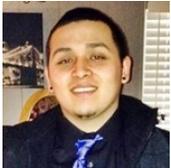


MEET OUR RCIA CANDIDATES

The season of Lent is marked by an intensified period of catechetical preparation for those seeking initiation into the Church. As those preparing for Baptism, known as *catechumens*, enter their final preparation for Baptism at the Easter Vigil, the rest of the community is encouraged to accompany them. This Lent, our parish is blessed to have three catechumens preparing for Baptism - *Julian and Anthony Sanchez and Ruth Canonico* - and one candidate - *Meredith Guerrieri* - for reception into full communion with the Catholic Church. Our RCIA team, led by Mark and Mary DeFrancisco, will be sharing some milestones along the way beginning with an introduction:

Anthony and Julian Sanchez - The Sanchez family began their journey more than a year ago, when Diane Sanchez and her sons Anthony, Julian, Angelo (AJ), and AJ's fiancé Nicole, inquired about receiving the Sacraments of Initiation. At different stages in the initiation process, Diane, AJ, and Nicole received the Sacrament of Confirmation and AJ received his first Holy Communion last April. **Anthony and Julian** attended some of the Confirmation preparation sessions with their family, but began their preparation for Baptism in earnest this past fall.



They were both born in San Bernardino, CA - Anthony in 1994 and Julian in 1996. After moving around a bit, they now live in Methuen. **Anthony** graduated from high school 3 years ago, is currently employed full time as a service technician, is exploring trade school, and hopes to specialize in HVAC work. In his words: "I am really excited about receiving the Sacraments in April and to meet new people and start my journey with the St. Augustine Parish Community. I'm glad that I now have this opportunity with so many great people."



Julian graduated from high school 2 years ago, attends Northern Essex Community College where he is studying criminal justice, while working for the Methuen's school department. He, too, is grateful and excited to be receiving the Sacraments: "In my life, I did not get a chance to do what I should have done when I was younger, but I'm glad I have the chance now."

(June) Ruth Canonico - Ruth was raised on Long Island, NY with three brothers as Evangelical Free Christians and the church at the center of their family life. After college, Ruth lived in England for 20 years, retuning to the states to work as a Music Teacher & Child Care Coordinator in Massachusetts. She lives in North Chelmsford and volunteer with CTI Senior Corps and is also a professional Storyteller & Folksinger.



Last year, partly due to conversations and prayer with an Augustinian Pastor, and inspired by the compassionate witness of Pope Francis, she felt drawn towards Roman Catholicism. Since last Lent she has focused on personal study and exploration of the Catholic Church through retreats, Marian Consecration, *Lectio Divina* classes, and attending Mass. Inspired by a EWTN biopic of St Rita, she sought a parish church with an Augustinian influence and clarified her intention to become a member of the Catholic Church. **Ruth** comments: "I am so glad to have found St Augustine's here in Andover and to have begun my Catholic journey in earnest with the help of your capable and caring RCIA Team. ... I look forward to completing my journey with Baptism at Easter Vigil. I hope you will introduce yourself to me after one of the 11:30am Sunday Masses."

Meredith Guerrieri - Meredith was born in South Carolina in 1987 and was baptized into the Episcopal faith as an infant. After graduation from USC, she attended flight school in Florida and worked as a commercial pilot. Meredith met her boyfriend, Chris Papineau, a parishioner of St. Augustine during flight school. Looking to the future, the couple chose new career paths - Meredith in education and Chris in real estate. Meredith is currently studying for a graduate degree in elementary school education at Merrimack College. She has also decided to take a new religious journey into the Catholic Church. Again with an eye toward the future, she cites as her reason for coming into the Church a desire to share the same faith as Chris.