

# Christian Initiation (RCIA)

## Background

The Second Vatican Council prescribed the revision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). This revision placed initiation at the heart of the Church's life and, therefore, at the heart of parish life. The baptised are commissioned to proclaim the Good News and make disciples: to live in the world as Christ and to help those who seek meaning to know Jesus. Long before Pope Francis, the RCIA imagined the Catholic parish as a community of missionary disciples whose way of life revealed Jesus through its commitment to communion and mission. Indeed in the initial excitement about the revised RCIA, the thinking and reflecting Church could not imagine a parish without a vibrant RCIA.

Over long years, the Church of Maitland-Newcastle has been blessed with wonderful people whose passion and commitment for this RCIA vision has helped sustain it in parishes and on the diocesan team. The latter has included people like Loretto Lynch, Daphne Peterson, Patricia Boland rsj, Kathryn McCabe rsj, Louise Marie McDonnell rsj to name but a few.

The *Many Parts, One Body, One Mission* Diocesan Change Management Program, which seeks to promote greater unity, collaboration and focus for the purpose of mission, has undertaken a restructure of Diocesan boards, councils and teams. In this restructure, the Diocesan RCIA Team has been dissolved. Responsibility for RCIA is now held by the Diocesan Liturgy Council (DLC) and Office. This change mirrors the national Australian Catholic Bishops' structures. RCIA is one of the Church's liturgical rites and its home is with liturgy.

For people of faith change immerses us in the paschal rhythm of dying and rising. The dissolving of the old RCIA Team – a dying of something that has served us well – provides us with previously unimagined opportunity for new life to rise up in our midst.

The Diocesan Liturgy Council, working with the remaining members of the Diocesan RCIA Team, is looking to establish a new entity – a Diocesan Liturgy Forum: Christian Initiation (DLF: CI)

## Purpose

The purpose of this Forum is to:

- Grow in its knowledge and understanding of the RCIA
- Engage in ongoing contemplative dialogue with parish communities
- Provide a forum for parish Christian Initiation ministers
- Engage in strategic planning to promote the growth of Christian Initiation in the diocese
- Be active members of the Christian Initiation Australia Network (CIAN) and grow relationships with Christian Initiation ministers from other dioceses
- Participate in national and state conferences and other formation opportunities
- Be alert to and support potential new members
- Provide Pastoral Guidance as deemed appropriate
- Ensure the preparation, celebration and review of diocesan events

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## Responsibility

The *DLF: CI* is the responsibility of the DLC and is accountable to it, initially, through the Diocesan Liturgy Co-ordinator.

## Membership

The Forum shall have at least four, and no more than eight, members. Included in this number will be members of the DLC who shall be appointed. Additional to this number will be the Diocesan Liturgy Co-ordinator.

The DLC will seek *Expressions of Interest* from members of the diocesan community. Some of the gifts, skills and capacities that are at the heart of this ministry include:

- Faith, passion and commitment to the Church's mission
- Contemplation
- 'Fire in the belly' for the ministry of initiation
- Love of and comfort in praying with scripture
- Capacity to share one's faith story, relationship with Jesus, Catholic way of life
- Appreciation of the place of liturgy and ritual in Christian life and the Church
- Openness to studying and becoming familiar with the RCIA
- A heart, spirit and mind for accompanying parish communities
- Imagination
- Hospitality
- Readiness to engage in contemplative dialogue and theological reflection
- Creative, strategic and critical thinking and planning

Upon receiving *Expressions of Interest* the DLC will discern those members who together form a representative group whose gifts and skills complement each other and encompass a fair selection of those listed above. Members will be appointed by the DLC.

## Term

Members will be appointed for a period of two years, with the possibility of renewal for a further two years. The term of an individual member may be extended if required for the life and ministry of the Forum.

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## Organisation

Members will determine:

- a convenor
- the nature, frequency, time and venue for their gatherings
- the agenda and process to ensure the Forum achieves the purpose outlined above
- the manner of preparing the agendas and minutes which will be tabled at DLC meetings

The Diocesan Liturgy Co-ordinator and Administrative Support Officer will provide admin support to the Forum.

The ministry of the Forum will be included in the annual liturgy budget. Authorisation from the Diocesan Liturgy Co-ordinator is required prior to significant expenditure.

## Contact

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