Sponsors Guide for RCIA

You are one of the most important people accompanying the candidate in their initiation journey. Always represent the Catholic Faith honestly and truthfully. If you do not know the Catholic teaching, please seek help.

The person you are sponsoring is seeking to profess personal faith. Because we desire to foster solid spiritual formation, spend ample time preparing them to commit to living as Catholics. This spiritual formation is centered around discernment. Discernment includes decision-making, but it’s more intuitive. It is listening to what God is doing, to where God is leading. Discernment happens as we look for signs, indications, hints, and clues for where the Spirit is leading. Perfect attendance at meetings may or may not mean conversion is happening. Help them discern the path they are on.

The person’s relationship with God is primary and conversion is the cornerstone. Each conversion is personal and must be somewhat developed. A classic definition of conversion is a change of heart, turning toward Jesus Christ, a deepening of one’s relationship with God. For those who are already baptized, the conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop. If they have a family, regardless of whether the rest of the family is Catholic or another faith tradition, they are involved in this journey of conversion. The lifestyle changes that the candidate makes will affect the entire family. This journey of faith may lead to conversion of other family members as well.

The journey of initiation must be something more than a typical religious education class. The process is aimed at training the candidates in the Christian life, which means showing them how to be disciples of Jesus Christ. There is no “graduation”- the journey to a deeper relationship with God in Christ continues for a lifetime. The journey involves walking in a Catholic community of faith.

So what do sponsors do?

* Renew your acceptance of Jesus.
* Practice Gospel living in personal and social life. Practice daily prayer, at least weekly Mass, monthly confession.
* Pray for them. Pray with them.
* Proclaim that Jesus saves us.
* Receive training. Discern if you are willing to mature in faith alongside the candidate. I highly recommend reading *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell.
* Accompany the candidate in entering the community. Welcome them into homes, conversations, and community gatherings.
* Recruit 1-3 additional Christians willing to journey with the candidate into the community of faith, ideally meeting weekly as a group. Discussion guides will be provided. An RCIA team member will be available for any questions.
* The Liturgy of the Word is one of the most important foundations for the candidates to develop a relationship with God. Discuss the scripture readings and homily as much as possible. Read the Bible outside of Mass.
* It will probably take 2-5 years for the candidate to become a missionary disciple. Living a Christian culture, lifestyle, and language takes time and effort. Connecting them to the parish assembly that celebrates Eucharist each week is foundational. Be prepared to accompany the candidate for at least one year of formation prior to Full Communion and at least one year of formation after Full Communion.