

St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church
Becoming Catholic: Frequently Asked Questions

How can I become Catholic?

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) is the process by which persons age 7 and over become Catholic. You enter the Catholic Church through celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. If you were validly baptized in another Christian church, you enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church by making a profession of faith and celebrating the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

Who can enter the RCIA process?

- Those who have never been baptized.
- Those who were validly baptized in another Christian church but have little knowledge and experience of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. To become Catholic, these persons do not need to be baptized again. One comes into the full communion of the Catholic Church after a period of study and participation in liturgy with our community. The Catholic Church respects the upbringing and experiences of other Christian churches. Becoming Catholic does not mean rejecting one's previous faith background. Rather, it means growing and living out one's faith in the Catholic Church.
- Adults who were baptized as infants in the Catholic Church and now wish to complete the sacraments of Christian initiation by being confirmed and receiving first Holy Communion.

What is a "Rite"?

A rite is a public religious celebration. Some of the RCIA rites are described below:

- The Rite of Acceptance (for those not yet baptized) and the Rite of Welcome (for the baptized) celebrate a person's decision to seriously pursue membership in the Catholic community. After the celebration of these rites, an unbaptized person is called a catechumen and a baptized person is called a candidate.
- The Rite of Dismissal is celebrated on Sundays at the 8 am Mass when the catechumens and candidates are dismissed with the prayers of the assembly to go with a catechist to break open the word that has been proclaimed in the liturgy of the word.
- The Rite of Election, which is celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, is when our bishop formally declares that those who are ready for baptism are now "the elect," those chosen to celebrate the sacraments of Christian initiation at the next Easter Vigil.
- The Rites of Christian Initiation celebrate one's entry into the Church by Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
- The Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church is celebrated with the baptized as they make a profession of faith and are confirmed and receive first Holy Communion.

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What are some aspects of the process?

- **Worship:** Worship and listen to God’s word with us at the 8 am Sunday Mass every week. After the part of the Mass that is called the “liturgy of the word,” catechumens and candidates come forward to be dismissed with a blessing to go with a catechist to the St. Gregory the Great room for continued reflection on the Sunday Scripture.
- **Study:** Learn about the Catholic faith with us in Foundations in Faith sessions, which are held on Sundays, 9:30 am to 10:40 am, whenever religious education is in session.
- **Prayer:** Pray with us at Mass and other liturgies, parish prayer services, and Foundations in Faith sessions. Pray with us at the RCIA retreat which is held during Lent for those who will celebrate the sacraments at the upcoming Easter Vigil.
- **Social:** Participate in various parish events and get to know and work with the people of St. Joseph’s parish community.
- **Service:** Reach out to others in Christian service by visiting the sick and helping the poor. Sponsors introduce catechumens and candidates to the opportunities available through our parish.

What is expected of catechumens and candidates in the RCIA process?

As described above, they are expected to worship, study, pray, become a part of the community, and reach out to others in Christian service. A catechumen or candidate who cannot come to the 8 am Mass on Sunday should attend either the vigil Mass on Saturday at 4:30 pm, or the other Sunday Mass at 11 am.

I’m not much of a student. Is this a “class?”

The Foundations in Faith sessions should not be considered a “class.” We want you to discover God on a personal level. There are no tests, no grades. The goal is conversion through a “change of heart.” In Foundations in Faith, a catechumen or candidate who is learning to be Catholic is more like an apprentice than a student in a class. We show you what it means to be a Catholic, and you learn by watching and being with us.

What am I expected to know?

Your faith journey is a time of formation and conversion. Faith formation involves learning about the faith, practices and doctrines, but we do not stop there. It is also about conversion. Your faith journey began before you contacted us and will continue throughout your life. Conversion is a time for you to grow in awareness of your relationship with God and with the Catholic Church. Bring an open heart and mind. You will learn to live out your call to be a disciple of Jesus within the Catholic Church.

How long does it take to become a Catholic?

This question is answered differently for each individual, and it is difficult to give a time frame at the outset. There is no need to rush your faith journey. If you have not been baptized, the process usually takes at least one year. Adult baptisms are celebrated at the

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Easter Vigil. If you have already been baptized in another Christian faith tradition, you may require less time, depending on the faith formation you previously received and your present involvement in the practice of your faith. We want to listen to both your needs and desires. We also do not want to deprive you of the opportunity to discern God's call at this important moment in your life. Time is needed for your faith formation as an adult, and we ask that you be open to the process.

What if I get started and decide this isn't for me?

Faith in God and the decision to become a member of the Catholic Church are personal choices that must be made in an atmosphere of complete freedom. We will try our best to help you understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian. But we sincerely believe that you must be allowed to use God's gifts of conscience and free will without feeling any pressure from us. If you decide not to become Catholic, it is okay for you to step away from the RCIA process.

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is a practicing member of the Catholic community who is willing to be a companion for a person on his or her journey of faith in the RCIA process. A practicing member is one who attends Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation, receives the sacraments frequently, and participates in the parish in other ways as well. If there is someone you know who is a practicing Catholic and would be willing to be your sponsor, please invite them. Otherwise we would assign a sponsor from our faith community to accompany you during this time.

Can my spouse or fiancé be my sponsor?

A spouse may participate in the RCIA with you; however, another member of the Catholic community should serve as your sponsor while you are in the RCIA. This provides an opportunity to broaden your perspective and help you to get to know others in our community.

I have children and teens that aren't members of the Church either. What about them

As with adults, the RCIA is a time of formation and conversion for children and teens between the ages of 7 and 18. It is important that they develop relationships with their peers at St. Joseph's. If your child is in the 8th grade or below, contact Caroline VanAtter, director of religious education; for teens in high school, contact Norma DeLaRosa, youth minister. Both can be reached through the parish office (765-482-5558).

I have very young children. Do you provide child care during the RCIA Foundations in Faith sessions?

You should arrange for your own childcare because St. Joseph's does not have a nursery in which we can provide childcare during Mass or Foundations in Faith sessions. Let us know if this is difficult for you, and we will try to help.

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I have been through a divorce. Will this stand in the way of my becoming a Catholic?

If you are divorced and not remarried, this will not stand in the way of your becoming Catholic. If you have been divorced and are now remarried, there is a process by which the Church may grant you a Declaration of Freedom to Marry in the Catholic Church and through which your current marriage can be recognized in the Catholic Church. Because this process takes some time to complete, begin talking with our pastor as soon as you sense you are truly drawn to the Catholic Church.

I am getting married. Will I be able to complete the RCIA by my wedding date?

The faith journey to become a Catholic takes time and energy. The timeline of a faith journey does not always coincide with that of a wedding. If you are engaged, the deepening of your relationship with your fiancé and the preparation for your wedding takes time. The deepening of your relationship with the Church community and the preparation for your baptism or full communion with the Church also takes time. It may or may not be possible for both journeys to arrive at a particular calendar date at the same time. We will work with you through this process.

May I bring a friend?

Yes, we encourage it! As a matter of fact, spouses, fiancés, and sponsors are especially encouraged to join us on a regular basis.

What is the time commitment?

We ask you to commit to our Sunday gatherings, which include worship and prayer with our faith community by attendance at the 8 am Lord's Day Mass, reflection on the scriptures, and Foundations in Faith sessions from 9:30 am to 10:40 am. We also ask you to commit to coming to the RCIA retreat during the Lenten season just prior to when you will celebrate the sacraments at the Easter Vigil. We also expect you to participate in all of the liturgical rites associated with the RCIA.

Is there a cost for participating in RCIA?

No. We supply everything that is needed.

When does the RCIA process begin?

We have a year-round RCIA process, so people can begin whenever they feel that they are ready.

How do I get started?

Start by coming to "Come and See" inquiry, which is held on most Monday evenings at 7:00 pm in the St. Aloysius room. These small casual gatherings are a place where you can ask questions and we can get acquainted. Call the parish office (765-482-4819) or the RCIA team coordinators, OA and Candy Kincaid (765-482-4819), for more information.