

Beacons Update: Adult Evangelization

Adult formation matters. The Church has said this repeatedly in recent years. For example, Pope St. John Paul II said, “[Adult catechesis] is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form. The Christian community cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults, whether as receivers or as promoters of catechetical activity” (Catechesi Tradendae, §43). In 1990, the International Council for Catechesis said, “A fully Christian community can exist only when a systematic catechesis of all its members takes place and when an effective and well-developed catechesis of adults is regarded as the central task in the catechetical enterprise” (§25, emphasis mine).

The directives keep coming.

The 1997 General Directory for Catechesis claims that “catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it” (§59). And, in 2020, the new Directory for Catechesis, points out that particularly in adulthood, “accompaniment and growth in faith are necessary so that the adult may mature in that spiritual wisdom which illuminates and brings unity to the manifold experiences of his personal, family and social life” (§259).

Despite this guidance from the Church, in most places, a disproportionate amount of resources goes to the formation of children and youth. That was the case at Stella Maris, but we’re working to balance things out.

Take, for example, the new Stella Maris Institute. We designed this effort to provide a robust “menu” of formation offerings for adults in a wide range of formats: book studies, Bible studies, mini-courses, talks, and workshops. Over the course of the 2025-2026 ministry year, we ran 24 events through the Institute (not counting the regular weekly Bible studies), which

drew in nearly 1,000 total attendees. The Institute aims to put adults into deeper communion with Christ, integrate faith and life, and cultivate a sense of wonder. We look forward to many good things along these lines as the Institute grows.

Our Lenten Mission with John Leyendecker and Dave Staples provided a spiritual “shot in the arm” during the season of Lent. We had ~120 people attend each night for worship, Confession, the mission talk, and time in Eucharistic adoration.

About two years ago, we rebranded OCIA as Become Catholic (for communication/marketing purposes) and refashioned the program to employ a mentorship approach that is similar to how the Church initiated people during her first three centuries. We have 19 parishioners serving as mentors on the Become Catholic team. In 2025, 14 adults received the Sacraments of Initiation. In 2026, we have already initiated 17 adults, with 15 more currently in formation.

Finally, our efforts to form adults spill into our work with whole families. Through Sacramental formation, Become Catholic for Children, Family Sundays, and so forth, we are actively engaging whole families and providing more support for parents as they fulfill their roles as primary formators of their children.

We certainly have a long way to go in the realm of adult evangelization, but the efforts of the past few years are already bearing fruit. This is a good sign.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Tim Ralston".

Fr. Tim Ralston
Pastor of Stella Maris