



## **WHY IS THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS IMPORTANT TO YOUR PARISH?**

When I was 17, I had an awakening about my faith. Life was not difficult for me as a teenager. I didn't have to work hard to get good grades. I didn't get caught up in drugs. I went to church. But I remember feeling confused and lost a lot of the time. Perhaps it was just a change in hormones and the transition out of childhood that had me feeling like life was tough. Whatever it was, some fellow students "evangelized" me and helped me see my faith in a new way.

I think of this as a mini-conversion. I didn't have to change my beliefs or my lifestyle. I was already a "good Catholic." What was new was that I took my beliefs from my head to my heart. I discovered the power of God's Spirit within me, and I became truly joyful.

### **THE BURDEN OF FAITH**

My goal from that day to this has been to help other people experience that same joy. And over the years of doing this, I've encountered two major roadblocks. The first roadblock is fellow "good Catholics" who have not yet moved their belief from their head to their heart. They believe and say and do all the things good Catholics are supposed to do, but they are not truly joyful in their faith. Their faith seems to be a burden, and some even see it as their duty to impose that burden on all those around them.

### **INTENTIONAL FAITH**

The second roadblock is trying to explain what faith is like to those who have no faith at all or very little faith. These are people who need true conversion—a complete change of thinking and change of lifestyle. To ask a good Catholic, like I was as a teen, to become intentional about his or her faith is a big enough step. Some people never take that step. But it is a very tiny step compared to asking someone who had never lived as a Christian and never known the comfort of a Christian community to give up whatever it is that has gotten them this far in life and turn to Christ.

This is exactly what our parishes are for. We are a collection of hot, warm, and cold Catholics who—as a body and in God's Spirit—are called to go out and find people who are living in darkness. We are supposed to share our love and our joy with them and welcome them into our community.

### **OUR GAME PLAN**

Some, perhaps a lot, of our parishioners will need a mini-conversion to make this possible. And all of us will need a structure that will guide us and help us with this task. We need a conversion game plan.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is that game plan. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a conversion process that changes both the parish and the seekers of joy. It changes the parish because in order to reach out to those seeking joy and bring them into the community in a meaningful way, the parish needs to be continually questioning every aspect of how it operates. The Knights of Columbus need to ask, how is this fundraiser helping seekers find Jesus? The youth group needs to ask itself, how is this ski trip helping seekers find Jesus? The banquet committee needs to ask itself, how is this dinner helping seekers find Jesus?

The vision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is that every aspect of parish life is deeply connected to evangelization and initiation. As more and more parishioners begin to understand that and grasp the implications, mini-conversions will begin to occur in the hearts of our parishioners.