

A Vision for Conversion – Eight Steps to Radically Change Your RCIA Process

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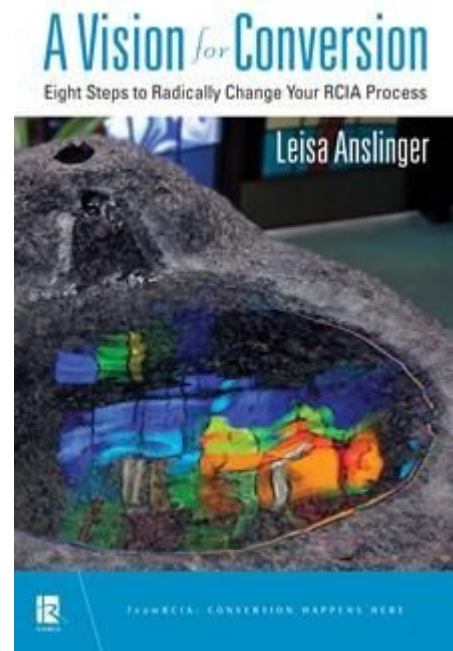
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Reviewer: Sharon Brewer



Like Diana Macalintal in her book, *Your Parish is the Curriculum*, Leisa Anslinger also writes from the perspective of a person who has a strong understanding of, and love for the RCIA process. Whilst you could probably read this book in two to three hours, it really needs to be regarded as a workbook. Or, at least, a book where you read a bit, then reflect on and respond to the questions Leisa asks.

The recommended audience for this book would include those who are involved in the RCIA process: the parish priest, staff members, parish pastoral council members and others who are involved in faith and liturgy formation. Personally, I think you might get more out of this book if you have experienced the RCIA process. As Leisa highlights at the beginning of the book, her first year of being involved as a Co-ordinator was more than she could have imagined, and occasionally felt like more that she could manage.¹ I think you have to 'live' the RCIA process before you can appreciate the convincing argument Leisa makes for the need to have a real vision for how to accompany people on their journey of conversion.

Leisa draws on the eight steps of change identified by Dr John Kotter, Professor Emeritus of Harvard Business School, and an authority on the process of change management. I realise there will be a number of readers who have just let out a 'big sigh' of frustration saying they do not want to have a secular guru telling them how to make things better in the Catholic Church. But as Leisa acknowledges, we need to recognise the 'many obstacles that may impede our progress – spiritually, pastorally, and practically.'² Such barriers to having the most effective RCIA process (and, in fact, parish ministry of any type) need to be identified as part of a plan. Yes! A plan! As they say, if we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

Leisa identifies the eight steps as:

1. Establish a vision
2. Create a vision team
3. Make your vision a reality
4. Share your vision
5. Remove barriers to your vision
6. Celebrate progress toward your vision
7. Keep your vision alive

¹ Page 1

² Page 73

8. Make your vision last

Each chapter gives a reason for the step to be undertaken, and practical advice as to how to go about it. For Australian readers, there are a few things to note. Firstly, the USA and Australia have different numbering for the paragraphs in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. So some adjustment of the references will need to be made. There are also references to documents from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). If you have the time, many of these are well worth reading. Leisa also highlights the need for RCIA teams to work closely with the faith formation and liturgy team in the parish. This could be a frustration for some Australian readers who do not have these teams operating in their parish. However, establishing these teams is the sort of infrastructure that might be required for your parish so that it can raise up more people who are well formed and confident to be part of the RCIA team.

There is a lot more to think about after reading this book. Certainly the question of whether your parish could establish a year-round catechumenate process is one that Leisa deals with, along with the very real issue of changing culture, and the need to build up and empower leaders within parishes. If you are passionate about lifting the vitality of your parish, and bringing people to know Christ through our Catholic faith, then this book is worth a read.