

RCIA Statement for September 13th, 7:30 AM Mass

Good morning. My name is Barbara McFadden. I am here this morning to speak with you about the RCIA ministry at St. Francis. I was one of the RCIA candidates you prayed for during the 2006-2007. This is RCIA week end, and there will be a speaker addressing the congregation at the conclusion of each of our masses. Each of these speakers is either a former RCIA candidate or one of the parishioners who volunteer to support the program---we are all committed to this ministry and proud to witness to its power. I will be at the table in the narthex after Mass to answer any questions you might have. There is will also be also literature available there for you to take away.

RCIA is the acronym for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the ministry for receiving Adults into full communion with the Catholic Church. According to the **Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1229:**

“From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.”

Here at St. Francis, the RCIA program begins each fall and continues until the successful candidates are received into the Church at the Easter Vigil.

The purpose of my talk is threefold: to raise awareness of the RCIA ministry in general, to reach out to those of you within the congregation who may know someone who has asked you about becoming a Catholic, and most importantly, to encourage those of you here today who find yourself at a cross road, wondering if this is the time to take that next step in your personal faith journey.

My message to you is simple: if you are at that cross road, I urge you to take the next step and come to RCIA. If you know someone who might be at that cross road, reach out to them now. All are welcome.

By autumn of 2006, I had attended mass for over twenty-two years with my husband, a cradle Catholic, in his home parish of St. Edward the confessor in New Fairfield, Connecticut. We also attended Catholic churches as diverse as a simple chapel in rural Ireland, a church in Budapest where one could still see the bullet marks in the walls--- and where we understood not a word except Jesus, the magnificent Notre Dame de Paris and a small baroque side chapel at St. Peter's in Rome ---in short, the church anywhere in the world we might be on a Sunday or holy day where Catholics gathered to celebrate the Eucharist.

My life had changed that year. I had just retired from my travel-filled corporate job and we were living in Hilton Head full time. I was at that cross roads---was it finally my time to personally discover the commitment to God that led my husband to seek a community of Catholics no matter where in world he might be? Not without trepidation, I met with Sister Kathleen, and elected to join the 2006-2007 RCIA class.

The group I joined was small but committed to our faith journey. We were led from inquiry through commitment by the gentle but persuasive Sister Kathleen, our Deacons, and the priests, all of whom provide strong guidance and a transformational experience. RCIA volunteers under the leadership of Pat and Charlie Birmingham were a mixture of cradle Catholics and recent converts, all of whom witnessed to the power of the faith and provided guidance by example, encouragement when needed, supporting fellowship, and coffee for those Tuesday evening sessions when the spirit was willing but the body was weak. My experience was further enriched by my husband agreeing to be my Sponsor and attending RCIA as my partner. The entire RCIA experience satisfied me intellectually and spiritually and confirmed my decision to join the Church.

I stood on the altar during the beautiful Easter vigil, 2007 with my Sponsor by my side and my family in the congregation and experienced the joy of becoming a full member of the Catholic Church and the St. Francis Faith Community. I knew then that my faith journey would continue in richness for the rest of my life.

This is my story. What will yours be?

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you this morning. I hope to see you at the table in the Narthex.