

SPONSORS

A Workshop by Loretto Lynch at the NSW/ACT RCIA State Conference 2011

Why have sponsors?

Very few of us can meet people in unfamiliar surroundings without some trepidation. Many times enquirers come to their first few meetings alone. Some already have support from spouses or friends, others know no other Catholics. If we can place ourselves in their shoes maybe the "why" question quickly becomes answered.

- Companionship
- Mentor
- Model
- Someone to share thoughts and questions
- Witness
- A sounding board
- Sponsors have a key role in the rite (*cf RCIA 10*)

Roles and responsibilities of Sponsors

- Attendance and companionship at Sunday Mass, meetings and rites
- Follow up between meetings
- Providing feedback to coordinator, especially if there is a concern
- Be present at all the rites
- Take the catechumen or candidate to parish gatherings
- Introduce them to parishioners at Mass
- Be part of the discernment process

Who can be a Sponsor?

- Fully initiated, practising, committed Catholic
- Member of the parish community
- Maybe similar age and interest
- Spouse is not recommended, could be a valuable extra dimension
- Team member if necessary, roles should not overlap

Qualities

- Committed Catholic
- Someone able to make the same commitment to meetings and rites
- Good listener, tolerant, patient
- Sensitive to others' needs
- Friendly
- Someone willing to tell their own faith story
- Someone with empathy for the enquirer
- Someone who respects our faith even if they struggle with some aspects of it

Finding sponsors

- Discern: look at lists, sit in church and observe, ask others for their opinions.
- Get to know your fellow parishioners!
- Ask a person face to face or phone them. Don't decide for them (that she/he is probably too busy, etc.) but allow the person to make his/her own decision. Even if people can't accept, they are always happy that you have asked them!

Give the person some time to think about it then contact him/her after a few days.
 Make sure this person knows the role and responsibilities, and provide an outline of what will be happening over the next 6-12 months.
 Maybe ask the enquirer if he or she has a relative or friend in the parish who might be their sponsor but be careful, the decision belongs to the team.
 Have a group of "sponsors in waiting".

Formation

Spend one session with the sponsors training them in their role in RCIA.
 Gather them again in the middle (for any problems) and at the end (to help you discern the readiness of the catechumens and candidates).
 Provide them with a Retreat day with the team.
 Prepare/practise them to celebrate the rites.
 Provide suitable reading: parish/diocesan library, resource centre.

Possible resources:

Companions in the Journey, Sponsors and Spouses in RCIA Chuck Blankenship ISBN 0-7648-0911-3
Guide for Sponsors Ron Lewinski ISBN 0-930467-05-1
So you've been asked to be a Sponsor Peter Maher (out of print)
 (Fr Peter is Parish Priest of Newtown NSW and may still have copies if you request them)

WA State Conference

The RCIA State Conference was this year hosted by the Archdiocese of Perth. The Conference was a great success due to the enthusiasm and interest of the 50 participants who travelled from Bunbury and Geraldton Diocese, including members from Margaret River and Mandurah, along with a wide representation from parishes in Perth.

The Opening Address by Archbishop Hickey was particularly special since the Archbishop's retirement is imminent, and this RCIA Conference is the last His Grace will address in his official capacity as Archbishop of Perth. His address focused on the conference's theme 'Transforming', and included the transforming nature of the journey of faith.

The highlight of the Conference was the key note speaker, Fr Tony Chiera from Bunbury Diocese, whose uplifting presentation of the transforming effect of RCIA on each of us, the parish, and wider universal Church set the tone for the days' events. Fr Tony included a depiction of the parish as a *Village Well*, which we are all drawn to, are replenished by, and return to for familiarity and comfort.

The evaluation feedback from the Conference was overwhelmingly positive. The 3 workshops on-Prayer and Spirituality; Sharing RCIA between parishes; and Transforming the Parish and its role in the RCIA process were of topical interest to the theme of *Transforming*

DATES TO REMEMBER

"Dear Diary"
**What is happening?
 in your Diocese / Parish
 for RCIA Please let us know**



ACN 2012 National Conference

Thursday 11 October (7pm)
 to
 Sunday 14 October (3pm)

Robertson Gardens Comfort Inn & Suites
 281 Kessels Road, Nathan

The Conference will explore the following topics:

- 1) Ministries in the RCIA process
- 2) Formation of those involved in the Process
- 3) The Rites in the RCIA process
- 4) The implementation of an ongoing catechumenate.

For more detailed information on what is happening check out the ACN web site

<http://www.ozcatechumenate.org>