



Discernment: Learning to recognize the Spirit

Tertullian, in the 2nd century, noted that Christians are made, not born. The process of initiation places before a would-be Christian the ingredients it takes to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Discernment is one of those ingredients. Fr. Marko Ivan Rupnik said it this way: “Discernment is learning how to remain in Christ, taking on his stance toward life, allowing him to inspire our everyday choices.”

The *Rite of Christian Initiation* (RCIA) takes this process very seriously. The Rite says it is the responsibility of the Christian community to make sure that those who present themselves as potential disciples of Christ, are in fact prepared to undertake this way of life. Far from being judgmental, cruel or divisive, discernment is one of a disciple’s tools. It is a process of uncovering, through outward

signs, the indicators of God at work in the life of a catechumen or candidate. Twenty-one years after the official implementation of the RCIA in our diocese, it has become obvious that the common practice of initiation in most parishes does not yet embrace this vision of discernment. But the exciting thing is that many of you sense its wisdom and are ready to explore its call. We welcome you!

RCIA Discernment: Focus on the Baptized will be offered in the Spring, in the same locations. Chesapeake, May 16; Blacksburg, April 25 and Richmond, May 2.

Who Should Attend?

This day is for:

- Pastors & Clergy
- Worship Leaders & Teams
- RCIA Leaders & Teams
- Catechists & Sponsors
- Parish Staff

How Faithful is Your Parish to the Rite?

Here’s a sampling of questions to consider when assessing your parish’s implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, with corresponding references:

Is it clear that those wishing to become catechumens or candidates have the beginnings of a spiritual life and that the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root? (*See Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA, #42,)

Do you set aside sufficient time to evaluate, and if necessary, to purify a candidate’s motives and dispositions? (RCIA, # 43.)

Are sponsors and godparents expected to give testimony as to the catechumen or candidate’s state of readiness? (RCIA, # 119.)

How often does the faith community, represented by the bishop, priests, deacons, catechists, godpar-

ents and the entire community arrive “at a judgment about the catechumen’s state of formation and progress”? (RCIA, # 121)

Do sponsors, catechists, deacons, and parish priests, along with the catechumen or candidate, look for the outward indications of a change of mind and heart into the mind and heart of Christ? (RCIA, # 43)

TO REGISTER:

1. List those from your parish who will be attending.
2. Attach payment. Cost is \$25.00 per person
Assistance is always available through the Office of Worship.
3. Mail to: Office of Worship
Catholic Diocese of Richmond
7800 Carousel Lane
Richmond, VA 23294

Registration due by Friday, January 5, 2008.

Parish: _____

Please register us for the RCIA Study Day on:

Please check one:

- January 17 at St. Thérèse, Chesapeake
- January 24 at St. Mary, Blacksburg
- January 31 at Pastoral Center, Richmond

Name(s)/Position (please print; make extra copies if necessary)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Parish Mailing Address:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Amount enclosed:\$ _____

Make checks payable to: Catholic Diocese of Richmond.

The Office of Worship
Of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond presents

RCIA Study Days 2009

Formerly Known as the Winter Refresher

When are they ready? Discernment gives the Clues

This Year, we will hold Study Days in 3 locations:

Saturday, January 17:
RCIA STUDY DAY WEST
St. Thérèse, Chesapeake

Saturday, January 24:
RCIA STUDY DAY EAST
St. Mary, Blacksburg

Saturday, January 31:
RCIA STUDY DAY Central
CDR Pastoral Center, Richmond

AGENDA:

8:30- 9:00 a.m.
Registration and Hospitality

9:00-9:30 Opening Prayer :
Our first listening for the Spirit

9:30-10:15 Defining Discernment

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-Noon Listening to the Spirit : Jesus and the Rite
Noon-1:00 p.m. Lunch (included in registration fee)

1:00-2:00 Listening to the Spirit put into practice

2:00-2:15 Speaking the Spirit's wisdom

2:15-2:45 Where is the Spirit leading you? Next steps

2:45-3:00 Closing Prayer: Sending forth in the Spirit

In 1972, when the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was promulgated by Pope Paul VI and then when the official English translation was mandated in 1988 for dioceses in the United States of America, another step in bringing conversion-based formation to parishes emerged.

From this point on, all adults or children of catechetical age who were to be baptized within the Catholic Church or received into full communion of the Catholic Church were to be part of a process of conversion and initiation as specified in this rite. It was no longer enough to hand on knowledge. The ritual text says it is

about conversion to the ways of Christ and the Church, a new way of life.

It is true that this conversion-based catechesis is different from other forms of handing on knowledge or practice. As a matter of fact, it is so different that the Rite says initiation practitioners must listen for God's movement in the lives of catechumens and candidates and they must look for its outward signs. They must invite *catechumens, sponsors, priests, initiation team members and the community of the faithful* to attest to readiness to embrace the Christian life. In other words, they must discern the signs of conversion.

Yes, it is a weighty and serious responsibility. But it is also one filled with the awe and wonder of the Spirit Jesus promised, alive, working and changing hearts and minds in our midst today. It is amazing to be charged by the Church to engage in this sacred work of discerning God's actions.

We invite your parish team to join us as we explore the Rite's presumptions and intentions about discernment, with an emphasis on catechumens. In the Spring Study Days, we'll focus on the baptized. Come begin to prepare yourselves to participate in this sacred listening ...to prepare to discern.

From apprentice to disciple: it takes a while!

Since the official implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the United States in 1988, parishes in the Diocese of Richmond have worked hard to bring this rite of the Church to life.

We still, however, have much work to do, to make this rite a year-round process wherein catechumens, with the help of cate-

chists, sponsors, and the entire community of believers, journey with us for *at least one entire liturgical year*, sharing in the life of the community and doing what Christians do: reading the scriptures, gathering on Sundays with other believers, and bearing witness to the message of Jesus in word and deed.

Only after that year (or more) are the catechumens chosen ("elected") for initiation at the beginning of Lent, culminating at the Easter Vigil, where the elect are baptized, confirmed, and welcomed to the Lord's table.

Is your parish RCIA process one of conversion? Come, share in discovering discernment as a tool!

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