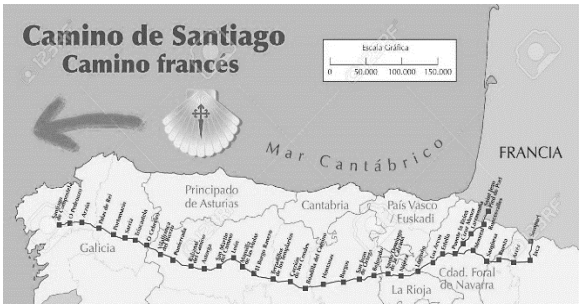
BECOMING CATHOLIC

For the first time, or once again

WELCOME to your Catholic faith community at St. John's Cathedral. Our community began in 1876 (see original church photo), and since then we've striven to be a witness to the Treasure Valley and beyond of God's grace at work in the world. We sure can use some good new witnesses like you, to join in our shared spiritual journey and to proclaim our shared salutation of "Buen Camino!"

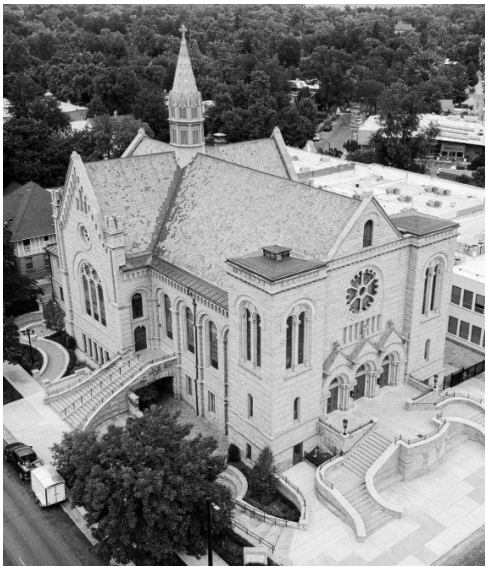
The Way of St. James (Camino de Santiago) was one of the most important Christian pilgrimage routes during the later Middle Ages. As the "peregrino" or pilgrim walks (nowadays it's just westward where before people turned around to walk back home) to the Cathedral of St. James (one of the Apostles) in Compostela, the shared salutation is "Buen Camino." It literally means "good road" in that you'll have a good voyage while walking the route, but it also has the extended meaning that goes beyond just this immediate trek, and that you'll have a good spiritual journey in life as you seek God's grace.

Buen Camino!



Prayer for Becoming Catholic:

Lord Jesus, we ask your blessings on these men and women who aspire to join your Church—for the first time or once again—through our parish community. As they ponder your Word and share their stories may the fabric of their lives become interwoven just as our lives are-- into the very Body of Christ, your Church. AMEN



Common Catholic Prayers

1) Sign of the Cross. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

2) Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

3) Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

4) Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

5) Prayer to St. John the Evangelist:
God our Father, you have revealed
the mysteries of your Word
Through St. John the apostle and evangelist.
By prayer and reflection
May we come to understand
the wisdom he taught
And know the Word he loved.
We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son,
Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen

6) St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness
and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly hosts, by
the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all
the evil spirits who prowl about the world,
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

7) Grace Before Meals. Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

8) Guardian Angel Prayer. Angel of God, my Guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day (or night) be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

9) Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of us your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love; Send forth your spirit and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth. Let us pray: O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

10) Nicene Creed. We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Challenge of our Secular Culture

"Default to Atheism" by David Carlin

https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2020/09/04/default-to-atheism/

I cannot prove it, but my strong impression is that for typical well-educated and relatively affluent Americans under forty years of age atheism is now the "default" position.

When I speak of atheists, I have three kinds in mind: (1) Outright atheists, persons who are quite frank as to their disbelief; (2) diffident atheists, usually known as agnostics, who don't believe in God, but like to tell themselves and others that they are open-minded about the question – even though they are not; and (3) indifferent atheists, who so take it for granted that God doesn't exist that they don't take the trouble to affix the label atheist or agnostic to their state of mind.

In the old days in America, it took some effort to be an atheist. It required a certain amount of mental and moral work. You had to rebel against the taken-for-granted view that God exists. And then you had to find some reasons for rejecting that view. And then you had to find the courage or the pig-headedness to stick to that view despite the fact that you had few supporters.

By contrast, in the early decades of the glorious 21st century, it's easy to be an atheist; almost as easy as falling off a log.

The shoe is now on the other foot. It is now the well-educated religious believer who has to rebel against the taken-for-granted view that God does not exist. It is the believer who has to find reasons for rejecting disbelief. It is the theistic believer who has to have the courage or the pig-headedness to stick to his belief in a highly secularized environment that is hostile to that belief.

In sum, before many decades pass, the United States may be a society in which atheistic elites preside over semi-atheistic masses. Already one can see this social structure being formed. Atheistic elites tend to predominate in our great institutions devoted to the "cultural education" of the public – such institutions as mainstream journalism, the entertainment industry, and our best colleges and universities.

All this is very strange, for throughout the history of the human race some kind of theism (or polytheism) has been almost universal. Almost everybody has believed in God (or gods). Almost everybody has believed that some supernatural divine power (or powers) presides over the world.

This has been going on for so many millennia that until just the other day careful students of the subject concluded that human beings are religious by nature; there is something in our very nature that impels us to belief in God/gods. Atheism has therefore been rare and unnatural.

Let's suppose that atheism comes to prevail generally in society. Will this do any significant harm to the generations who come after us? Those of us who have all our lives believed in the existence of God will answer "yes" to this question. But perhaps this is just a prejudice on our part. Do we have any good reasons to fear the triumph of atheism?

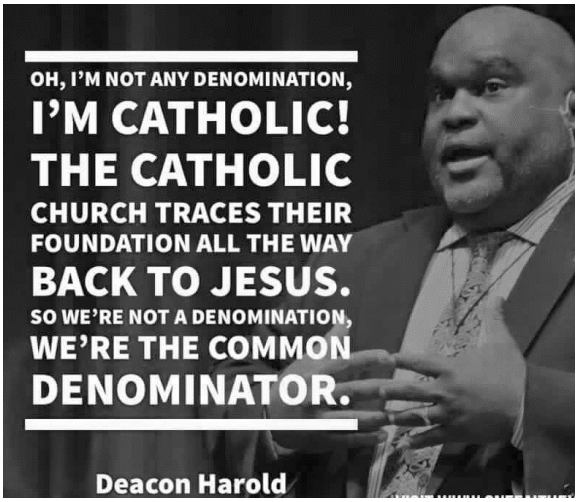
I suggest two reasons. For one, if God doesn't exist, then human morality does not have a divine foundation; and if it doesn't have a divine foundation, then it must have a purely human foundation. Morality will have to be recognized as a purely man-made thing. And if it is a man-made thing, then it can be changed by humans, and changed suddenly and radically. What was wicked yesterday (murder for example) can be good today.

For another, if God exists (at least the rational God that western theology and philosophy have traditionally believed in, as opposed to the quite arbitrary God of Islam), then it makes sense to believe that nature, God's creation, is intelligible; that nature can be grasped and understood by human reason. If we do away with this rational God, we do away with a rational creation. We open the door to arbitrary beliefs.

David Carlin is a retired professor of sociology and philosophy at the Community College of Rhode Island, and the author of The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America.

Why Be a *Catholic* Christian?

3 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE CATHOLIC
By Matt Nelson



Why be Catholic? Because to be Catholic is to be in full union with the one thing that can make you most sane and most happy. A tall claim, to be sure; but it's not an arrogant claim. It's a truth claim. I am Catholic because I am convinced the Church is the *only* place I will find the fullness of truth and joy. That's why I'm Catholic: because I believe Catholicism is true.

G.K. Chesterton believed that often the first step for a convert is the decision to be fair to the Catholic Church. That's right—*fair*. All too often those who are skeptical towards Catholicism are quick to give their objections and are, perhaps, too caught up in admiration of their own objection to hear the Catholic response. In effect, the skeptic becomes like the golfer who is too busy admiring his long drive to realize it's headed straight for the water trap—the golfer who looks away in self-contentment before he sees where his ball is about to land. The water trap gets the best of the long drive; but the golfer isn't paying attention.

Catholicism is both logical and evidence-based; but most skeptics just haven't been listening. Shortly after his full entrance into the Catholic Church, Chesterton wrote in his book *The Catholic Church and Conversion*: *"It is impossible to be just to the Catholic Church. The moment a man ceases to pull against it he feels a tug towards it. The moment he ceases to shout it down he begins to listen to it with pleasure. The moment he tries to be fair to it he begins to be fond of it."*

The problem with many of the objections towards Catholicism is not that they are illogical; indeed they are often logical. But a logical argument is not always a good argument. The contention that all Canadian Prime Ministers are aliens, and thus, because Justin Trudeau is the current Canadian Prime Minister he must be an alien, is a logical argument; but it's foolish. One who makes that argument hasn't considered all of the evidence seriously. It's an unfair and thus intellectually dishonest argument.

The big point I am trying to get to (in a rather roundabout way) is that there are good reasons to be Catholic. Here are three:

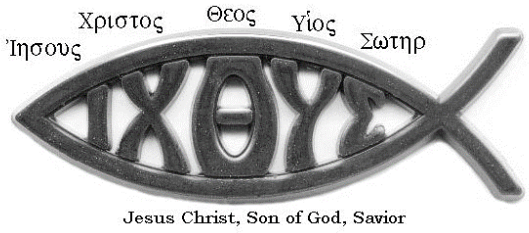
1. CATHOLICISM IS REASONABLE.
There are many aspects of Catholic belief that cannot be immediately reached by deductive reasoning: that God is a Trinity, for example. But the idea of one God in three co-equal and co-eternal persons is not a logical contradiction either; it just requires fine distinctions to be made and understood—namely, the difference between *person* and *nature*.

But some religious beliefs can be reached via deductive logic. The Church from her foundation has always recognized that there are footprints of God in the natural world. St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that God's existence can be known through the observation of created things (see Rom 1:20). Science combined with reason is a powerful combination for the believer.

Various arguments that address the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" demonstrate how religious truths can

indeed be reached logically (like God's existence, for example). Since reason tells us that things do not pop into existence without a cause, and scientific investigation (as well as philosophical reasoning) makes a good case for the beginning of the universe, it can thus be concluded that the universe has an eternal, all-powerful cause unbound by space and time.

And of course there are the cosmological arguments of St. Thomas Aquinas who observed (building on the arguments of the pagan Aristotle), for example, that an infinite regress of *caused* causes leads to logical problems; and thus there must be an infinitely perfect being—an Uncaused Cause—behind it all to get the domino effect going in the first place (as well as to sustain it here and now). Indeed it was such arguments as these that played a huge part in moving perhaps the 20th century's most renowned atheist, Antony Flew, to belief in a Creator.



2. CATHOLICISM IS HISTORICAL.

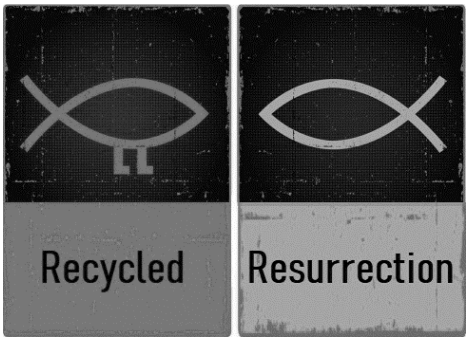
C.S. Lewis in his essay "God in the Dock" remarked that many of the unbelievers he encountered had no trouble believing in prehistoric man; but there was a paradox: *"I had supposed that if my hearers disbelieved the Gospels, they would do so because the Gospels recorded miracles. But my impression is that they disbelieved them simply because they dealt with events that happened a long time ago."*

Nonetheless, that Jesus existed is confirmed by nearly every New Testament historian on the planet. Due to a plenitude of early sources, and the multiple attestations of Christian, Jewish and secular sources, New Testament historians (particularly the skeptical ones) are interested in much bigger questions such as: "What did the Church persecutor Paul (not to mention the apostles) *see* that convinced him Jesus had resurrected from the dead?" and "What explains the rise of early Christianity?"

Indeed the non-Christian historical sources are valuable and interesting, but that's not where the story ends. We must also ask: *what was early Christianity like?* And for that, one must go to the early Church Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the first seven or so centuries.

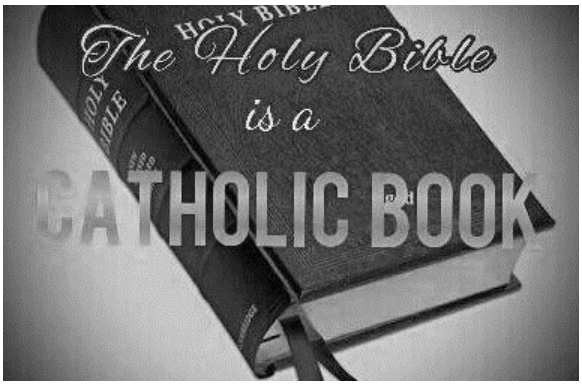
What do we find in these early Christian writings? Catholicism. The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, baptismal regeneration, the baptism of infants, and the authority of the bishops are not disputed; they are staples of the faith. At the beginning of the first century, Ignatius of Antioch calls the Church of Christ "catholic". We find the veneration of saintly relics in *The Martyrdom Of Polycarp.* Irenaeus records the succession of the first four popes of Rome. Tertullian describes how Christians make the sign of the cross on their foreheads. C.S. Lewis wrote that "a young atheist cannot be too careful of his reading". The same would also appear true for the Protestant.

Indeed, as Blessed John Cardinal Henry Newman learned and thus noted, "to be steeped in history is to cease to be Protestant." It's not that Protestants aren't our brothers and sisters in Christ—they are. It's just that they're separated from the fullness of the Church and her wisdom and we Catholics want them to come home. Our arms are ever open and waiting.



3. CATHOLICISM IS BIBLICAL

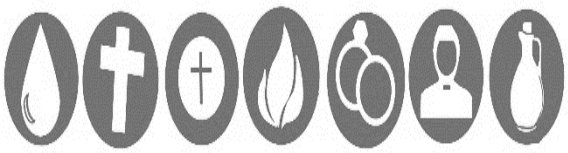
We've talked about historical sources that support the claims and beliefs of Catholicism; but we haven't talked about the primary source, both theologically and historically: the written Word of God.



One of the shocking things I realized when I re-entered the Catholic Church was how plainly biblical her teachings were. We believe that we are saved by grace because St. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says so (Eph 2:8). But we also believe that we are saved by faith—but not "by faith alone" because that's what the Bible says (James 2:24). We believe true faith works in love and thus we must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Gal 5:6; Phil 2:12). We believe that the deposit of faith has been passed down through the Sacred Writings and also by sacred oral tradition because that's what Paul taught (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Cor 11:2). We believe that priests can forgive our sins in the presence of Christ because Jesus said to the apostles "whose sins you forgive are forgiven them" (John 20:21-23). But we also believe that the grace required for our salvation comes freely through the sacraments, beginning with baptism, because the New Testament says things like "Baptism…now saves you" (1 Pet 3:21).

We also believe in the authority of the Church as the teacher and interpreter of the faith. Jesus makes the final authority of the Church clear in Matthew 18 and, furthermore, St. Paul calls the Church " the pillar and bulwark of truth" (1 Tim 3:15). We recognize Peter and his successors as the leader and Prime Minister of the Church because, well, it is a sort of sociological necessity; even for the Church of God. Every institution on earth needs a "boss" because people disagree on things. But also, Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter (signifying a new mission like when God changed Abram's name to Abraham) and then gave him "the keys" and the power to bind and loose (Matt 16:18-20; Is 22). There can be no mistaking it: Jesus gave Peter authority over the Church, and his successors (see Acts 1:20) would inherit that authority.

Finally, we believe in the Eucharist because Jesus said "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you" and "my flesh is food indeed". Then the night before he died he showed the apostles how this was to be done by revealing his flesh and blood in the form of bread and wine. "Do this", said Jesus. And to this day the Catholic Church continues to do this in memory of Christ making present today the once for all sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. The Eucharistic sacrifice is a re-presentation and *this* is the source and summit of the Christian life.



That is why a Eucharistic Church is the final resting place for every human. It is the one place where spiritual *and* bodily communion is possible with God in this life: and from that one great meeting with God flows all kinds of extraordinary possibilities. That is ultimately why I am Catholic. Because of the Eucharist. I believe it is found in the Communion of the Catholic Church—and only there. The Catholic Church, I believe, is where man finds everything he is looking for.

What is RCIA?

Becoming Catholic

RCIA

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

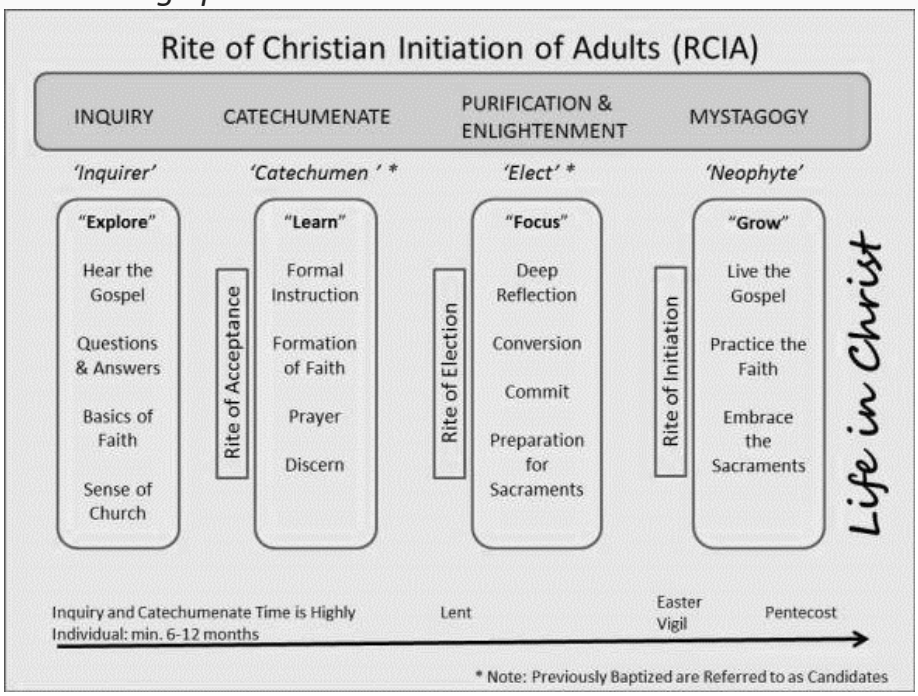
RCIA stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. When we bring people into the Catholic Church, or help them to receive all of their initial sacraments if they are already baptized Catholic, we call that "initiation." While the word "initiation" is often used when people are talking about joining a club, we are really talking about a process of prayer, reflection and study spread over several months during which the inquirer participates in Catholic life and worship. The focus of the RCIA process is Christian conversion - a change of heart in which the individual turns toward God and away from whatever is in the way of living a full Christian life. Those who participate in this process of prayer, study and reflection include:

- Catechumen: People who have never been baptized Christian
- Candidate: People who were baptized in another Christian tradition, or baptized Catholics who want to deepen their understanding of their faith and complete their sacraments of initiation. The three sacraments of initiation are Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation.

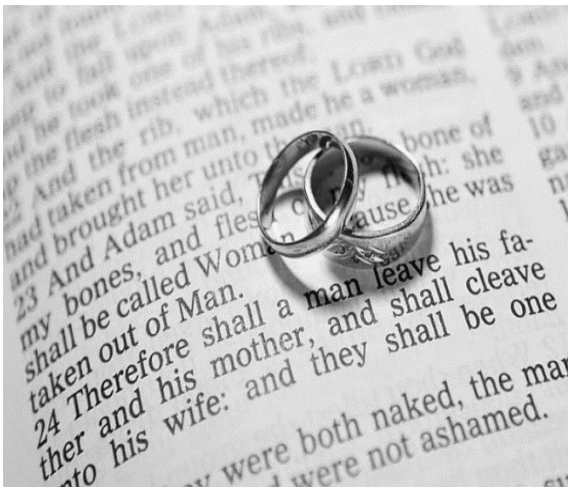
This process could also be a good formation opportunity for anyone who:

- Desires to know more about the Catholic Church
- Attends the Catholic Church and is questioning if the Catholic Church is the right choice for a faith community
- Was baptized Catholic but left or has little contact with the Church.

RCIA 4 stage process:



< The RCIA journey is moves through four distinct stages as illustrated here. The first three stages move across several months, and the fourth and final stage doesn't end until death. What RCIA hopes to provide you is the basis for a lifelong conversion experience.



Marriage status & RCIA

There aren't many technical issues that stand between you and Becoming Catholic. The cost is minimal for the RCIA program (usually just purchasing a book or two), and we do ask for your consistent attendance at our RCIA group gatherings, for example. There is also the element of your marriage status. In terms of the Church's teaching on marriage people fall into two categories: 1) not an issue for you or 2) you need to have a conversation with your RCIA coordinator. Basically it's based on your responses to these questions:

__You have never been married, and you are not living with "a significant other" in a relationship that in all intents and purposes is a marriage.

__This is the one and only marriage (either in Church or civilly) for both you AND your spouse.

If you can answer yes to one of these above, then move on because this issue does not pertain to you.

If, however, neither of those scenarios applies to you, then you need to have a discrete conversation with your RCIA coordinator. Marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, and as such, must be taken seriously by the Church, and it relates to the pathway of potential converts to Catholicism. The Church is bound to follow what Scripture teaches about marriage including:

- Marriage is a divine institution. God created humans, and then he created marriage. See the book of Genesis 2: 21-24.
- Supremacy of marriage. Marriage is one of the highest human relationships there are, if not the highest, and it is one that God takes seriously, and He expects us to take it seriously too. See Hebrews 13:4.
- Jesus on Marriage. Jesus didn't leave much room for us to justify divorcing a spouse. In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10 Jesus says: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." Consequently, the Catholic Church recognizes all civil marriages (i.e., marriages outside of the Church) but not civil divorces.

If neither of these two categories above applies to you, then please speak with your RCIA coordinator. There are some possible remedies available, including circumstances in which a previous marriage can be annulled (which *does not mean* pretending it never happened, or if you had children from a previous marriage that they are illegitimate).

Importance of "Faith Buddies"

Do you have people in your life who are helping you to grow your faith? Do have a forum where matters of faith are discussed among friends? If so you're fortunate, and stand to gain much as your "faith buddy" is there in a reciprocal way. If you don't have a faith buddy in your life, consider where you might be able to find one. Your RCIA team members can help you with this.

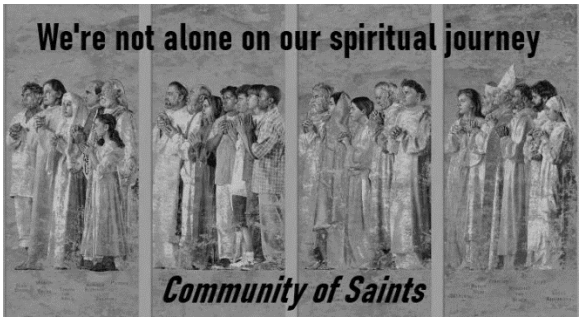
Step 1 of 2: Selecting a Sponsor. The RCIA process requires that you select someone to be your sponsor. Below are some points to consider in selecting a person. If you can't make a determination, that's not a problem. Speak to your RCIA coordinator and we can find someone to help serve as your sponsor. To serve the goals of R.C.I.A., sponsors must be active, practicing Catholics, ideally active parishioners from the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist so as to better help integrate the candidate/catechumen in our faith community via parish activities, ministry, and overall parish life, and be objective in their judgment of a person's readiness or calling.

A sponsor is present. Sponsors will be asked to attend a few rites and participate (it is not necessary that they attend the regular sessions unless they wish). Their presence is also required at the Saturday night Easter Vigil.

A sponsor prays. S/he humbly recognizes that he is an instrument whom God uses to support the candidate. In prayer the sponsor learns to be open to the Lord's will and to rely upon the Spirit for guidance.

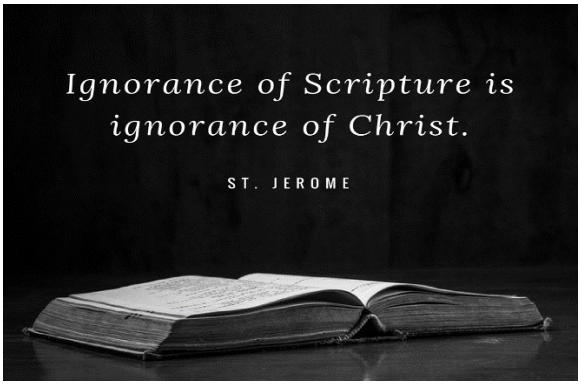
A sponsor is up to the spiritual challenge. Sponsors should be willing to accept the possibility of being challenged in their own faith. The candidates' personal stories, struggles, and insights have a way of stirring up within the sponsor a renewed sense of belonging to the church. After all, being Catholic means dying to self and being born again, and again, and again, in an ongoing process of conversion.

A sponsor meets some basic qualifications.
__Be at least 16 years old;
__Be fully initiated in the Catholic Church (Baptism, Confirmation, 1st Holy Communion) and an active Catholic;
__Not be parent/guardian of the intended participant;
__If married, current marriage was witnessed by a Catholic priest or deacon.



Step 2 of 2: Select a patron saint. The RCIA process also asks that you select a patron saint. Specifically this is done within the context of the Sacrament of Confirmation. There are literally hundreds of saints to chose from, so do a bit of research and see if there's a particular saint whose story you find inspirational and perhaps a model for your own faith journey. Despite some confusion on this point, Catholics do not worship saints as gods: the point is to ask of them their intercession or added support in asking God for grace. For example from one of the best known Catholic prayers of the Hail Mary we have the central line of "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners…" As Catholics we believe that the saints are still with us and we're not alone on our spiritual journey.

Catholics & the Bible



Christ did not leave a Bible; He left a Church.

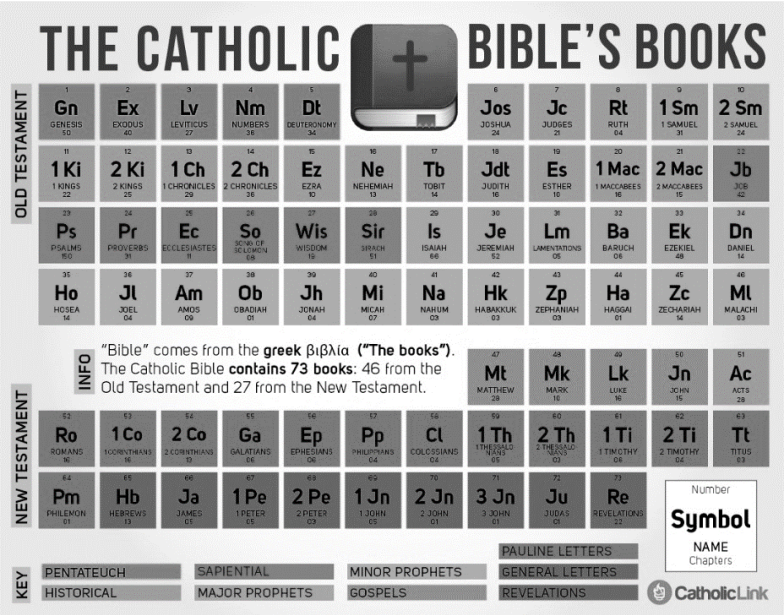
These two statements above serve as the guideposts for Catholics. The Bible as we know it did not come about until centuries after the time of Christ as compiled by the Church. Catholics utilize both the Holy Bible and what we call the "Magisterium" or teachings of the Church to help guide our spiritual journey.

The way Catholics interpret the Bible has sometimes been a source of conflict between Catholics and other Christians.

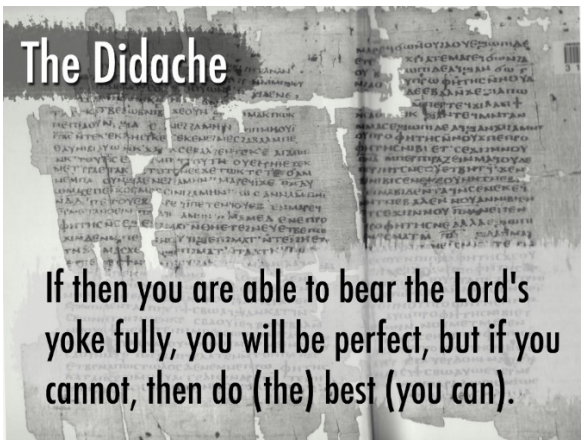
__All Christians believe that God is the ultimate author of the Bible because the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors in their writing. But some Christians -sometimes called fundamentalists or literalists-believe that every part of the Bible must be absolute true in every way: historically true, geographically true, and scientifically true. Thus, for example, they believe God created the world in six twenty-four-hour days.

__The Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical authors to write what God wanted known for salvation. The Holy Spirit did not take over the biblical authors' humanity when they wrote. Thus the authors were subject to natural human limitations, and they also used their human creativity in their writing. To continue the example above, Catholics believe in the religious truth that God created the world and everything in it, without having to believe that the world was literally created in twenty-four-hour days.

__Catholics understand that the Bible is without error in communicating what God wants known for salvation without having to be historically and scientifically correct in every detail.



*Catholic Bibles have 73 books, while Protestant versions usually have just 66.



DIDACHE: The first RCIA program

INTRODUCTION: The Didache (did-a-key), Διδαχή, or Te Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is an early Christian text that most scholars date to the first or early second century. The Didache was highly regarded by many early Christian authors and theologians. It served as an early effort to facilitate converts to the Christian faith. This is an excerpt minus the citations: the complete version can be viewed online.

Part I: THE TWO WAYS

There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.

The way of life is this. First of all, you shall love the God who made you. Second, love your neighbor as yourself. And all things you would not want done to you, do not do to another person.

This is the second commandment of the teaching.
You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not be sexually perverse.
You shall not be sexually promiscuous.
You shall not steal.
You shall not practice magic.
You shall not practice sorcery.
You shall not murder a child by abortion, nor kill a child at birth.
You shall not covet your neighbor's things.
You shall not commit perjury.
You shall not bear false witness.
You shall not speak evil.
You shall not bear a grudge.
You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for the double tongue is a snare of death.
Your words shall not be false or empty, but fulfilled in your actions.
You shall not be greedy, nor a swindler, nor a hypocrite, nor bad-tempered, nor proud.
You shall not plot against your neighbor.
You shall not hate any man, but you shall reprove some, and you shall pray for others, and others you shall love more than your own life.
. . .

This is the Way of Life.

THE WAY OF DEATH. The way of death is this. First of all, it is evil and full of curses: murder, adultery, lust, promiscuity, theft, idolatry, magical arts, witchcraft, robbery, false testimony, hypocrisy, duplicity, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, greed, foul language, jealousy, arrogance, pride, and boasting. … May you be delivered, my children, from all these things.

PART II: INSTRUCTION FOR CATECHUMENS

CONCERNING FOOD. Now concerning eating, observe the traditions as best you can. But do not eat meat sacrificed to idols, for it is the worship of dead gods.

CONCERNING BAPTISM. Baptize in this way. Having instructed him in all of these teachings, baptize the catechumen in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit …

CONCERNING FASTING. Do not let your fasts fall on the same days as the hypocrites, for they

fast on Mondays and Thursdays. Keep your fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

CONCERNING PRAYER. Do not pray as the hypocrites either, but pray as the Lord commanded in His Gospel: Our Father, who art in Heaven … Pray this way three times each day.

CONCERNING THE EUCHARIST. … Do not let anyone eat or drink of this Eucharist who has not been baptized into the name of the Lord. And you have given us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your Son.

CONCERNING THE OINTMENT. And concerning the ointment, give thanks as follows: We give you thanks, our Father, for the fragrant ointment which you have made known to us through your Son Jesus. Yours is the glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

THE APPROVED TEACHER. … if the teacher himself turns aside and teaches a different doctrine that subverts what has been taught before, do not listen to him. If his teaching fosters righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

Part IV: THE LORD IS COMING
Watch over your life. Do not let your lamps burn out, nor your waist be ungirded, but be ready, for you do not know when our Lord is coming. And gather together frequently, seeking what is necessary for your souls …

A History of RCIA

R.C.I.A. has been around since the early Church - and was the method in which the Church prepared un-baptized adults to be received into the Christian Church (which later became known as the Catholic (meaning universal) Church). The R.C.I.A. process was an intense period of study, prayer, and conversion which (in the Church's early days) often lasted up to three years. During the process, a sponsor would testify to the entire assembly of the conversion, authenticity, and genuine readiness of the individual. After some time as Christianity became the dominant religion in the western world, the RCIA process was put aside and in its place private preparation was used.

R.C.I.A. in the Modern Era dates from the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s that brought back the R.C.I.A. process in keeping with the spirit of communal participation of the whole Church (recognizing that Catholic Christianity was no longer the dominant faith it once was contrasted with Protestant Christianity and other religions. Now like then, inquirers enter into a public process, are formed in community, and integrated into the life of the Church through that community.

Keeping in the spirit of the original preparation, the base elements of study, prayer, community, and discernment remain and are integral, though persons may now possibly enter the Church in a shorter time-frame, based on his/her needs. While there are standards or measures by which to discern a person's proper place in the R.C.I.A., and how long each will be in each phase, there is no absolute schedule for an RCIA process to run; it varies from parish to parish. Here at St. John's Cathedral we usually run our program starting in the Fall, and then concluding with Pentecost that spans about 40 gatherings together.

The decision to accept baptism, or to become a Catholic, or to complete one's Catholic initiation must be the free will of each person. The Catholic Church does not coerce, guilt, nor do we manipulate this decision.

Regardless of a person's age or circumstances, the Church is tasked with the duties, rights, and responsibilities to ensure that each individual meets the requirements set out by the Code of Canon Law, as well as publicly demonstrates the desire, readiness, and lifestyle that reflects acceptance and understanding of the Gospel and becoming a member of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Church Etiquette

Welcome to the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Boise, Idaho. Like any house to which one is invited, there is always some sort of basic etiquette, and God's house is no different. Below are some basics.

Pre-Mass Preparations

__ Hopefully, your preparation for Mass began before your trek to Church! Catholics are asked to attend **mass every Sunday and on Holy Days** (see the image>)

__ If you think you may be **contagious, the requirement to attend Mass is waived**. Getting others sick is not charitable!

__ Please be considerate and **arrive in the Church before the Mass begins**. It is considered disrespectful to arrive after the Mass has begun. The opening and closing of doors, the movement of people to their pews and the disturbing of people to accommodate people arriving late is very distracting to some very important moments in the Mass.

__**Silence is most appreciated** in the Church. The Church is a House of Prayer, please refrain from carrying conversations in the Church.

__ Please remember that there is a **one-hour fasting** discipline in the Catholic Church before receiving Holy Communion. Please, **please, no gum, food or drink in the Church**. This requirement is waived for babies, the elderly, the ill and necessary medications. Chewing gum does break the Eucharistic fast.

How many days of the year are you required to participate in Mass?

52 Sundays
+ 6 - Holy Days of Obligation (U.S.)
58 There are 8,760 hours in a year. God asks for just about 60 hours.

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION: DUE WORSHIP

1.) Christmas - Dec. 25th
Jesus' birthday

2.) Mary, Mother of God - Jan. 1st
Mary's title = human son is divine

3.) Ascension - 40 days after Easter
Risen Jesus enters heaven

4.) Assumption - Aug. 15th
Mary enters heaven, body & soul

5.) All Saints Day - Nov. 1st
Honor everyone in heaven

6.) Immaculate Conception - Dec. 8th
Mary conceived with original sin

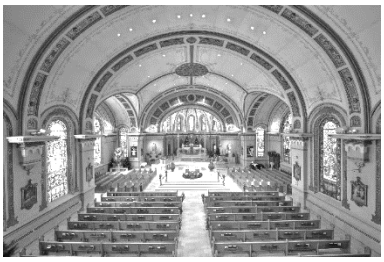
__ While the Church never imposes a **dress code**, it is a sign of our interior disposition, and a sign of how important we consider coming to Mass. It is not appropriate for men to wear shorts or t-shirts at Mass. It is also not appropriate for women to dress immodestly. Men must never wear a hat or cap while

women are allowed to wear something covering their heads. No one should wear sunglasses in the church unless for health reasons. Please dress modestly. We want to keep everyone's eyes on Jesus Christ. "Formal attire" is not necessary.

__ Our Lord says, **"Let the little children come to me."** Children at Mass are a sign of God's love and promise that the Church will endure until the end of the ages. Patience is always afforded to crying infants, but parents are asked to be as courteous as you can be for others trying to pray and listen. You can step outside for a minute to quiet things down, even during important times at Mass. God, the priest and everyone else will understand. Most of us have been there!

__ Check that **cellular phone**! Is it off or on vibrate mode? As in most important moments, cell phones ringing, buzzing or people texting is highly inappropriate. Please turn off your phones prior to the Mass beginning. It is NEVER appropriate to answer your phone in the Church or make a call. Emergencies are obvious exceptions.

__ Remember that good Christian behavior should be exhibited on the road to Church and its **parking lots** as well! Patience is a virtue – yes, even when it's related to safety!



AT MASS

__ If you arrive late, please stand in the back and **wait for an appropriate pause**.

__ **Bless yourself with Holy Water** doing the Sign of the Cross at the fonts at the entrances as you enter and leave. It is a reminder of our Baptismal vows, and it is a sacramental, a source of grace. You may bless yourself with Holy Water if you are not Catholic or able to receive Communion.

__ As you enter the row of pews, **genuflection in the direction of the tabernacle**, as a sign of reverence and respect for the Real Presence of Jesus. To make a proper genuflection bend the right knee to touch the ground, a sign of our acknowledgement of Jesus' Divinity.

__ Custom dictates that when we have found our seat we **kneel in prayer briefly in the pew**. This is a great opportunity to offer to God gratitude/thanksgiving or make our petitions that we intend to pray for during Mass.

__ During the mass, congregants alternate from being **seated, standing and kneeling.** Each is a gesture dictated during different parts of the mass. You will soon become familiar with what to do after watching what others do around you!

__ Please do **join in the songs** and prayers of the community! If you think your singing will distract others, or you do not quite know the hymn or prayers, a soft tone is fine.

__ The **restrooms** are downstairs, with the access via the main entrance of the Cathedral.

RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

FOR CATHOLICS. Communion means "union with." It is the True Body and Blood of Christ sacramentally made present. All Catholics of age in union with the local bishop and pope, not under any unconfessed, grave or serious sin, or irregular marriage situation, and who followed the Eucharistic Fast may receive Holy Communion. A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all Catholics.

__ Those who can receive may receive on the tongue or on the hand (please do not “grab” the Host). If in the hand, create a mini throne with one hand under another and extend to the minister.
__ Please consume the Host immediately. If you do not, a Communion Minister may ask you to. This is to protect the Sacrament. *Intinction* (“dipping” the Host in the Precious Blood) is generally not allowed.
__ When the Eucharistic minister presents the Host and says “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ” (for the Chalice), the proper response is a simple “Amen!” This indicates that you know and believe that what you are about to receive is Jesus Himself.
__ Please make sure you have a firm hold on the Chalice (without grabbing it) from the Eucharistic minister. If you are sick, please do not receive from the Chalice!
__ It is sufficient to receive under either Eucharistic species (the Body or Blood) to truly receive Communion. So if you “forgot” one species or the Precious Blood ran out – you received Communion.

FOR NON-CATHOLICS. The Eucharist is a sign of our communion with each other who are in communion with the Church, its bishops and all in communion with Rome. For that reason, we regret that it would be a false sign for those not in communion to receive the Communion Host. This is NOT a moral judgment or condemnation on your person! We pray for the day when the Church is truly One and Universal once again! Make a “Spiritual Communion” instead, if you wish (offering to God your great desire to receive Communion when you can), or pray as you wish.

FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION. If you cannot receive for any reason, that is fine. You may come up for a blessing in the Holy Communion line (just cross your arms in front of you). You may also remain seated for there is no obligation to come up. All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

FINALLY…
__ Mass does not end until the final blessing. Please wait until the priest has exited before making your pilgrimage to the parking lot.
__ Please respect those who wish to remain in prayer and thanksgiving to God!
May God bless your worship time with us here, and may it be a source of grace, strength and consolation for your body and soul!

What is the Catholic Church and what do we believe?

We are a community of believers who span the globe – our very name, "catholic," means universal. We are members of smaller faith communities called parishes – you are probably reading this in a local parish church.

Our core beliefs are summed up in our Creed – found on page 6 when you flip the book over.

We are the original Christian Church, which began when Jesus himself said to the Apostle Peter, "You are the rock on which I will build my church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it." Every pope since then has been part of an unbroken line of succession since Peter, the first pope.

Early in the history of the Church, there was the belief that when Jesus said at the Last Supper, "Take this and eat – this is my body; take this and drink – this is my blood," he was giving us the gift of his real presence in the form of bread and wine. We call this the Eucharist – a name that comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving. The Catholic Mass is a Eucharistic celebration and a celebration of God's word in Scriptures.

We believe that holy men and women who have come before us still pray for us and aid us. We call them saints, and many of our churches are named for them. First among the saints is Mary, a virgin who gave birth to the child Jesus, and who is honored as the mother of God and the mother of the Church.

From the beginning of Christianity, the Catholic Church has handed on God's word to each new generation – and defined what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Through the centuries, it is the Catholic Church that preserved the Bible, as well as many other written works, through its monasteries and libraries. It instituted the university system in order to educate.

We also believe that beauty is a sign of God's loving presence – and so we have commissioned and preserved some of the world's greatest art-works. Without the sponsorship of the Church, Michelangelo would never have painted his famous Sistine Chapel nor carved the Pietà.

Today, the Church is the world's largest charitable organization; we provide a significant portion of social service needs for Americans. There are nearly 250 Catholic universities and colleges in the United States alone, and we also operate this nation's largest non-public school system.

Mostly, we are a billion people on every continent who profess and express a faith in Christ that spans two millennia.

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The seven sacraments

The sacraments are the seven outward and visible signs, instituted by Christ, to confer God's inward and invisible grace. They are rites of initiation, healing and vocation.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

BAPTISM (from the Greek word *baptisma*, a "dipping") is the sacrament in which, by water and the power of the Holy Spirit, a person is cleansed of all sin, including original sin, and experiences birth into the new life of Christ.

- Pouring of water (or immersion)
- Words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

MATTHEW 28:19

CONFIRMATION is the sacrament in which the baptized are strengthened by the Holy Spirit in order to bear witness to Christ and prepare to take on the role of a disciple.

- Laying on of hands and anointing with chrism
- Words: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit."

ACTS 8:14-16a, 17

EUCHARIST (from the Greek word *eucharistia*, "thankfulness") is the sacrament in which the true Body and Blood of Christ, who is truly and substantially present under the appearance of bread and wine, is received in holy Communion.

- Bread and wine
- Words of institution: "This is my body… This is my blood."

SACRAMENTS OF HEALING

RECONCILIATION (or penance, confession) is the sacrament in which sins committed after baptism are confessed after an examination of conscience and forgiven by a priest in the name of Christ.

- Verbal confession of sins
- Words: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

JOHN 20:21-23

ANOINTING OF THE SICK is the sacrament in which those who are ill are anointed to impart spiritual strength and physical healing.

- Anointing with oil
- Words: "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

JAMES 5:14-15

SACRAMENTS OF VOCATION

The sacrament of MARRIAGE signifies the union and love that exist between Christ and the Church. It is a faithful covenant in which a man and a woman unite in such a way that, by forming "one flesh," they can transmit human life. As spouses and parents, men and women cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work.

- Mutual consent to live together as husband and wife
- Exchange of vows

MARK 10:6-9

HOLY ORDERS is the sacrament in which a bishop confers on a baptized man the grace of the Holy Spirit and sacred power for the service of the faithful. It can be administered in three forms: deacon, priest and bishop.

- Laying on of hands
- Prayer of consecration

DEACON: 1 TIMOTHY 3:8a-9,13

PRIEST: ACTS 14:23

Roles in the Catholic Church

LAITY
are all the faithful who, by virtue of their baptism, confirmation and participation in the holy Eucharist, are called to be witnesses of Christ in the world.

LAY MINISTERS
Here are a few examples of lay ministers who may be serving at our church:

- *Director of Religious Education* is responsible for the religious education of all age levels in a parish.
- *Coordinator of Youth Ministry* is responsible for the religious education of the youth in a parish. Works with the Director of Religious Education and parish staff to reach out to youth and involve them in the religious life of the parish.
- *Director of RCIA* (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) is responsible for overseeing the process of welcoming new

MEN AND WOMEN IN CONSECRATED LIFE
often live in community and take vows such as poverty, chastity and obedience. They may be priests, monks, nuns, consecrated virgins or religious brothers or sisters.

DEACONS
are men ordained to assist in carrying out the Church's ministry. They are able to proclaim the Gospel, preach, baptize, and conduct funerals and weddings outside of Mass.

PRIESTS
are men ordained to mediate between God and his people. They preside at Mass, celebrate sacraments and minister to the people in their congregation. They may have the title of pastor or parochial vicar (assistant pastor).

BISHOPS,
successors to the Apostles, have received the fullness of Christ's priesthood. Bishops are the visible head of their diocese. "Diocese" is from the Greek word for administration, and is the district under the supervision of a bishop.

THE POPE
is the Bishop of Rome, the successor to St. Peter and the Vicar (representative) of Christ on earth. Christ is the head of the Church; the pope is Christ's visible representative.

Gestures

Here are some gestures you may see while in our church, and the reason for them.

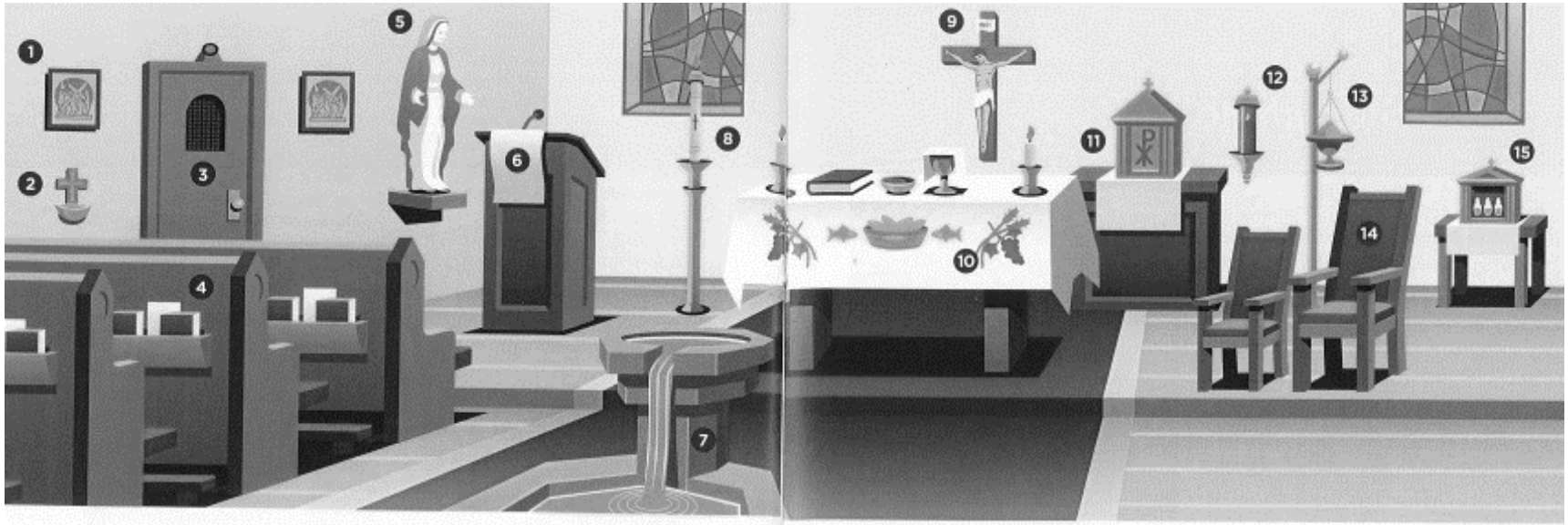
SIGN OF THE CROSS
is commonly traced from forehead to breast, from left shoulder to right. This gesture, in the form of the cross, is done while praying, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."

TRIPLE SIGN OF THE CROSS
before the Gospel is traced with thumb on forehead, lips and heart. Typically, people pray inaudibly that their minds and hearts be open to hear the Gospel and their lips open to proclaim it.

GENUFLECTING
is the gesture of bending on your right knee to the ground as a sign of reverence or adoration.

SIGN OF PEACE
is a handshake or other suitable gesture in witness to the belief that true peace is a gift of Christ's death and resurrection.

BLESSING YOURSELF WITH HOLY WATER and making the sign of the cross occurs when entering and leaving church as a reminder of our baptism.



What's inside a Catholic Church?

Here are some of the things you may notice when you look around our church.

① STATIONS OF THE CROSS are a series of pictures, paintings or engravings on the wall of a church depicting the passion of Christ (the events leading to his death). The faithful use them as aids in prayer.

② STOUP, or HOLY WATER FONT, is a container for holy water placed at the doors to a church. People use the water to bless themselves as they enter and leave church.

③ CONFESSIONAL is a room or private area where the sacrament of reconciliation occurs.

④ PEW is a seat for worshippers in a church; the KNEELER is in front of the pew and can be put down for kneeling.

⑤ STATUE is a likeness of Jesus, a member of the Holy Family, a saint or an angel that helps people recall the example of the person depicted. The faithful do not worship statues, they serve only as a reminder and source of inspiration.

⑥ AMBO is the podium or lectern from which the readings are proclaimed. It takes its name from a word meaning "elevated," and is based on the raised platforms from which rabbis read.

⑦ BAPTISMAL FONT is the basin and/or pool containing blessed water in which new members of the Church are baptized. The water in the font may be moving, representing the "living water" by which people are reborn into the faith.

⑧ PASCHAL CANDLE is a large wax candle that is blessed on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil. Representing the light of Christ, it is lit for baptisms and funerals.

⑨ CRUCIFIX is a cross with the figure of the crucified Christ on it. Its purpose is to remind us of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

⑩ ALTAR is the table on which the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered. It is both a sacrificial altar, recalling Christ's sacrifice, and a table around which we gather for the meal, the Eucharist. Eucharist comes from the Greek word meaning "thanksgiving."

⑪ TABERNACLE is a boxlike repository for the Blessed Sacrament – the consecrated hosts of Christ's actual presence – usually displayed in a prominent place near the main altar or in a separate chapel.

⑫ SANCTUARY LAMP is a light, normally a burning candle, contained within red glass that is placed before the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is kept.

⑬ CENSER, or THURIBLE, is the metal container in which incense is burned. The fragrant smoke that rises symbolizes our prayer rising to God.

⑭ PRESIDER'S CHAIR is the chair for the priest during the Mass.

⑮ AMBRY is the box in which the holy oils are kept.

HOLY OILS

There are three oils used for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, holy orders and the anointing of the sick: Oil of Catechumens, Sacred Chrism and Oil of the Sick.