

What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?

RCIA, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, is a process of faith formation for those who are interested in learning about the Catholic faith or becoming members of the Catholic Church. Members of the parish gather with those who are inquiring about the faith and share with them their faith stories and experiences, the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church, and ways to live out the call to be a disciple of Jesus.

How long does it take?

There is no set time period for the process of becoming a Catholic. Some require more time and some less depending on their needs and spiritual readiness.

Stages of RCIA



The first stage of the RCIA faith journey is called **Inquiry (Pre-Catechumenate)**.

Sessions are informal and center on the life stories that brought each member to this time and place. Questions about God, faith, the Bible, the Mass, Mary, and God's love are considered. There is ample opportunity to ask about *things Catholic*. There is time for inquirers to learn the ways Catholics worship together and how they bring the Christian faith to life. This stage ends when the inquirer is ready to make a commitment to enter the catechumenate and prepare for entrance into full membership with the Catholic Church.

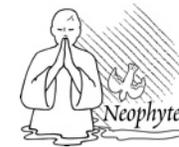


To mark the beginning of the **Catechumenate** the Rite of Welcome/Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is celebrated. At this point inquirers are called *catechumens* (preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) or *candidates* (already baptized but preparing for full membership in the Church). They publicly state their wish to continue the process of formation, and the community commits their prayerful support. Selected members of the parish community join the process as sponsors and lend their support to the catechumens and candidates. It is during this period that dismissals during the Sunday liturgies begin and those in the catechumenate are sent forth with a catechist to reflect on the readings for the day and connect the Scripture to their faith life and the teachings of the Church. The length of this stage is determined by the needs of the catechumen/candidate and the community. During this time the catechumen/candidate are exposed to various forms of prayer, worship with the community, receive more in-depth teaching on the beliefs of the Church, participate in the apostolic life of the Church, and join in community actions.



When they are ready to accept the invitation to join the Church, and when the catechists and sponsors are ready to recommend them to the Bishop and the parish for full membership, the **Rite of Election/Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion** is celebrated. This rite is celebrated at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Owensboro on the first Sunday of Lent. It marks the closure of the catechumenate and the beginning of the **Period**

of Enlightenment and Purification, a time to prepare for the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. The beginning of Lent signals a special time of prayer and reflection for these *elect and candidates* in the RCIA process. On the 2nd Sunday of Lent the *Pentecost Rite* is celebrated with candidates in the RCIA process. On the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent the *Rite of the Scrutinies* are celebrated with the elect during the liturgy. In these rites the elect, candidates, and the faithful are reminded of the need of continued healing, conversion, and reconciliation. Presentations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer are also made to the elect and candidates during this period. Sessions are marked by an increase emphasis on prayer rather than an accumulation of knowledge. A time of retreat is also scheduled for those preparing for the Easter sacraments.



The Easter Vigil marks the beginning of a commitment to a lifelong discovery of the Christian message. The 50 days from Easter to Pentecost is called the period of **Mystagogy**, a Greek word meaning mystery. The post-Easter period and the year following initiation into the Church serves as a time for the *neophytes*, new members, to form a closer relationship with one another and come to a deeper understanding of God's word and the sacraments.