

The Role of an RCIA Sponsor

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is a liturgical rite of the Roman Catholic Church. The rite calls for a process that offers individuals who may wish to enter into the Catholic Church an opportunity to examine the faith in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. At St. John Neumann this process is conducted by a team of lay parishioners and clergy, and new participants are welcomed at any time during the year.

RCIA is not a course or class in Catholicism. Rather, it is a gradual, guided process of formation and conversion leading participants towards initiation into the Catholic Church. Initiation into the Church is marked by the celebration of three sacraments as needed: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist.

The St. John Neumann parish community promises prayerful support for, and to walk with, each prospective new member of the Catholic Church. The role of RCIA Sponsor is the fulfillment of that promise. As a Sponsor you are assigned a Candidate (baptized adult) or Catechumen (unbaptized adult) whose continuing faith journey you will share.



Being a Sponsor is like being a trusted friend. You share what you can about your own faith journey. You offer counsel and support as you are able and to the extent that it is needed or desired. You serve as a bridge to the larger St. John Neumann community. You listen and pray. Each relationship between a Sponsor and a Candidate or Catechumen is unique. As a Sponsor, you walk with a Candidate or Catechumen through a formation process that culminates with initiation into the Catholic Church.

Many prospective Sponsors ask themselves whether they are worthy or qualified. The role of Sponsor is not that of catechist. You are not expected to know every aspect of the Church's teaching, but rather simply to be a guide, an example of a Catholic living your faith as best as you can. A Sponsor who can admit his or her limitations and who continually tries to grow is an excellent faith model. Sponsors are supported by the parish's RCIA Team, members of which can be called upon to help answer a Candidate's or Catechumen's questions.

A Sponsor participates in the RCIA process by accompanying the Candidate or Catechumen to catechetical sessions held each Tuesday evening from 7:30 to 9:00pm at the parish. These sessions are facilitated by an RCIA Team member and involve an exploration of the Church's teachings within the context of prayer and scripture. Each session provides for one-on-one discussion between the Sponsor and participant.

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Additionally, Candidates and Catechumens participate in the Rite of Dismissal, which takes place at the 9:30am Mass each Sunday. To the best of his or her ability, a Sponsor attends this Mass to support the Candidate or Catechumen. Sponsors do not participate in the Rite of Dismissal.



Sponsors do participate in other brief Rites that recognize important steps in the participant's faith formation. These Rites usually take place at Mass and occur infrequently throughout the RCIA process. Finally, a Sponsor assumes an active role at the Mass when the Candidate or Catechumen receives the sacraments of initiation.

The RCIA Team provides Sponsor training and support, and welcomes inquiries into being a Sponsor at any time. Sponsors should be practicing Catholic members of the St. John Neumann parish community. If you are interested in this ministry or have questions about it, please contact Jim Kordes (jimkordes@comcast.net) or the Director of Religious Education, Mary Lyons (703-860-8510 x340, mlyons@saintjn.org). For additional information about the RCIA process, please see the *Frequently Asked Questions about the RCIA Process* document on the parish's website (www.saintjn.org).