

They're Being Called Up and Dismissed...What's Happening?

Beginning Sunday, November 10th, we will again start dismissing our RCIA participants at the 10:30 am Mass to attend *Breaking Open the Word*, which will continue each Sunday through Passion Sunday at Holy Week. But why do we do that? What do they do? What does this have to do with me?

WHO GOES TO BREAKING OPEN THE WORD?

Those being dismissed are in period of intense formation and training as they continue on their spiritual journeys (that for many will include the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) to become Catholic!

WHY DO THEY GO TO BREAKING OPEN THE WORD?

1. **Catechesis**, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by CELEBRATIONS OF THE WORD (which introduce them to Church teaching, but that also foster their desire to participate in it. *Breaking Open the Word* is always tied directly to the cycle of readings and helps the participants delve deeply into the things that are unique to each liturgical season. Christ is present in the Mass in four unique ways: the Word, the Eucharist, the priest, and the people. Recognizing Christ's presence in Celebrations of the Word helps participants to recognize Christ's presence in the other three ways, as well).
2. **Example and support** of sponsors, godparents, and THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. Their participation WITH us is essential. The best way to learn how to live the Catholic life is by actively doing it with others who are already doing it. It is a "spiritual internship" in which we help them in their relationship with Christ and the Church. Our prayers, words of welcome, support, etc. are essential for their perseverance. In the Mass, we best live our identity as the Body of Christ, and we need to give example to the RCIA participants of how we actively live that out by our full, conscious, and active participation in the Sunday Liturgy.
3. **Suitable liturgical rites** (especially the Liturgy of the Word with the rest of the faithful) that helps them prepare for eventual participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, and participation in the Liturgy of the Word prepares RCIA participants for this. We can only come to recognize Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist if we have recognized His Presence in the proclaimed Word and have allowed that Word to resonate inside of us so that it might affect our entire way of life. This is exactly the desired result of *Breaking Open the Word*—in which the Word (Jesus Christ) breaks up our hearts and opens them to the newness of life that only He can give. RCIA participants cannot yet join us in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but they are doing the necessary preparatory work so that they can do so later in the fullest way possible.
4. Learn how to **work actively with others** to spread the Gospel. At the end of Mass, we are sent forth to spread the Gospel—to take what we have received in Mass and to share it with others. *Breaking Open the Word* helps RCIA participants to gradually join us in this task (as they participate more and more in parish life and our outreach to the community).

BUT WHY DON'T THEY STAY FOR THE WHOLE MASS?

The fact that RCIA participants leave after the homily has nothing to do with them "not being worthy" for the second part. They are not being dismissed FROM something, but they are being dismissed TO something. The Mass always has this dismissal TO something—for those who are already Catholic, it just happens to be the dismissal at the end of Mass, but in both cases, what we are dismissed to is directly related to where we are in our spiritual journey. The RCIA participants are dismissed to do the things laid out above. Those things will prepare them to later join us in recitation of the Creed (which those to be baptized formally profess for the first time on the day of their Baptism) and reception of the Eucharist (which unites us not only to Christ but to the entire Church).

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME & WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

The dismissal of RCIA participants at Mass is not just an "extra thing" added to Mass that you just passively watch since you're not one of the people in RCIA. Actually, even if you're at a Sunday Mass that doesn't include the dismissal, the things that take place at that other Mass still directly affect you. So what should you do?

1. **Set an example** for the RCIA participants. Make Sunday Mass the climax of your entire week—spend time preparing for it through prayer and looking at the readings ahead of time, wear your “Sunday best”, get there a few minutes early to pray and reflect, and participate fully and attentively in the Mass.
2. **Pray** for the participants **as they are being dismissed**. The connection to the parish is very palpable to RCIA participants at this time, and it is important that they be aware of our union to them through prayer.
3. **Pay special attention to the dismissal** prayer the priest/deacon uses. The words of this prayer are connected to that day’s readings, and they not only remind the RCIA participants of what they are called to do in light of these readings, but they also remind us of our role in their formation.
4. **Introduce yourself** and get to know those who are looking to be part of our parish family.
5. **Pray** for the RCIA participants **throughout the week**—this is a good way to live out the task we receive at our own dismissal at the end of Mass.

MAY OUR ENTIRE PARISH BE RENEWED THROUGH OUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA).

Interested in becoming Catholic or learning more about the faith? Contact our Faith Formation Coordinator, Lauren, at lauren.scheller@denvercathedral.org