

# HOW TO BECOME CATHOLIC

If you (or someone you know) are interested in becoming Catholic, you will need to ask about the parish RCIA program. RCIA stands for “Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults” and is a way of preparing adults and older children to enter the Church. Unbaptized persons preparing to become Catholic Christians are called catechumens, which means “one being instructed.” Baptized Christians in another denomination who are preparing to convert to the Catholic Church are called candidates: For both, the process includes the following with some differences:

**The Period of Inquiry:** This step starts for most people before they contact the parish. They are searching for meaning and purpose in life. For others, they have studied the history of the early Church. All inquirers have been praying to God to lead them along His paths. When one formally enters this period of Inquiry, prospective converts learn more about the Catholic Church by attending Mass, spending time with the Lord in the chapel, meeting with a priest for spiritual direction and talking with a teacher who can answer their questions and explain the basics of the faith. This time can also include listening to Catholic radio and television, participating in adult education classes, reading various good books or Catholic websites, blogs, and podcasts. Above all else, the catechumen should be praying to develop a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. There is no set time limit for this process as the work of the Holy Spirit is different for every person. Anyone can formally join this period of Inquiry by contacting the parish office.

**The Order of Catechumens:** After prayer and discernment, an unbaptized “inquirer” who formally wishes to continue and become a Catholic will enter the order of catechumens. To do this, the parish priest will consult with his or her teacher and perhaps other family members, especially if the individual is younger. A sponsor will be assigned who is a practicing Catholic and will guide and support him or her through the process and will be present when it comes time to celebrate the various rites and the sacraments of initiation.

**Catechesis:** In this stage, the catechumen is formally taught the doctrines of the Faith and instructed in how to live a Christian life. This period will culminate in the Rite of Election, where the Church formally recognizes a person’s desire to become Catholic. Christians baptized in another denomination (candidates) will also join the catechumens in this period of formal study and will also be assigned a sponsor.

**The Sacraments of Initiation:** For most people, the RCIA process reaches its climax at the Easter Vigil Mass, where non-Christian catechumens receive Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. Candidates from other Christian denominations with valid baptisms receive only Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. For both groups, it is a joyous occasion how God has brought his children into full communion with Christ’s “one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.”

(This was adapted from Trent Horn’s book [Why We’re Catholic: Our Reasons for Faith, Hope, and Love](#). If you would like a complimentary copy of this book for yourself or to share with someone, please contact the parish office.