

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Welcome!



This page explains the process by which you can — through your local Catholic church — learn more about the faith and the process of becoming Catholic.

The formation of adults and process by which they are initiated into the Church is known as the "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults," or the "RCIA."

The RCIA is for:

- **Unbaptized...** persons at the age of reason (7 years and older) who follow a process to help them grow in awareness to God's call to conversion as well as ways to respond to that call. They are considered **catechumens**.
- **Baptized in Another Christian Church...** those catechized and uncatechized persons from a faith tradition other than Catholic who are seeking full communion with the Roman Catholic Church (Eucharist and Confirmation). They are considered **candidates**.
- **Baptized but uncatechized Catholic Adults...** persons who were baptized as infants in the Catholic Church yet not given any religious upbringing within the Catholic Tradition. These adults will be prepared to celebrate the sacraments of penance, confirmation and eucharist. They are also considered **candidates**.

In the case of children who have reached the age of reason (age 7), the pastor of the local parish should be consulted for information about Baptism and the other Sacraments of Initiation.

Adult Catholics who were baptized and received their First Eucharist in the Catholic Church and are interested in the Sacrament of Confirmation should contact the [parish office](#).

What is the Rite of Christian Initiation?

The Rite of Christian Initiation is based on the principle that the process of conversion proceeds gradually, in stages. Progress from one stage to the next is marked by a liturgical celebration in the midst of the parish

community. The experience and needs of each individual differs, and so the length of time may vary for each person, yet there are certain similarities in the process everyone will experience.

Period of Inquiry - Precatechumenate

The first stage is called the period of inquiry (or the precatechumenate). This is when the individual first expresses an interest in becoming a Christian or a Catholic. With the help of the parish community, the individual explores his or her relationship with Christ and how that relationship might be enriched and deepened by joining the Catholic community. This period of inquiry may last several months or several years and ends when the inquirer feels ready to move forward and the community is prepared to welcome him or her.

Catechumenate

The second stage is called the catechumenate and, for the unbaptized listed above, who are now called “catechumens,” lasts for one year or more. For the baptized but uncatechized (not yet educated in the faith), the period should be a similar length. “Candidates” for full communion may complete this stage in a shorter time frame. The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens (for catechumens) and the Rite of Welcoming (for candidates) mark the beginning of this stage. Catechesis is based in Scripture and proclaimed in the midst of the worshipping community. This is also a time for the catechumen or candidate to learn how to live as a Catholic Christian through their faith journey and the support of their parish community. This period ends when the catechumens and candidates express their desire to receive the sacraments of initiation and the parish community acknowledges their readiness. The catechumen then becomes an “elect,” which is marked by the Rite of Election during the next stage.

Purification and Enlightenment

The third stage is the period of purification and enlightenment. It coincides with the liturgical season of Lent. During this time, the elect (catechumens) and the candidates enter into a period of intense preparation and prayer which includes the three public celebrations of the scrutinies (for catechumens) and is marked by the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The Rite of Election (for catechumens) and the Call to Continuing Conversion (for candidates) are celebrated at the beginning of this stage. This period ends with the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. (Note: only the elect are baptized. All receive the sacrament of Confirmation and welcome at the Eucharistic table.

Mystagogy

The fourth stage is the period of post baptismal catechesis or mystagogy. The newly initiated explore their experience of being fully initiated through participation with all the faithful at Sunday Eucharist and through appropriate catechesis. The period formally lasts through the Easter season and may be marked by a parish celebration on or near Pentecost. On a more informal level, mystagogy is a lifelong process, one in which all Christians are engaged, as we all work to deepen our sense of what it means to live the Christian life. It is important to note that “Candidates” do not always need to take part in the full process. If they have been actively living the Christian life in another denomination, they are likely to need very little catechesis and may be welcomed into the Church on any Sunday after a short period of preparation. According to the National Statutes for the Catechumenate, "Those baptized persons who have lived as Christians and need only instruction in the Catholic tradition and a degree of probation within the Catholic community should not be asked to undergo a full program parallel to the catechumenate."

I'm interested. What should my first step be?

Contact the [parish 619-295-4141 x 11](tel:619-295-4141). Your priest can discuss with you the specifics of the initiation process at your local parish.