

How to Become A Catholic



An invitation to 'Come and See'

A guide to the Rite of Christian
Initiation of Adults

2. Catechumenate:

The “Catechumenate” is a term used in the early centuries of the Church for the period of time in which a person is prepared for Christian baptism. It is akin to an “apprenticeship in the faith”, which involves a period of formation, a deepening one’s response to the Gospel of Christ, growing in commitment and faith, and beginning to be initiated into the life of the Christian community. To participate in this a person is formally enrolled as a “catechumen”.

With the help of a sponsor and members of the parish community, they experience the Church as a community of the faithful: its spirit, work, prayer, creed, and mission.

3. Period of Purification and Enlightenment:

This period coincides with the season of Lent and involves the final preparations for the sacraments of initiation at Easter. The catechumens formally present themselves before the bishop on the First Sunday of Lent for the ‘Rite of Election’. Together, the ‘Elect’ and the parish community journey toward Easter by deepening their personal commitment to the Lord and praying for an outpouring of grace which helps them grow in the spiritual life.

4. The Sacraments of initiation

During the most elaborate and joyous celebration of the Church’s year, Easter, the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—are conferred on the Elect during the Easter Vigil.

Those already baptised into another Christian denomination enter into full communion with the Catholic Church through Confirmation and Eucharist, celebrated on the Feast of Pentecost. The entire community of the faithful joyfully welcomes the new members and joins in a renewal of their own baptismal vows.

5. Mystagogia or Post-baptismal Catechesis:

This period lasts from Easter to Pentecost and completes the initiation. It is a festive season for the Church. The sacraments of initiation are the climax, but not the end of the process of conversion. The new members reflect more deeply on the meaning of the Easter sacraments and begin thinking about how they will share in the mission of the Church through service of God and their neighbour as they find their place in the ordinary life of the Church. This stage is named *Mystagogia* – the sharing of the mysteries. It is also a reminder to the entire Christian community that conversion is a life-long journey.

FIRST STEP

In order to begin the RCIA process, set up an initial meeting with your local parish priest, so he can get to know you and your story, and what it is that has prompted you to make this enquiry. If you are happy to proceed, he will introduce you to the RCIA Team who will accompany you through the process.

For more information:
www.dioceseofmeath.ie/rcia



WHAT IS THE RCIA?

The Catholic Church always welcomes those interested in exploring the possibility of becoming Catholic. Anyone seeking answers to a life of faith in Jesus Christ, can enter into a process where they, along with many others, search for God in a new and more meaningful way.



The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the process by which people enter into the fullness of the Catholic faith through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The RCIA is a process whereby interested men and women engage in questions and discussion, shared spiritual growth, prayer and worship, catechesis, Catholic tradition, Sacred Scripture, the sacraments of the Church, church teaching, and social outreach, accompanied by catechists, sponsors, and the faith community.

The RCIA becomes a spiritual awakening, not only for those seeking to become Catholics, but also for the welcoming community.

There's no commitment required to begin the process. At each stage of the journey, participants discern God's call in their lives and decide whether or not they should move forward to the next stage. The final commitment occurs when participants receive the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter and commit themselves to a new life in Christ.

WHO IS RCIA FOR?

- ♦ Any adult not yet baptised who wishes to become a Catholic.
- ♦ Any adult baptised in another Christian Church who wishes to become a Catholic.
- ♦ Any adult, baptised Catholic who has not yet celebrated Eucharist or Confirmation and wishes to do so.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A CATHOLIC?

The RCIA is not a programme, but a journey in which candidates are accompanied, instructed, and guided by priests, catechists, and sponsors, while supported and encouraged by the prayers and example of the Catholic community.

Participants will be required to attend weekly meetings and join the faith community for Sunday Eucharist.

In general, formation includes the following areas:

Scripture: the stories of God's people

Teaching: what Catholics believe

Prayer: how we communicate with God

Liturgy: how the community worships

Mission: how we live out the faith we profess

Participants will journey with the other RCIA candidates and their sponsors. Participants can choose their own sponsor or the local parish will assist in choosing a suitable sponsor.

Sponsors need to be practising Catholics who are willing to walk with the candidate on their journey. Ideally, it is desirable if the sponsors can attend the sessions with the candidate.

THE RCIA JOURNEY

The RCIA is a "spiritual journey" which guides the candidate through five stages:

1. Inquiry period:

During this initial stage a person approaches the Church community with their interest in Christ, and His Church. In return they are welcomed by the parish community and hear about the Gospel of Christ as a response to their search. 'Inquirers', as they are now known, are encouraged to reflect on God's presence in their lives, past and present. They are encouraged to ask questions about faith



and the Christian life. It is also a crossroads in a person's life, whether he or she wants to enter the Church via the catechumenate.