

Energizing an RCIA Program with SYMBOLON



“The credits at the end of SYMBOLON are a Who’s Who of theologians. So many people who are uniquely more qualified than I am—are helping to teach the faith.”

Beth Rutski

Director of Parish Life
St. Simon the Apostle, Indianapolis, IN

When Beth Rutski became the director of Parish Life at St. Simon the Apostle in Indianapolis four years ago, the parish’s RCIA program became one of her areas of responsibility. To get her feet on the ground with the program, she decided to sit in on every RCIA session.

The pastor, a deacon, and three or four laypeople on the core RCIA team “were really gifted and talented,” Rutski said.

But the instruction itself, drawn from the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (USCCA), felt “pretty cut-and-dried” to Rutski.

As she listened, Rutski suspected that few participants actually read the corresponding USCCA chapter before each session.

Rutski started hearing about FORMED; the more she learned, the more she pushed to have FORMED in her parish.

She found a way to finance a subscription, and since then, she said, “I’ve discovered more and more on formed.org.”

Rutski’s use of FORMED resources begins before someone signs on for RCIA.



“We believe in year-round RCIA, and thank goodness for FORMED!”



Beth Rutski

In response to inquiries about the program, Rutski reaches out and asks those interested to watch Chris Stefanik's *THE SEARCH*. "After you watch," she tells them, "come back, then let's sit down and talk about it."

"If they come back, I know they're serious," Rutski said.

At that point, she advises her interested candidates to listen to Scott Hahn's recordings or audios on formed.org for a perspective of someone who was a convert to the faith.

The parish maintains two groups under the RCIA umbrella, tailored to where people are on their faith journeys.

Full-blown RCIA lasts between nine months and one year. The RCIA core team leads a full catechesis for those coming into the Church with little or no background in the faith.

An Adult Faith Formation group under a different team begins in January for those who are finishing their sacraments and don't need "full, intense catechesis."

To supplement the lessons from the USCCA, Rutski relies on *SYMBOLON*. She gave her RCIA teams a chart of what *SYMBOLON* covers in each session and how it dovetails with the USCCA. The team assigns participants to watch the appropriate *SYMBOLON* video for that week's lesson.

That assignment is intended to enrich what participants read in the USCCA, but Rutski knows that for parents or a single parent who's working, it's easier to watch a video while making dinner than it is to carve out quiet time to read a chapter.

"There's a better chance of them picking up something from a video rather than not reading a chapter," Rutski said.

This past year, 23 people either came into the Church or completed their sacraments at St. Simon the Apostle. The oldest person in RCIA was 50 years old; most were much younger. A few were individuals, but there were also siblings and husbands and wives. And Rutski has noticed that since the parish has a K through 8 school, the decision to join RCIA is "often driven by the kids."

The coming into full membership in the Church at the Easter Vigil "was very much a family event," Rutski said.

Rutski called the past year the parish's "rookie year" for incorporating *SYMBOLON* into the RCIA process.

"This year, I'm really going to spoon-feed *SYMBOLON* to my RCIA candidates," Rutski said. "This will be the telling year."



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