil. In our parish here, the classes usually run from October till April, with candidates attending evening classes once a week and the courses or topics and discussions make Christianity and Catholicism compelling to adults and help them cultivate a sense of enduring personal commitment to the Christian life. RCIA is the gateway to conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. Conversion is always a lifelong process. It is never finished for any of us.

The RCIA program also reaches out to those who were baptized in other faith traditions but want to become Roman Catholics. It is also opened to those baptized in the Catholic faith but who no longer practice. We know that there are many baptized Catholics who now describe themselves as lapsed, former, non-practicing, retired or recovering! The RCIA sessions attempt to correct misconceptions, such as those concerning church marriage regulations and the annulment process and takes a non-judgmental approach to disaffected Catholics and catechumens and encouraging them to have a zeal about it and a joy about embracing the faith.

The process emphasizes an engagement with scripture rather than an affirmation of dogma and consists of four distinct periods defining this process—known as inquiry, instruction (or Catechumenate), purification and enlightenment, and mystagogy (or post-baptismal Catechesis). The candidate undergoes the four ritual transitions that culminate in the initiate's baptism during the Easter Vigil. The whole catechumenate period allows for a gradual, multi-staged ritual integration into the faith community culminating in the celebration of baptism at Easter. RCIA goes beyond what to believe as a Catholic but emphasizes active participation, engagement, and discussion rather than lecture and passive delivery of information.

The RCIA process as practiced today can be directly traced to the Second Vatican Council and is actually a return to the ancient model of initiation in the Church. Inspired by Vatican II's emphasis on *ressourcement*, or the return to earlier sources in the Catholic tradition. It is based on initiation practices used in the early centuries of the church. Those who complete the process become full members of the Roman Catholic Church, able, for example, to receive sacraments and join a parish groups and participate actively in all the ministries.

Please phone the parish office if you or someone you know might be interested in joining us for RCIA sessions starting this fall until the spring.