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## RCIA restores old tradition for new disciples

Two thousand years ago, they might have been baptized by John in the Jordan River. Or perhaps they would have attended the Last Supper, or begun speaking in tongues after they were engulfed by the Holy Spirit.

Now, in the year 1993, adults who enter the Roman Catholic Church and receive its sacraments do so through the increasingly popular Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults — more commonly known as the RCIA.

In the 21 years since the official establishment of RCIA, it has engendered much of the same earnestness shown by disciples in New Testament passages pertaining to baptism, first holy Eucharist and confirmation.

Indeed, "The RCIA process is about forming disciples," said Barbara Carroll, coordinator of sacramental life for the Diocese of Rochester.

The very numbers of participants reflect the success of RCIA. Results from a survey Catholic News Service conducted among U.S. dioceses earlier this year show that the rate of newcomers joining the church has grown by about 4 percent over 1992.

In the Rochester diocese, an even larger increase has occurred. According to Carroll, approximately 725 people — nearly 20 per-

By Mike Latona, Staff writer

*... you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses."*

Acts 1:8

cent more than in 1992 — will be received into the church this coming Saturday, April 10, at various Easter Vigil Masses.

RCIA is the process currently designated for adults to join the church. The rite was formulated during the Second Vatican Council, introduced in 1972 and made mandatory in all U.S. dioceses in 1988.

RCIA restores a tradition of the early church, when initiates were instructed in large groups, leading up to their reception during the Lenten period.

For many years prior to 1972, however, adults wishing to enter the church received individual instruction. RCIA returned the initiation of adults to a group setting, with preparation typically taking place within a parish environment.

In the Rochester diocese, for example, these people — known as either "catechumens" or "candidates" — meet regularly with parish RCIA coordinators. They are eventually initiated as Catholics in their parishes at the Easter Vigil celebration.

Several variations exist within the RCIA process. For instance, those who enter RCIA may complete in a time frame ranging from a few months to more than one year, depending on what point in the liturgical year they enter the process and on how much prior experience they have with Catholicism.

Carroll noted that initiates are grouped into four general categories:

- Catechumens, who have never received the sacrament of baptism in any Christian denomination.

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