

Becoming Catholic: RCIA & Why Become Catholic

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Section I: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

RCIA Overview

The process by which adults come into the Church is called the *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, also known as **RCIA**. RCIA forms a community of inquirers, sponsors, and catechists who move through the education, formation, and ritualization of entrance into the Catholic community. *Every* adult (person over the age of 16) who has not received the sacraments or been baptized needs to undergo this process if they wish to be confirmed in the Catholic Church. It does not cost any money to join RCIA, a parish, or to be confirmed. If you need to miss RCIA classes or you are going to be tardy, you must speak to the Leader of RCIA at your parish, so you do not fall behind.

All those who wish to join RCIA must have a sponsor. A sponsor is someone who has been baptized in the Roman Catholic Faith and is currently a practicing Catholic. All Sponsors must be present with their candidate or Catechumen during the weekday meetings, but it is not required to be present for The Breaking Open of the Word on Sunday. Minors who are in RCIA can ask one of their parents to sponsor them. If you do not have anyone who is willing to sponsor you, you can ask an RCIA Team Member to be your sponsor. The Church is more than happy to help, so don't worry if don't have a sponsor!

Typically, RCIA starts in mid-September, but it depends on the Parish. During RCIA, Candidates and Catechumens will learn about the beliefs of

the Roman Catholic Church, Mass, The Liturgical Calendar, The History of Christianity, and will be asked to engage and respond to questions about God's call to them, and reflect on their spiritual journey.

Even though there is no formal homework or assessments, RCIA is not a passive lecture class. Participants will be asked to engage throughout the process and discover what they ask of God's Church. Upon joining RCIA, if a person realizes they do not wish to be confirmed, they may leave at any time. However, upon leaving RCIA, typically they may not return to RCIA until the following year's next start date.

Participants gather together on a weekly basis (oftentimes during the evening on a workday) to learn about God's Word in the Bible, the core teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and how to build and nurture an authentic relationship with God. RCIA will also hold a meeting during Sunday Mass for Candidates and Catechumens to discuss the Gospel that was read. This is called "The Breaking Open of the Word," and is lead by alternating RCIA Team Members.

RCIA ends on Easter Vigil (the night before Easter) when the Candidates and Catechumens receive their Sacraments. Catechumens also receive The Sacrament of Baptism in addition to the other Sacraments. Once, you have received all your sacraments you are officially able to partake in Communion and can call yourself "Catholic!"

Who Is It For

RCIA is Designed For Adults Who Are:

- **Not Baptized:** Those who have not received Christian baptism in any Christian communion.
- **Baptized but uncatechized:** Those who have been baptized either as Roman Catholics or as members of another Christian community but did not receive further catechetical formation or instruction. This includes Catholics who have not yet celebrated Confirmation or Eucharist.
- **Seeking Full Catholic Communion:** Those who are baptized, practicing Christians from other denominations who seek entry into the Catholic Church.
- **Minors:** If minors wish to become Catholic, they must ask their parents to contact the Parish office for information regarding Youth Formation Classes. Once enrolled in Youth Formation Classes (every Sunday for about 2 hours), they will prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation (Confirmation for Minors). Children who are 16 or older, may (if permitted) partake in RCIA instead of Youth Formation. Whether or not a child will be able to participate in RCIA is up to the child's parents and the Parish office.

- **Families:** Families who wish to partake in RCIA together (with one or more members of their family) are more than welcome to! Family is the greatest blessing, and no one will try to stop you from experiencing this amazing process together! However, as the Rite of Acceptance, Rite of Sending, and Rite of Election, draw near, families may have to have an RCIA Member(s) sponsor some of their family members since each candidate or catechumen needs an individual sponsor.

The Rites of RCIA

The Rite of Acceptance:

Candidates and Catechumen stand in front of their Parish during Sunday Mass with their sponsors and are asked to state their name and what they ask of God's Church. The Rite of Acceptance can sometimes look a little different for each Parish, but generally, it is the parish members welcoming the Candidates and Catechumen into the Parish, and blessing them before they begin their journey.

The Rite of Sending:

The Rite of Sending takes place at the Candidates and Catechumens' Parish Church prior to the Rite of Election when Candidates and Catechumens (soon to become The Elect) are recognized by the Bishop to continue their journey with God and toward Confirmation. In simple terms, think of it as a time for everyone in the Parish to say "Good Luck" before those in the RCIA meet the Bishop.

The Rite of Election:

The Rite of Election is the admission of those catechumens who have the dispositions that make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation by the Roman Catholic Church. God is choosing those, who are able, to be disciples of Jesus. *Catechumens are not choosing to be a part of God's Church, God is choosing those who are fit to become the body of Christ.* The Catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversation in mind and in action, to have developed a

sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching, and a spirit of faith and charity.

The local Bishop's presence at the Rite of Election represents an outward expression of the choice already made by God. The Rite of Election before the Rite of Initiation (the final Rite). During the Rite of Election Catechumens (even those already baptized) sign the Book of Elect. After the Rite of Election, Catechumens will now be called "The Elect," the Rite of Election ends the period of Catechumen.

The Rite of Initiation:

The Rite of Initiation takes place on Holy Saturday during Easter Vigil (the night before Easter). During this time, Candidates receive the Eucharist and are confirmed, while Catechumens also receive the Rite of Baptism. Once confirmed into the Church, you are free to receive Communion.

Section II: Why Become Catholic?

Catholicism Makes Sense:

The Roman Catholic Church is built directly on the teachings that Jesus Christ gave to his apostles.

The Roman Catholic Church is the only Church that Jesus Christ founded:

- Mathew 16:18: *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”*

The Catholic Church Has a Pope:

- Unlike most organized religions today, the Roman Catholic Church has an active figure of authority who governs the Church. The Papacy descends directly from Saint Peter, who Jesus Christ asked to found of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church is Consistent and Unified:

- Catholics, unlike Protestants for example, are not cafeteria Christians. There are no denominations within the Catholic Church. In other words, Catholicism does not pick and choose individual theology and viewpoints, Catholics believe in Christology (Church teaching about Jesus Christ), ecclesiology (what she teaches about the Catholic Church), and sacramental theology (the Sacraments and the Eucharist). Catholics believes in the authority of Jesus Christ and the One Church he founded.

The Catholic Church is the Universal Church:

- In Greek, the word Catholic is “Katholikos,” which means Universal. The Catholic Church was created for everyone everywhere. The Roman Catholic Church is based in Rome, but is present in more than 10 countries. As of 2021, there are 1.3 billion baptized Catholics worldwide.

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