

Things I Like about the RCIA

My involvement in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) began in May 1982, when a group of us from “Queen of Apostles” parish, Stafford, went out to Banyo to be instructed in the mysteries of this “new” process recently re-discovered in the church. I’ve been involved in the RCIA some way or other since then.

A Sense of Continuity

There is a powerful sense of continuity that each year’s experience of the RCIA seems to awaken. People’s faith-journey is very special, and opens us all to a fresh understanding of God’s mystery and compassion in our life.

Many of the candidates and catechumens from Easter Journeys will return to resource the parish in surprising and gracious ways – and often they will become a shining light down the track for people yet unnamed.

A Rich Mix of People

I’m always amazed at the range of people who arrive on the scene each year, seeking baptism or a full communion with the Catholic Church. Sometimes the range is geographic, as one year when we had Doris from Sierra Leone, Adrian from Ireland, Andrea from Germany and Eric from El Salvador all involved in the program in one way or another. But what is most significant each year is the energy that flows from the heart of people who are coming alive to God in new ways. It is a great privilege to come close to people who are themselves coming close to God. The people in their group are enriched, often profoundly, but so is the parish.

Some say that you can be part of a parish all your life and not come close to people. But that is never true of the RCIA. People who enter our life in this kind of faith journey, built round the weekly home-meetings and open, honest sharing, build a beautiful intimacy that is often for life and seems to stand the test of time.

A Sense of Providence

I enjoy enormously the sense of guidance and providence that gathers us up each year and somehow sweeps us along. I know I can forget some details and be unaware, but that does not stop the beautiful blessing that surrounds each person’s journey. The “candidates” are watched over and graced, as are the people who work with them: the sponsors who support them, the parish people who pray for them, and the catechists who instruct them.

Each year people make their own journey: some come from different Christian traditions, others have no Christian background at all and seek baptism and a full initiation into the church; each story is different. Bob, for instance, had never been baptised yet had been going to Mass on and off for the last 30 years; Debbie likewise was not baptised, yet had her children baptised and had nursed them through their questions of faith. They are all very special people, and each year we invite a new group of people to undertake a journey of faith, to make this their year for a journey to Easter and full communion with the church.

The parish generously supports the RCIA venture. Creative, generous people give their time and talent to the task. A parish, I think, is very fortunate when the RCIA is alive and well.

Brian Gagen *RCIA Coordinator*