

# Journey of Faith



## In Short:



- Your journey through the RCIA involves growing in love of God and his Church.
- The Scripture readings from the Easter Vigil help us reflect on this journey.
- Initiation into the Church is the beginning of an ongoing formation.

## Easter Vigil Retreat

You've come a long way on your journey of faith. You've become part of a faith community, you've grown in knowledge of God, and you've taken a closer look at yourself and your faith. You've been preparing for the next step—initiation into the Church and reception of the sacraments.

The reflections and activities during this time of reflection and sharing will help you prepare in heart and spirit for the celebration of Christ's resurrection and the next stage of your faith journey.

### Opening Prayer

*Lord, open our minds and hearts to your presence today. Guide us as we journey through this process and bring us closer to you each day. Help us know you better and help us see your goodness in everyone we meet. Amen.*

## First Reading: Genesis 1:1—2:2

*"God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good."*

Genesis 1:31

Spend time alone outside. Walk around and take in everything you see. God is present in this creation. If an object or a scene catches your eye, reflect on it. What is God trying to reveal to you?

A plant growing through a cracked stone might be a reminder that your faith is strong enough to grow through tough times. A seedpod might be a reminder of how important it is to have patience as you work on your spiritual growth. A sturdy oak tree might show how strong you can become when rooted in Christ.

If you can't get outside, imagine your favorite outdoor spot. What about this place makes it so important to you? Where do you find God there?

- What can you learn about God through his creations?



## Second Reading: Genesis 22:1–18

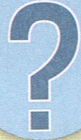
*"God put Abraham to the test and said to him: Abraham! 'Here I am!' he replied."*

Genesis 22:1

How eagerly do you answer God's call? Do you shout, "Here I am!" like Abraham? Or are you less eager, responding "Can you come back when it's more convenient?" Or "I'm willing, but only if..."

God has given Abraham so much, but now God is asking: *Do you trust me? Are you really ready to answer my call? As you look forward to entering the Church, God is asking you these questions as well.*

- Look back on your journey through the RCIA process. What has God called you to sacrifice? (a habit that wasn't Christian? A way of thinking? Time spent doing other things to commit to Mass and the RCIA? Friends who didn't support your decision or were a bad influence?)
- What have you gained through this sacrifice or offering?



### Third Reading: Exodus 14:15—15:1

*"Then the LORD said to Moses:...'Lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two, that the Israelites may pass through the sea on dry land.'"*

Exodus 14:15–16

This reading shows how God has worked many miracles for his Chosen People, and God is still working miracles for each of us. Your journey through the RCIA process is something like the Israelites' journey out of Egypt. God has called you out of slavery to sin and into the freedom of a loving God. As you decided to start the RCIA, as you've grown and changed, God has been there to guide and protect you.

That guidance and protection doesn't end with the RCIA, either. God will continue to guide and protect you as you start your life as a member of his Church.

- How have you, or how has your faith, changed since the beginning the RCIA?
- What was the most wonderful thing God did for you on this journey?
- What was the most difficult part of the journey? How did God guide you through it?



### Fourth Reading: Isaiah 54:5–14

*"Though the mountains fall away and the hills be shaken, My love shall never fall away from you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the LORD, who has mercy on you."*

Isaiah 54:10

This reading is a love letter from God. God is pictured as a friend, a spouse who wants to repair any damage done to our relationship and shower us with love.

In this reading God is not a parent or a judge but a beloved friend who is asking us to share our lives with him. Sharing our lives with God isn't always easy. It means admitting and asking forgiveness for the times we sin. It means humbly accepting God's plan for our lives. It means making the right decisions even when we struggle or the decision is unpopular. But in return, we get a lifetime of love.

- Are there any relationships in your life that come close to the relationship described in the reading? If yes, how have they changed your life? If not, how could a relationship like this be life-changing?



- How does this reading from Isaiah change the way you view God?
- How would your life be different if you lived every day with this image of God in mind?

### Fifth Reading: Isaiah 55:1–11

*"So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it."*

Isaiah 55:11

This reading speaks about the power of God's word.

Take your Bible and spend quiet time contemplating this reading on your own. To allow the words to sink in, reread each verse as many times as you need to. Be aware of your reactions. Is there a verse that seems to speak directly to you? Is there a verse you find yourself resisting or pushing against?

Take these reactions, positive and negative, to prayer. Thank God for the words you find comforting, for the verses you see your life reflected in. Ask God for help with those verses you have trouble understanding. Allow God to open your heart to the verses you find uncomfortable.

Then read the verses again, but this time when you're finished reading, sit in silence with God's word. Give God a chance to respond in your heart.

- How can you take what you've learned into your life outside of your RCIA sessions?



## Sixth Reading: Baruch 3:9–15, 32—4:4

*"Blessed are we, O Israel; for what pleases God is known to us!"*

Baruch 4:4

This reading talks about God's wisdom which, as we know, isn't always the same as the wisdom of the world. Saint Paul tells us that the wisdom of God can often seem foolish to those of us who look for worldly approval or worldly success. The Christian perspective is often much different than the world's perspective.

In your journal or with a partner, take time to make a list of worldly wisdom. Then alongside it, write what God's wisdom is, using Scripture if you can. For example, worldly wisdom might say "your value as a person is determined by what you're worth in dollars." But God's wisdom says: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth....But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19–20). Keep in mind, while often different, you may find some values of the world and of God that align. Don't be afraid to add these to your list, too.

## Seventh Reading: Ezekiel 36:16–28

*"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*

Ezekiel 36:26

### A Meditation

Sit comfortably and away from distractions. Close your eyes or focus your gaze on a sacred object like a crucifix that will keep you focused on God.

Now breathe in and out slowly. With each breath, imagine yourself moving down to the center of yourself, to your heart. Push away any distracting thoughts and continue to breathe slowly in and out. Ask God to show you your heart. How has it changed through the RCIA process? In what ways does it still need to grow?

Now imagine that God is creating a new heart within you. What is this new heart like? How does this new heart make you feel?

- Think about your old heart and your new heart. How are they the same? How are they different? (If you prefer, draw the two hearts and include their similarities and differences.)



## Epistle: Romans 6:3–11

*"We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life."*

Romans 6:4

- In baptism, we die with Christ. It is natural to be afraid of change. What fears do you have about the changes baptism or entry into the Catholic Church will make in your life?
- In baptism, we are raised with Christ. What hopes do you have about your future in the Church?



**Gospel:**

Year A, Matthew 28:1–10;

Year B, Mark 16:1–7;

Year C, Luke 24:1–12

*“You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified.  
He has been raised; he is not here.”*

Mark 16:6

- Reflect on the miracle of Christ’s resurrection, Christ’s promise to you, and Christ’s presence in your life.
- What do these things mean to you?



**Closing Prayer**

*Lord Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. We have journeyed from darkness to light, from being alone to belonging, from doubt to faith. Guide us on the next step of our journey to make a commitment—a covenant with the living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*



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