

Reflections on Serving as a Sponsor

By Alice Ruhnke

I come from a large Catholic family and community in Nebraska. I am a cradle Catholic and went to Catholic schools K-12. In fact, my brothers and sisters and I had to pay half of our high school tuition if we wanted to go to a Catholic high school and that was not something that deterred me from wanting to go. And yet, most of my experiences felt pretty “rote” and having a committed relationship with God was missing in my experiences. As an adult, I have tried to work on that relationship. However, I often neglect to create the time to enhance that relationship.

Last fall I was asked to consider being a sponsor for a member of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). My first thought was “I’m too busy” and asked for some time to think about it before I made a decision. Honestly, when I hung up the phone, I thought that would give me some time to tactfully provide an excuse why I couldn’t participate.

And yet after I hung up the phone, my thoughts didn’t go towards crafting that perfect excuse. And a few days later, I thought, “You really need to make up that excuse” and again, no excuses were forming. And by the end of the week...nothing. So I thought perhaps I should listen to what God was telling me, and think about participating in RCIA as an “excuse” to spend dedicated time exploring faith with someone on her own journey. Little did I know, I would get more out of the process than I gave.

So what did RCIA mean for me?

- I learned that God provides opportunities for us come into a relationship, but you have to make the time.
- I learned that faith is not static...it constantly changes...and that is a good thing.
- I learned that walking with someone else on their faith journey only enhances your own.
- I learned that community strengthens a faith journey.
- I learned that spending Monday nights at RCIA made my week better.

- I learned that sharing, reflecting, reading, and conversing about faith with my candidate (and the rest of the team, sponsors, speakers, and candidates) helped me understand the teachings of the Catholic Church better.
- I learned that we're all on a journey.

I can't find the right words to accurately convey how much I enjoyed the sessions, the conversations, and most importantly, the friendships I made in the process. While the commitment of every Monday night from 7-9 sounded overwhelming in the beginning, it is now something that I don't want to end. I knew very few people involved in the RCIA process when I walked into the room that first night, and now I feel like I am part of something much bigger. So if in the future you get the call (figuratively or literally) to sponsor someone through RCIA, here is your written "excuse" to accept.

Thanks, Alice, for sharing your experience! All sponsors and candidates, from any year, are most welcome to share theirs also!

Each year we seek suitable sponsors for those who are beginning the process to join our Church. Sponsors are asked to attend the weekly RCIA sessions on Monday evenings, make themselves available for other conversations with their candidates, and accompany their candidates in the special liturgical rituals throughout the year. If you would like to know more about what is involved in being a sponsor, please contact Jeanne Haas at haasjeanne@hotmail.com or 304-744-5523.

JHF

