

THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION AND ADULT FAITH FORMATION

Welcome to OCIA and Adult Faith Formation. These are two different programs; however, both involve catechesis, and can be taught together as one class.

WHAT IS ADULT FAITH FORMATION?

Adult Faith Formation is the lifelong process of finding and falling in love with God in the midst of our human lives. Every one of us, by virtue of our Baptism, is on a life-long journey of faith. Consequently, Adult Faith Formation has as its purpose to support, nourish, and challenge adults as they explore their faith, experience its power, grow in relationship with God.

How important is Adult Faith Formation?

Religious education is not just for children anymore. Adult faith formation is vital. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* (OHWB):

“Adult faith formation, by which people consciously grow in the life of Christ through experience, reflection, prayer, and study, must be “the central task in [this] catechetical enterprise,” becoming “the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age.” (OHWB #5)

Why do we need Adult Faith Formation?

In their document *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, the US Bishops renewed a commitment to fostering faith formation for adults. Since we all are continually being formed in our faith as we walk our journeys of life, a renewed commitment to adult faith formation necessitates a need for quality programming and a variety of opportunities for all adults.

What are the goals of Adult Faith Formation?

The bishops outline three key goals of Adult Faith Formation (OHWB #67-73):

- **Inviting and enabling ongoing conversion to Jesus in holiness of life:**
 - helping adults acquire an attitude of conversion to the Lord
 - leading adults to repentance of sin, reconciliation through the sacraments and deepening faith in Jesus
- **Promoting and supporting active membership in the Christian community:**

- helping adults make a conscious and firm decision to live the faith through membership in the Christian community
- inviting and supporting baptized adults in their co-responsibility for the Church's mission and life
- **Calling and preparing adults to act as disciples in mission to the world**
 - inviting baptized adults to evangelization and justice in the world



WHAT IS THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS?

OCIA is the process in which adults enter the Roman Catholic Church and is known as OCIA, "The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults."

Who is eligible for this process?

The Unbaptized. The primary focus of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults is on those who are not already Christian and have had little or no religious education.

Baptized but un-catechized are those who have been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church but need further catechetical instruction to celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist.

Those Seeking Full Communion with the Catholic Church are baptized, practicing Christians from another Christian Tradition who seek entry, or full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. *If you know someone who might be interested*, please call Sharon Curtin at 614-563-8405, or email at sharon@mcurtin.com. Classes will be held at St. John the Baptist Church on Wednesday evening, 7:00-8:30 p.m. beginning September 18, 2024, in the parish library on the second floor.

STAGES OF OCIA

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults as a process in which participants "undergo...conversion as they study the Gospel, profess faith in Jesus and the Catholic Church, and receive the sacraments..." The OCIA process follows the ancient practice of the Church and was restored by the Second Vatican Council as the normal way adults prepare for baptism."

OCIA is a journey.

The Order of Christian Initiation for Adults is a process that proceeds over weeks and months. It has several steps.

– *Pre-Catechumenate*

This is the earliest phase in the process; it is also known as the Period of Inquiry. Catechumens and Candidates acknowledge that Christ is calling them into the Church through the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is a time for seeking and reflection.

– *Rite of Initiation*

The first Rite in the OCIA process, the Rite of Initiation accepts new members into the worshipping community.

– *Catechumenate*

The longest part of the process, the Catechumenate is a time of learning and formation in the traditions and doctrine of the Catholic Church. This is a time for sharing stories, reading scripture, and studying the Church customs, traditions and doctrine. Participants also participate in worship services and various Church rituals.

A team of parishioners serve as sponsors and catechists for these adults, providing many opportunities for inquirers to experience Church community, prayer, beliefs, and service.

– *Rite of Election*

Catechumens are chosen to be received by the bishop and the community, and to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

– *Sacraments of Initiation*

At the Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday), all newly elected members of the community who have been journeying through the OCIA process are welcomed formally into the community of believers through receiving the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

– *Mystagogy*

This is a time of reflection and celebration after the formal reception into the Catholic Church. Mystagogy means “leading into the mystery” and it is a time to explore the deep mystery of our faith and go forth to help build the reign of God on Earth as new members of the faithful.

Growing as a Family

The Rite of Christian Initiation can be likened to the inclusion of a new family member. As the new member grows into the ways of a family’s living, the various members share their values, beliefs, hopes and visions. In this interaction and sharing, the family creates itself anew; it creates its own identity. This “making” or creating involves not only the formation of a new member, but the formation of the family itself.

If you know someone who is thinking about joining the Church, encourage them to call. Sometimes all someone needs is to be invited. Offer to become a sponsor, catechist or team member. Questions: Sharon Curtin sharon@mcurtin.com or call 614-563-8405.