

How Does an Adult Become a Catholic?

What is RCIA?

RCIA — **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** — is the process through which the Catholic Church welcomes new adult members. It is a journey that involves conversion of the heart and formation into discipleship. These newcomers may be unbaptized persons, persons who have been baptized into another Christian tradition, or baptized Catholics who have had little or no religious training.

What is the Process?

The RCIA process is divided into four periods and three steps. It's important to understand that a person's progression through the process depends on his or her own situation and development as a disciple rather than on the calendar.

The first period is called the **Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate**. This is a time of awakening faith. It is a period for asking questions, for sharing stories, for building trust, for sharing the Gospel message of salvation, and for introduction into the life of the parish. There is no time limit for this period. It may be a few weeks or many months depending on an individual's situation.

The first step in the rite celebrates the transition of the newcomers into the next period. For unbaptized persons this step is the **Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens**. For those already baptized this step is the **Rite of Welcoming**. The rites are celebrated in church at Mass. The whole community pledges its acceptance and support for the newcomers.

The second period is called the **Period of the Catechumenate**. During this period, unbaptized persons are known as catechumens while those already baptized are called candidates. This is a time of deepening of faith and conversion and for passing on of Catholic tradition. During this time, the candidates and catechumens are formed through catechesis based on the Liturgy of the Word, prayer and worship, and an introduction to the apostolic life of the faith community. It is a period of training and apprenticeship in the Christian way of life. This period may last for one or more years depending on the candidate's or catechumen's personal situation and the discernment of the RCIA team.

We meet on Tuesday nights.

Are you a non-Catholic who has been worshipping at St. Patrick or other Catholic churches often? Have you considered joining the Catholic Church? Do you want to know more? Are you a baptized Catholic who never received the Sacraments of Confirmation or Eucharist? Have you been thinking of completing these sacraments of initiation? Do you want to know more? Is now the time for you to become a Catholic or to more fully join with the Catholic Church? If you want to explore how the Spirit may be guiding you in this direction, come to our next RCIA session. Sessions usually are held at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays in the Education Center. Call (530) 622-7692 to confirm meeting times and locations.

What About Children?

St. Patrick also offers a Children's Catechumenate. This process enables those 7 years or older who have never been baptized or who have been baptized in another Christian faith to come into the Catholic Church. For more information, call (530) 622-7692.

The second step in the rite is the **Rite of Election** (for unbaptized) or **Call to Continuing Conversion** (for baptized). This usually takes place at The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and is presided over by the Bishop. It is preceded by the **Rite of Sending**, which is held in the parish. The parish community sends the catechumens and candidates to the Bishop with its assurance that they are ready to receive the initiation sacraments. These rites are usually celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent.

The third period is the **Period of Purification and Enlightenment**. This period lasts through Lent. The unbaptized are now referred to as the Elect. This is a period for retreat and recollection, for reflection on faith and religious experience, and for overcoming weakness and building strength. During this time, the Elect and Candidates participate in the **Scrutinies** on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, are presented with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and will participate in prayer on Holy Saturday.

The third step in the rite is the celebration of the **Sacraments of Initiation** at the Easter Vigil. The Elect will receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Candidates are welcomed into full communion with the Church.

The fourth and final period is called the **Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis** or **Mystagogy**. This period lasts at least until Pentecost and preferably for a full year. The newcomers are now referred to as Neophytes. During this period they reflect on their experience and participate more fully in the sacramental life of the parish and in Christian service. The emphasis is on Gospel, Eucharist and Mission.

Want More Information?

If you want to explore whether the Catholic Church is where you want to begin or continue your Christian journey, please call the coordinator of R.C.I.A., Ruth Ann Pilney at (530) 622-7692.