

Discernment for the Rite of Acceptance

The first public ritual in the RCIA process is the Rite of Acceptance for the unbaptized. Prior to this celebration, discernment of the inquirer's readiness takes place. In the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the prerequisites for this first public ritual are listed. (See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* 42.)

The ritual text also states that sponsors, catechists, deacons, and pastors are responsible for arriving at a decision regarding the readiness of the inquirer. They are to base this assessment on the observation of external behaviors that indicate the inquirer's desire to continue in the process. (See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* 43.)

At this point of the process, the RCIA team is looking for signs of initial faith and conversion that cause the inquirer to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The team is also looking to see whether the inquirer desires to conform their lives to the Gospel.

For discernment at this stage, it is helpful to give the inquirer some questions to reflect on prior to meeting with their sponsor and a member of the RCIA team who has been a catechist in the Precatechumenate period. The following questions might be used as a guide:

- In what way have you grown in your relationship with Jesus/God?
- When, where, and how are you finding time for prayer?
- What are you observing about the importance of Sunday and what it means to live a Catholic way of life?
- In what way are you now more connected to this community? Do you desire to deepen that connection? What will you need from the community to help you in that process?
- What in the Bible has surprised you? How did that challenge or affirm your understanding of God?
- Why do you want to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance?
- How have your questions, concerns, and issues been addressed? Do you have different ones now?
- Are you ready to celebrate publicly your desire to explore the Catholic way of life?

Set a time for the inquirer, sponsor, and at least one RCIA catechist to meet and discuss the inquirer's reflections based on some of the above questions. The sponsor and the catechist should also share examples of growth they have observed in the inquirer.