

RCIA Planning:

Nine-Month Model or Year-Round Initiation Model?

There are a number of parishes which follow the **Nine- Month Model** of the RCIA process. If your parish is using this model, you would, typically begin the Inquiry Sessions in September; followed by the celebration of the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome. After this, you would begin the Catechumenate Sessions prior to the First Sunday of Advent. When the parish's RCIA team is small, this approach is the most practical. Unfortunately, however, this approach is not entirely faithful to the spirit and the norms established in the Rite itself.

On the other hand, the **Year-Round, Ongoing Model** (which offers Pre-Catechumenate and Catechumenate sessions year-round) allows for a richer pastoral expression of the Rite. This model more adequately acknowledges that the Holy Spirit does not necessarily work on the churches' time schedule, and that the time schedule for each person's conversion journey is unique. The **Year-Round, Ongoing Model** operates as follows: as soon as someone expresses an interest in the Catholic Church, she/he is interviewed and then immediately invited to join any Inquirers who have already been meeting. Also, when a participant in the Pre-Catechumenate stage is ready to move onto the Catechumenate stage, she/he is invited to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance/Welcome and then join those catechumens and candidates who have already started meeting. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the **Year-Round, Ongoing Model** requires a team that is large enough to accommodate people who will be in different phases of the RCIA process at the same time.

If you choose to follow the **Year-Round, Ongoing Model**, usually one month before the first Sunday of Lent the RCIA coordinator meets with the catechumens who have spent at least one complete liturgical cycle in the Catechumenate phase, as well as with the candidates. At this time the Director can evaluate whether each participant is ready to receive the Easter Sacraments at the Easter Vigil. Then, on the first Sunday of Lent, those catechumens, who are ready, will celebrate the Rite of Election. These catechumens and the candidates, will then begin the Purification and Enlightenment phase of their journey, while those who are not ready to receive their Sacraments remain in the Catechumenate. Those catechumens who remain in the Catechumenate continue in that phase until the first Sunday of Lent during the following year. The candidates who are not ready to move into the period of Purification and Enlightenment need not remain in the Catechumenate until the following Easter. When they are ready, they are able to go through a modified period of Purification and Enlightenment, and then receive Confirmation and Eucharist at any of the regularly scheduled parish masses.