

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* or the *RCIA* as it is commonly known, is the formal process for people to be received into the Church. Although it usually takes the better part of a year, there are no time limits or a set amount of time in which you will complete the process. It is largely dependent on your readiness. Your personal circumstances also play a part in how long the process takes. People with a strong background in another Christian faith tradition and in Scripture may take less time than others. If you have a prior marriage to be annulled it may take a bit longer.

This process is for both people who have not been baptized, as well as people who were baptized in another Christian faith. The Catholic Church recognizes baptism from most other Christian denominations. If you have already been baptized, you may be received into full communion with the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Generally, adults coming into the church through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist will do so during the season of Easter. Adults celebrating baptism do so at the Easter Vigil.

The RCIA is not a program. It is the church's way of ministering to those who seek membership. It is a process of coming to know Jesus. It is a call to choose a relationship with Jesus through the Catholic Church, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist. The RCIA is an opportunity to join in the sacramental life of the church. It is a choice to bear witness to the gospel by living a life of faith and service.

The RCIA has four stages. The beginning stage is called a time of *Inquiry* or the *Pre-Catechumenate*. During this period the RCIA team seeks to assist the inquirer with answers to their questions about God, faith and the church. The second stage is the *Catechumenate*, or the period of learning. During this period, the church encourages an ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ and the reign of God he proclaimed. The Catechumenate provides a structure for the studying scripture, especially the gospels, catechesis (passing on the teachings of the church), public and private prayer, direct contact with the members of the parish community and participation in the work of the church for justice and peace.

The third stage is called the *Period of Purification and Enlightenment* and generally takes place during Lent. It is a period of intense prayer and reflection prior to celebrating the Easter Sacraments. *Mystagogia*, the fourth period is one of "unpacking" and integration of the experience of celebrating the Sacraments. These periods of the process are all preceded by formal Rites that take place during a Sunday Mass. These Rites are your public affirmation to the community, as well as yourself, that you are ready to move on in your journey towards the Easter Vigil, your initiation into the Catholic Christian community.

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