

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

What we are doing now. The catechetical process consists of four periods leading to receiving the sacraments of initiation and beyond into a final period called the neophyte year or mystagogy. This first period is called the precatechumenate and will extend until late November when candidates declare their intention to the Church. The first period consists of inquiry on the part of the “inquirer” or “candidates” and of evangelization and the precatechumenate on the part of the Church. During this time, the RCIA team gives a suitable explanation of salvific events and the Gospel and provides an opportunity to experience the company and spirit of Christians in our community. Inquirers are seeking the truth and the team transmits the words and deeds of revelation. There are no liturgical rites in this period because inquirers have not yet entered into a formal relationship with the Church through the Rite of Acceptance. All inquirers have been given a binder full of conversion stories, informational articles about our faith and examples of common Catholic prayers. Many of the questions asked early on are being answered and some are addressed specifically.

Catechism for All of Us...

Our catechist, Father George asks us, who is Jesus and why did he come? We first looked at who we are and who God created us to be. In the beginning...there was essentially chaos or nothing. So God is going to create all out of nothing. And in creating the cosmos, he creates with an order. He establishes order in the universe throughout the first chapter of Genesis. It is meant to function in a certain kind of way. In Genesis 1:26, God said let us make man in our image after our likeness, in the Divine Image and he says that it is *very good*. We have a dignity in all of God's creation because we are the only creature created in the image and likeness of God. The creation of humanity is at the pinnacle of God's creative work. God set man in the middle of the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it. Man was ordered not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or he would surely die. We must humbly remember that God created us and we are his creature. We are not the cause of our existence. God has established authority over our being; he is the potter and we are the clay. By his command not to eat of the fruit of this one tree, he sets up this proper and well ordered relationship of obedience. The story is about obedience. Satan, in the form of a serpent tempts the woman to eat of the fruit promising her that they would be like gods, having equality with God. This is the sin of pride. Adam and Eve were created in grace and with their disobedience they are now dis-graced. Now they fall away from this relationship of grace which God had given to them, because of their own disobedience. Here is the exercise of free will. We can choose to do good or evil. If a person is forced to love and forced to be obedient then *it is not a free offering of yourself*. Through this free will, Adam and Eve succumb to this temptation. God did not create them to be sinners, he created them sinless. This is authentic human identity and authentic human dignity, to be without sin. Sin deforms our human identity and human dignity. This is not how God created us to live. He created us to live in grace and without sin and in communion and friendship with him. But in respecting our freewill we lost all of these benefits.

Now Adam and Eve acknowledge their nakedness and hide from God. In Genesis, God describes the confrontation between the serpent and man with the promise that man would come out on top. *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel. (Gen 3:15)* This is the first announcement to mankind of the good news of the Redeemer-Messiah. This verse in Gen 3:15 is considered “the first gospel” or the protoevangelium. Here God promises someone who will re-order the disorder that is happening, a Savior. Here is the promise of the Savior, Jesus Christ. *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. (Gal 4:4-7)* What St. Paul is communicating to us with that phrase in “the fullness of time”, is how the early Christian community understood the fulfillment of the

proclamation in Genesis 3:15. That Christ is the fulfillment of this promise. Adam and Eve had a relationship with God also as Father and child, so there was an intimacy that was deeply wounded because of their sin. In Galatians, we see that because of Jesus Christ, all of this is restored. Now, the Holy Spirit is given to us so that we can call out, "Abba, Father!" All that was undone and lost at the beginning is now restored and given to us as a new gift of grace. This is the restoration of our human dignity.

The Father gave a gift beyond our imagination by sending his Son. In Luke's gospel we see that God the Father brings his plan to fruition by sending an angel to ask a virgin, Mary, to become the true Mother of God. God has truly become one of us. The Son of God assumed a human nature, including a human body, a human soul with intellect and will, true human knowledge; he was completely human in every way but he was sinless.

The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is begotten of the Father. He is equal to the Father. The Son took on human nature to accomplish our salvation. Faith in him is the path to Heaven.

The Son of God became man, Jesus Christ, to reconcile us to God by dying for our sins because we are finite creatures and could not make adequate reparation to God for our sins. John tells us, *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. (Jn 3:16-17)* Jesus came to reveal the depth of the Father's love. *But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)* God takes the initiative of redeeming love; he shows us his plan of benevolent love prior to any merit on our part. John the Baptist points out Jesus as the "Lamb of God" who takes away the sins of the world like the Paschal lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover. The sinless Christ became a victim for sin, that we might become holy.

A relationship with Jesus is necessary. *Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3:8-11)* Jesus loves us, seeks us out, and calls us to know him better. He reveals the Father to us, for he is the visible love of the Father among us. He wants a relationship with us based on our free love for him. He intends that we become holy and partakers of his divine nature. *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature... (2 Pt 1:3-4)* He shows us the way to holiness, to become perfect as his Father is perfect.

Prior to the incarnation, God communicated with us through the prophets, covenants and the Ten Commandments. The Son of God became man to show us how to become holy, to teach us by example. He enables us to partake in God's own divine nature. Jesus taught us to love one another as he loved us which is in direct contrast to our original sin, a sin of self-love. Jesus remains present to us in his Church, especially in the Eucharist, to heal each willing soul of sin.

Read it for yourself. CCC paragraphs: 260, 422-451, 461-464, 516, 519-560, 601-603.