

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Age is not an issue for RCIA program members

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GREECE — What's the best time to get involved with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?

Any time, according to Barbara Carroll, diocesan coordinator of sacramental catechesis.

"The process is for anyone age 7 to whatever," Carroll stated. "The only ages we ask for are the children."

Otherwise, Carroll said, "Anybody is welcome to join, at any age."

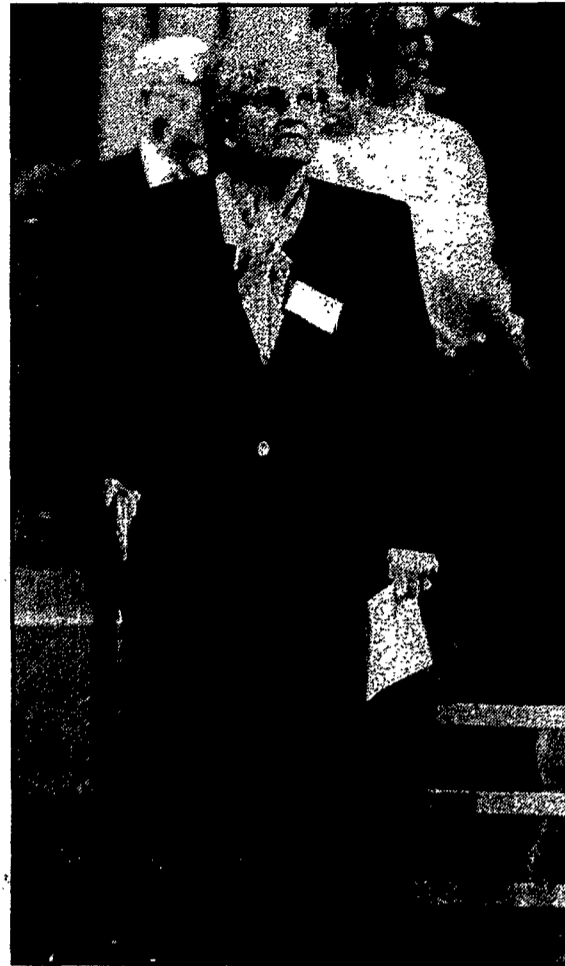
Take 91-year-old Molly Graham, instance. She is looking forward to her full initiation into the Catholic Church on Saturday, April 6, during the Easter Vigil Mass at St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads.

At St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece, three program members lend

further proof that there's no age discrimination surrounding RCIA. This year's parish RCIA contingent contains three adults at least 70 years of age: Evelyn Giambrone, 78; Charles Thiele, 70; and George Haines, also 70.

All three recently participated in the Rite of Election, led by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, at Sacred Heart Cathedral Feb. 28. Their group continues to meet each Sunday morning at St. Charles Borromeo for discussion and reflection as they prepare for their initiation at the Easter Vigil.

For Charles Thiele, his attraction toward the RCIA program began last August as he was recovering from heart surgery. He was visited at Rochester General Hospital by Sister Miriam Nugent, RSM, who is pastoral associate and RCIA coordinator at St. Charles Borromeo.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Evelyn Giambrone, 78, of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, made her way to the Sacred Heart Cathedral altar with cane in tow to participate in the Rite of Election Feb. 28.

"I said, 'It's about time I got baptized.' I went to a meeting, and now here I am!" Thiele remarked.

Thiele is a *catechumen*, meaning he has never received the sacrament of baptism in any Christian denomination. He will be baptized and confirmed, and also receive the Eucharist, at the Easter Vigil.

Haines and Giambrone, meanwhile, are *candidates* — people who have already been baptized in either the Catholic Church or another Christian faith.

RCIA preparation is an invigorating educational experience thus far, Haines reported.

"The Catholic Church takes you in and explains why they do things," commented Haines, who was raised a Baptist and has also participated in Methodist and Presbyterian churches.

Haines noted that Sunday RCIA discussions are often intense. "They pull things out of you; they search your mind," he said.

He pointed out that his wife, Pat — who is serving as his sponsor — benefits from the sessions even though she is already Catholic.

"She's learned a lot. The church has changed a lot of the ways it does things since when she was a kid," Haines observed.

The spiritual aspects of RCIA are also important, Evelyn Giambrone acknowledged. She said she became enthused about the Catholic faith upon her very first visit to St. Charles Borromeo.

"You go in there and feel free. I got the feeling I could be forgiven for anything," Giambrone recalled. "So I started to come (to St. Charles) more."

Sister Nugent reported that Giambrone, Haines and Thiele are all energetic participants in the RCIA gatherings.

"They want to be as involved as possible. They all give so much," Sister Nugent commented.

On the other hand, Haines wouldn't necessarily feel his efforts deserve special merit. Enrichment of one's faith, he explained, should be an ongoing process for everyone.

"It's a necessity. You've got to have it, and you're better for it," he said.

"There's a lot to learn," Thiele added. "You probably learn all your life."

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At that point, Thiele and his wife Rosemarie — who is Catholic — decided they wanted to join St. Charles Borromeo. Soon after they began attending Mass there, Thiele noticed an announcement in the parish bulletin that RCIA sessions were about to begin.

Thoughts to Consider



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Funeral Director

What are some ways to help a child who has lost a parent?

First it is important to make sure the child is honestly included in all the information and planning. This means being honest about the death and answering the child's questions. It also means allowing but not forcing children to go to the funeral or visitation as they wish. Secondly, a child needs love and security. Let a child know they will be cared for, take an interest in schoolwork and include them in play. Some children resent being pressured to accept burdens beyond their reach. "Taking over for Dad or Mom" may be too much responsibility. Naturally, changes will occur but a child needs time and help in adjusting to them.



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